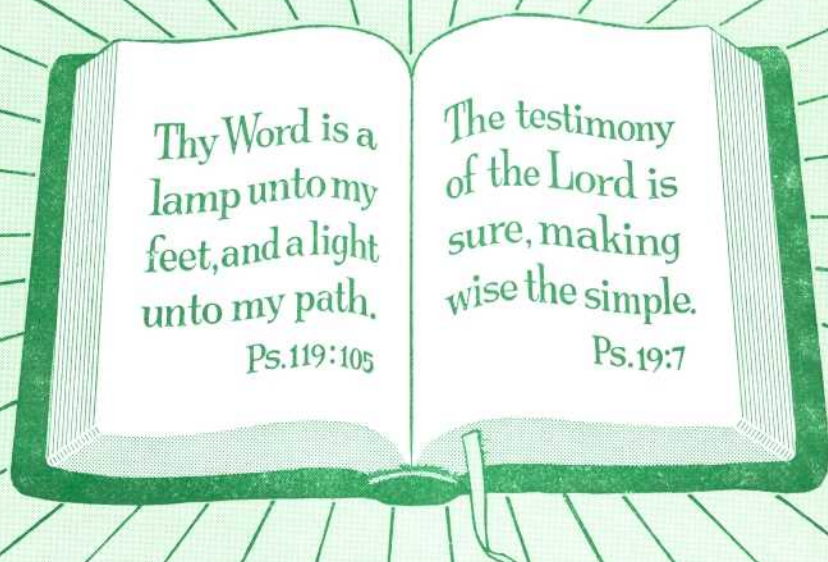


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Pre-Existence of Christ--Fact or Fable?  
Extraordinary  
In the Chambers of Imagery  
Understanding the Bible

# Megiddo Message

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
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## Editorially Speaking...

### Keep Everlastingly At It

IT IS not the thing we do once or occasionally which counts most in the mastery of life, but that which we do every day. There lies attainment, by a steady perseverance, a kind of compound interest on the investment of time and talent.

For example, the seemingly spontaneous mastery of the violin by a great violinist; or the superbly controlled voice of a great singer which appears to be effortless. "How easily he does it!" we exclaim. But that effortless ease is the sum total of exhausting hours of tireless practice every day.

All of us need to take to heart the lesson that perfection comes only through practice—steady, persevering, careful practice. Take a youth of twenty and give him ten more years of everyday study and practice in any field within his ability, and see what enormous stores of competency he builds up.

In the same period almost anyone can master just about any skill, become an authority in almost any field; the only requirement is that that talent be exercised, or that subject studied, with concentrated application every day.

The average among us often marvel at the many-sidedness of people who are above the average. We attribute the accomplishment to genius. It is genius—the kind of genius that keeps them at it with painstaking precision and practice every day.

For better or for worse, destiny is the stored-up power of what we have been doing—or what we have not been doing—every day.

Let the reader reckon upon the time he spends every day fiddling about, daydreaming, reading what is not upbuilding or educational, or starting what he never finishes. He will see that very possibly he is wasting enough time every day to make himself over, if only he would employ that time in the service of one unwavering aim.

Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same  
Year after year, through all the silent night  
Burns on forevermore that quenchless flame,  
Shines on that inextinguishable light!  
Be mine to guard this light from all eclipse!  
Oh! if our souls but poise and swing  
Like the compass in its brazen ring,  
Ever level and ever true  
To the toil and to the task we have to do,  
We shall sail securely, and safely reach  
The Fortunate Isles, on whose shining beach  
The sights we see, and the sounds we hear,  
Will be those of joy and not of fear!

This was the secret of the great Apostle's success. "This one thing I do," he said in Phil. 3:13-14. May we, too, keep everlastingly employed in the attainment of this "one thing" with that same unwavering aim, and we shall obtain it. ●●

# The Pre-Existence of Christ

## FACT or FABLE?

THE pre-existence of Christ is a major doctrine of Fundamental religion accepted by nearly all Christendom. Christ is assumed to be one member of an eternal Godhead trinity, co-equal, coexistent and coeternal with the Father. Hence, His birth of the Virgin Mary was not the beginning of a completely new life but the incarnation of a life already existing, a process by which God took on human form and came to dwell among men.

Were we to take hymnbook for authority for this belief, we would have ample evidence that an eternal Christ came down from heaven to be born of the Virgin Mary. The first verse of the familiar church hymn, "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story" runs:

I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
How He left His home in glory  
For the cross of Calvary.

Or were we to rely on the confessions of faith of the various denominational churches, we again would find ample evidence. A popular statement of faith reads something like this: "I believe in: the verbal inspiration and authority of the Bible in its original writings; the eternal trinity of the Godhead; the eternal deity, the virgin birth and vicarious death of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; the personality and deity of the HOLY SPIRIT..."

If the God of heaven decreed such doctrines to be the truth, erring man has no right to interpose objection. But our question is this: Is it of God? Is it Biblical? Is it a doctrine which has come to us from the God of heaven or from the reasonings and teachings of men?

Nominal Christianity with its accretions of absurd, unscientific, unreasonable and cruel dogma, its meaningless and mechanical forms, its endless divisions and janglings, cannot be the religion of Jesus, the apostles and prophets. In the words of a noted historian, "Christianity... is a river into which have flowed tributaries from every side,

from oriental religions, from Greek, Roman, Celtic, Teutonic, Slav, and probably pre-Aryan, mingling their waters so that it is often hard to discover their faraway springs."

### How Are We to Determine Truth?

The Bible contains numerous statements which are more than straws to show which way the wind blows. They are vivid direction-signs set to direct us away from error and into truth.

First: *Truth is never possessed by the masses;* multitudes are not found in the right way. Jesus said: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." And again: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7: 13-14, 22-23).

The "woman" of Revelation 17, seated upon the scarlet beast, "having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication," had been so successful in her activities that of her it was said: "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Her cup being "full of abominations," anything that poured forth from it was polluted and inebriating.

The forecast in II Timothy 4 is another direction-sign that points us away from the teachings of the masses. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The prophet Jeremiah, looking far ahead to the time when God will take a hand in the affairs of men, forecast the following: "The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall



say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. 16:19). If all the churches, or even *most* of them, have in their possession the truths of the Bible, why should it be said that the "Gentiles shall come . . . from the ends of the earth" (this depicts a large number and a general condition), and admit, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit"?

Second: *Adherents to the true teaching of the Bible are in the minority.* Jesus foretold that the condition of the religious world at His coming would be similar to that in the days of Noah and of Lot. Only Noah, the preacher of righteousness, his wife, their three sons and their wives, believed God's Word that a destructive flood should visit the earth, and so saved their lives.

Multitudes are no mark  
That you will right be found;  
But eight were saved in ark,  
While many thousands drowned.

Only Lot and his two daughters believed God and thus escaped the holocaust that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, cities of the plain. The few were right; the many, wrong.

During Jesus' ministry the side of truth and right was the minority side. Jesus was opposed by the whole body of priestcraft, yet He was right and they were wrong.

Moses witnessed that God's people were the "fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:6-7). Isaiah the prophet foretold that when the glory of the Lord arises in the last days, darkness will be covering the earth, and gross darkness the people (Isa. 60:2). The apostle Peter foretold that in the Day when the Day Star arises the saving knowledge would be as a light shining in a dark place.

The lesson is inescapable. The true religion will not be in the possession of a large proportion of mankind.

Third: *The wise and prudent of the world do not possess the saving knowledge.* Paul was specific: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26-27). There are many intelligent and educated men among the ministers of the churches. In fact, among the denominational ministry and the priesthood of the Catholic Church may be found some of the best educated men of the land. However, that is no proof that they are right, but quite the reverse.

The apostle Paul was an educated man, taught in the wisdom of the Greeks, as well as having been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an excellent teacher of the Pharisees; yet that was not the wisdom that he bore to the people to whom he

preached. Said Paul of himself: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, . . . that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:1, 4-5). Hence, any doctrines that are sponsored by the learned men of today should be subject to suspicion. The theory that Christ pre-existed as an eternal part of the Godhead is one of these doctrines.

As a church, we feel compelled to reject the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence. We have two basic reasons for our position:

- 1) The doctrine is not Scriptural.
- 2) The doctrine is not reasonable.

There are a number of Biblical statements which upon surface reading can seem to be construed to support the idea of His pre-existence. Among these are statements from the Old Testament, from the apostles, and from Jesus Himself. (These will be discussed later in detail.)

But there is so much in the Bible to disprove the theory of His pre-existence that that theory cannot be accepted. The difficulty is not a lack of Bible evidence but our lack of understanding. In some cases incorrect translation of the original languages has obscured the meaning. In such cases we should take the general teaching on the subject and find a way to harmonize the minority statements with the majority.

The Bible does not say in so many words that Christ did not exist until born of the Virgin Mary, but there is abundant Scriptural evidence witnessing to His mortal birth.

### Who Is Christ?

Let us first ascertain the general teaching of the Bible regarding Christ's nature. Theology says He was a deity, one member of a Godhead composed of three members, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that He had existed through all eternity past before His birth into the world. Let us compare this teaching with the Bible.

On the afternoon of the day of His resurrection when Jesus expounded to the two disciples on the Emmaus walk the things concerning Himself, He went to the Scriptures: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). And that is the place for us to go—not to Origen, Augustine, Jerome, or any of the "fathers" of darkness, but to the Scriptures.

Who was Jesus Christ? What was His relation to God?

The Bible is specific: "Though he were a Son"

(Heb. 5:8)—Jesus was the Son of God. "Jesus Christ" was "the Son of David," (Matt. 1:1), "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). He was the Son, not an equal personage. "My Father is greater than I" were His own words (John 14:28).

On five occasions it was witnessed that Christ was the Son of God:

God's testimony concerning him: "Thou art my son." God's testimony to Him: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Christ's testimony: "I am the Son of God."

The Centurion's testimony: "Truly this was the Son of God."

Nathanael's testimony: "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Peter's testimony: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

These testimonies contain not the slightest suggestion that Christ was a deity, or any part of God, or that He had pre-existed. Indeed, Christ was the *Son* of God. Jesus repeatedly made this statement. No son could be as old as his father or older than his mother, and Christ's sonship was no different. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). He was made of a woman, and could not have existed before the material from whence He came existed any more than you or I or any other human being could exist before his mother.

The angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that the Son of God should be born of her. In answer to her query as to how that could be, the angel answered: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Notice it says: "born of thee." Born means "to bring forth or into being." Again, there is no suggestion of an incarnation.

The prophet Isaiah foretold the Virgin birth: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). The definition of conceive is, "to become pregnant with young." It is the beginning of a life, not the first step in incarnation or "the union of divinity with humanity." Christ did not already exist, but was to be born of a virgin.

The following verse reveals more of Christ's nature: "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." He did not know all things at the beginning, but had to eat that He might *learn* to refuse the evil

and choose the good. Try to picture a deity, part of the Godhead, who had always existed, having to learn obedience!

The statement in Heb. 5:8-9 confirms the words of Isaiah 7 and adds another fact: He had to be made perfect: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Ponder the incongruity of a God having to be *made* perfect or *learn* obedience by the things which He suffered!

*Jesus Christ was a man, not God.* "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Again we have the testimony of the apostle Paul: "...through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin" (Acts 13:38). Jesus was "found in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2:8).

Moses foretold that Christ would be raised up from among His brethren: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). This Prophet did not exist in the days of Moses but was to be *raised up*. If He were part of a deity to be sent down from heaven, Moses should not have said He would be *raised up*.

In a post-Pentecost statement (Acts 3:22), Peter quoted Moses' words to buttress Jesus' claim to the Messiahship. And in verse 26 he added: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you..." He raised up His Son Jesus, not sent Him down from heaven. Note also that He was raised up *from among His brethren*, not from among the heavenly hosts.

It was also prophesied that Christ should be of the lineage of David. Speaking to King David, Samuel said: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, ... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Sam. 7:12-13). The seed was not in existence then, but Samuel foretold it would be after David slept with his fathers.

Another statement revealing Christ's nature is found in Hebrews 2: Jesus was made lower than the angels. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor. ... But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." He was *lower than the angels*, hence could not have been part of an eternal Godhead.

Christ was made *like His brethren*: "Wherefore  
(Continued on page 22)

# EXTRAORDINARY!

*"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*  
Acts 2:1-4.

**F**EW days in the history of the world began more solemnly and triumphed more gloriously than this day of Pentecost. Extraordinary beyond the limits of our experience, it was the day when bewildered apostles, tried almost to the limit of their faith, tarried in Jerusalem to receive "power from on high." The promise was fulfilled—Jesus, glorified at His Father's right hand, sent forth a special power to give impetus and confirmation to the promises He had entrusted to His followers.

It all began with tremendous excitement. The event is related in twelve short verses in the book of Acts, but its significance reaches far, far down into the future, even to that which "shall come to pass in the last days," when the Holy Spirit shall be restored.

Are we lulled to slumber by the monotony of what we call ordinary? We should realize that every day of life is a gift from God, and that nothing that comes from God is ordinary. What did the eleven apostles have in the way of equipment that was *extraordinary* that day when they stood gazing up into the heavens as their Lord and Master ascended? Nothing that could be measured or weighed or counted. The vested interests of Roman Law, Greek philosophy, and Hebrew ritual were formidable obstacles indeed. Their dynamic lay not in the things which men call outstanding. The secret of their confidence was hope; the assuring words of Jesus kept ringing in their ears: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." And on the day of Pentecost, just ten days later, this hope was realized. Theirs became a power which toppled kings from their thrones and struck fear into the heart of pagan Caesar. All they had was the power of God, but that was enough. Extraordinary!

The early Church of the apostles did begin in an extraordinary manner; but that is all in the past; it is recorded history. What about today? Is

there nothing extraordinary about *today*?

Christianity has been criticized severely at this point. Critics say that we look *back* to the glorious time—the age of miracles, the time when God spoke in thunder and lightning and through gleaming white angels; when He parted the Red Sea; scorched the peaks of Carmel; destroyed the Assyrian armies; rolled away the great stone from the tomb of Jesus and brought Him triumphant from the dead; when He turned the world upside down with the apostolic preaching.

But all this is only half the story—and the small half, indeed. We are looking *forward*—forward to the culmination of all that has gone before, the Day when the heavens shall split and down the golden way shall travel the King in the greatness of His strength, His face shining as the sun, His eyes like a flame of fire, His voice like the thundering of many waters, and attended by a splendid retinue of shining seraphim, brilliant bands of celestial hosts crowding the skies as they escort the immortal Conqueror, the eternal King, the Prince of Peace. We are looking ahead to the Day when the earth shall erupt and the dead in Christ shall rise; when the saints shall receive the radiant crown of immortality and the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously! Extraordinary? Yes! A thousand times YES!

Pentecost reminds us that God can intervene in human affairs—suddenly, mightily, strikingly, with all the vigor of divine omnipotence—when the time is right. He can and—HE WILL! Extraordinary? The day is coming that shall see and triumph in the renewing of that power from on high a thousandfold!

Let it be our part now to permit the full power of the gospel of God to penetrate and direct our lives that we may be extraordinarily prepared when dawns that Great Day of God Almighty. ●●

# Timely Topics

**"B**UT YOU must realize that in the last days the times will be full of danger. Men will become utterly self-centered, greedy for money, full of big words. They will be proud and contemptuous, without any regard for what their parents taught them. They will be utterly lacking in gratitude, purity and normal human affections. They will be men of unscrupulous speech and have no control of themselves. They will be passionate and unprincipled, treacherous, self-willed and conceited, loving all the time what gives them pleasure instead of loving God. They will maintain a facade of 'religion,' but their conduct will deny its validity" (II Tim. 3:1-5, Phillips).

**In the Last Days** What an apt description of the very time in which we are now living! The fulfillment of this prophecy right before our eyes is ample proof that we are indeed living in the "last days." One day's reading of the news should be enough to convince anyone that these are indeed dangerous times.

So many people are all taken up with themselves, trying to get what they can out of this life, and at the same time not caring what anyone else gets out of it. They seem to be reaching a point at which they no longer care about one another; instead, each is out to please self.

A breakdown of the virtue known as honesty is very apparent in our society. Businesses are greedy for money and try to deceive the public as much as possible. Products and services are falsely represented. There is great striving for material gain.

The home has broken down and the family is no longer a close unit. Parents have not disciplined or demanded obedience and respect from their children, and in turn the present generation of youth shows the results. Young people, even small children, have no respect for parents or other authority. They are left floundering, with no sure foundation on which to stand, no code by which to live.

Pleasure of all sorts seems to be the rule of the day. Principles or morals which remain in the

world as a whole are low indeed. This is evidenced by a seeking after things which gratify the flesh—cheap amusements, movies, radio, television, alcohol, drugs, with an overemphasis on sex. And these things are not confined to the young only. Truly, this present age is a modern-day Sodom.

All the evils of these times are carried on with hardly a thought of God. Many people are no longer grateful to an Eternal Creator for the gift of life and all its blessings. There are millions of churches, some humble and small, some great and beautifully designed, but too often they lead mankind astray. People "maintain a facade of 'religion,' but their conduct" denies "its validity." Instead of the church upbuilding the world, the world has brought the church down to its level.

Down through the ages the words of the apostle Paul speak to every striving Christian: "You must keep clear of people like this. Don't link up with unbelievers and try to work with them. What common interest can there be between goodness and evil? How can light and darkness share life together? How can there be harmony between Christ and the devil? What can a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What common ground can idols hold with the temple of God? For we, remember, are ourselves living temples of the living God, as God has said:

I will dwell in them and walk in them:  
And I will be their God, and they shall be  
my people.  
Wherefore  
Come ye out from among them  
and be ye separate, saith the Lord,  
And touch no unclean thing;  
And I will receive you,  
And will be to you a Father,  
And ye shall be to me sons and daughters,  
Saith the Lord Almighty.

With these promises ringing in our ears, dear friends, let us keep clear of anything that smirches body or soul. Let us prove our reverence for God by consecrating ourselves to him completely" (II Tim. 3:5; II Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1, Phillips).

Let us remember that these days will not always be. Someday "all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." With such a grand future to look forward to, let us rise high above all the low and degrading elements of the world. As we see it growing worse, let us get better and still better, so that when these "last days" come to an end we will be worthy of continuing life in the new world so rapidly approaching. ●●

# In the Chambers of Imagery

THERE is a valuable spiritual lesson in a rather unfamiliar passage of Scripture found in Ezekiel 8: "... Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?" (v. 12). By "chambers of imagery" we understand chambers or rooms painted throughout with images, as Ezekiel saw.

No phrase could better describe the human mind and memory. Memory is one of the most remarkable powers provided us by a considerate Creator. When asked to furnish information about something experienced at some former time, memory not only paints a picture but stands there ready to explain the picture in detail. In this way memory can do much good—also much harm.

Let us beware of retiring into the chamber of our impure imagination, to revel in the pictures it presents. These are among the "imaginings" which must be "cast down," along with every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (II Cor. 10:4-5). Such a feat can be accomplished only by bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of the law of God. We should beware, too, of everything that tends to defile the imagination: impure actions, impure companionship, impure literature. We should be supercautious of what we read. An impure thought, once implanted in the mind, may flash its image repeatedly upon the walls of the chambers of our imagery. It may have taken only a few seconds to implant that thought in our mind, but once fastened, it may remain to plague us through many years of prayerful effort to eradicate it.

We should cherish a love of what is truly beautiful and good. Let us live purely, and we will people our imagination with scenes of purity. Above all, let us cherish a sense of the presence of God, the Holy One.

There are other pictures to be seen in the chambers of our imagery which are harmful to the spirit man. A fine and superior appearing person is pictured who has just driven a shrewd bargain, or gotten the best of an opponent in an argument. Such pictures, of course, always bear our own image. Here is the picture of a man all aglow with delight, admiring a fine piece of work just completed, in fact, one of the finest pieces of work ever performed. Oh yes, your guess is correct—it is

yourself. Heedless of the command to every one of us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, we do the very opposite. In place of letting another praise us, we want to praise ourselves.

Yes, and forgetting that there is "no unrighteousness with God," and that He will not forget "our labor of love," we see the picture of a man who is not appreciated, of one who doesn't get just credit for the good deeds he has done. Again we see the picture of a man who is misunderstood, whose motives are wrongly evaluated. Failing to count our blessings, we see the picture of a man who is deprived of many things that others can have, and we succumb to destructive self-pity.

However, the pictures in our chambers of imagery need not necessarily be evil or destructive. It is possible and helpful to picture oneself as an advanced "new creature," even if that spiritual status is not yet achieved. What we love, what we fervently desire, what we think about, we are photographing, painting on the walls of our mental chambers of imagery. If we think on that which is "true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, and of good report," we tend to become like our thoughts.

A godly woman whose life was greatly influenced by God's truth once wrote: "A noble and godlike character is not a thing of favor; it is the natural result of continued effort in right-thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with godlike thoughts. ... He who lives constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts, who dwells upon all that is pure and unselfish, will, as surely as the sun reaches its zenith and the moon its full, become wise, noble and godlike in character, and in the future shall rise to the heights of immortality, being made 'equal unto the angels, neither can [he] die any more.' "

Oliver Wendell Holmes once told of a bookcase in his residence which, having stood long in one place, was finally removed. There upon the wall was an exact image of the whole and many of its portions. But in the midst of this picture was another, the outline of a map which had hung upon the wall before the bookcase was placed there. He said: "We had all forgotten everything about the map until we saw its photograph on the wall." How disconcerting if, someday when standing



before the great Tribunal, when the framework of life is pulled away before the wall of infinity, a sin which we have carefully concealed during our lifetime—even tried to forget was a sin—stands self-recorded, and brings an unfavorable verdict from the Judge.

This need not be our fate, for no matter how vividly some form of wrongdoing may have left its imprint on our character, if we heartily repent and completely reform, not the slightest trace of the outline of that sin will be seen by the Judge at the great Tribunal. The comforting promise is:

"If the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, . . . none of his sins which he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

How great is God's mercy and how much we need that mercy! Whatever we have done in the past, from this time forth let us guard more carefully our thoughts, that our chambers of imagery may reveal only such pictures as are fit for Jesus and the holy angels to look upon. ●●

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## *Spiritual Lessons from*

## *Bible Trees*

PALESTINE was a land of many trees. Frequently the Biblical writer referred to trees as a significant part of the setting. It was in a forest that David found honey to eat after he and his armor-bearer had led in the defeat of the Philistines. The prophet Micah closes his prophetic book with this pictorial prayer: "Shepherd thy people with thy staff, the flock of thy inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest" (Mic. 7:14, RSV). When David was fleeing before the jealous Saul, he "abode in the wilderness in strong holds, . . . in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God" (I Sam. 23:14-16). Ezekiel, prophetically picturing the peace and safety God's chosen shall enjoy, says, "And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezek. 34:25).

We who enjoy nature may wish we had more information about these forests, but we must remember that the Bible is not a textbook in botany. It was not intended to be. The Bible is the revelation of God's plan to eventually fill this earth with His glory. This being true, the fact that the Bible writers mentioned specific trees on occasion has special significance.

In a few places a certain tree is mentioned as part of a historical incident. This, of course, gives built-in evidence that the story is authentic and not just a piece of fiction. For example: "The men of Dedan were thy merchants; . . . they brought thee



for a present horns of ivory and ebony" (Ezekiel 27:15). Ebony is a dark, heavy, expensive wood. It grew in that area. It could well have been used as a medium of exchange in that part of the world.

There are certain names assigned to trees of Palestine which we today may confuse with trees familiar to us. The sycamine tree of Luke 17:5-6 was in reality a mulberry tree, and the "sycomore" of Luke 19:4 was related to our fig tree. The "chestnut" of Ezekiel 31:8 was a plane tree and somewhat similar to our sycamore.

Incidentally, our willows are similar to those of Bible times. The scientific name of our weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) is even reminiscent of the time when the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon. They could not sing; they merely hung their harps on the willow tree and wept when they remembered Zion.

In several tree texts in Scriptures, a definite spiritual lesson is intended. For example, David's opening psalm. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. . . . He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:1-3). Here we have a tree—perhaps a willow or a poplar—growing luxuriantly on the bank of a stream with its rootlets and root hairs constantly bathed by life-promoting water. The vascular tubes carry this to the leaves of even the topmost branches, and though neighboring fields may be parched by summer heat, the tree remains green and produces its flowers and fruit in regular sequence.

What a picture of a man who keeps his trust in the great inexhaustible supply of divine faith! He has the abundant life. His face is radiant with spiritual health because he draws spiritual nourishment day and night from the river of God's truth. His example to his fellowmen is one of outstanding faith and hope. And this is true even when there is a deplorable dearth of spirituality around him, when men are groping about in darkness, with nothing in this evil world to satisfy.

Some trees of the Bible are known for their aromatic qualities. Nearly all these grow under desert or semidesert conditions. Although we today use perfume obtained from flowers, Israel used aromatic wood, bark and spices.

Among the trees used for this purpose was al-mug, a tree similar to our junipers or red cedars. Almug, with pealike blossoms and a wood so antiseptic that insects cannot bore into it; also lign aloes, of which the fragrance is found in the heartwood; cinnamon, the sweet smell of which was

likened to the wisdom of God; balm of Gilead, which produces a gum or resin in its bark which led to Jeremiah's exclamation, "Is there no balm in Gilead?"

And there were yet others; Cassia, the bark of which resembles cinnamon but is less delicate in perfume. Frankincense, which was brought to Palestine at great expense from the Himalayas, and which was given to Mary's child by the Wise Men. Myrrh, which Nicodemus brought with him when he and Joseph of Arimathea carefully prepared the body of Jesus for burial. Thyine, a slow-growing tree similar to our juniper, the indestructible wood of which was sometimes burned as incense.

Appropriately, the Temple at Jerusalem was made pleasant not only by incense but also by the fragrant lumber from some of these trees. It helped Israel to appreciate their place of worship, so they might say, "How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longs, yea faints for the courts of the Lord."

There is a different lesson for us from the bay tree: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not." This tree may be several years old, have a trunk six inches in diameter, and yet not be very tall because it "spreads itself" almost like a vine on the ground. Growing in its own soil, it is symbolic of the wicked and of those whose self-importance keeps them from giving all to God.

Among the trees specifically mentioned in the Bible are the magnificent cedars of Lebanon. This beautiful evergreen may grow to a height of 120 feet with a girth of forty feet. It produces a cone that takes three years to mature. The lumber from these trees has been so useful that only a remnant of great forests remains today. Solomon's temple was roofed with cedar from Lebanon. After this temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the new temple built on the same spot was roofed with the same type of wood.

Cedars of Lebanon are said to produce a gum or balsam which makes the wood so fragrant that "to walk in a grove of cedars is a delight." How symbolic is this of the spiritual church of God, composed of people instead of wood and stone—people whose lives are the timbers which "are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." These members of His body will have such fragrant lives that it will be a delight to be among them, and their prayers will ascend as sweet incense to the throne of God. Of each it shall be said, "He grows like a cedar in Lebanon."

The olive tree was so intimately associated with the welfare of Israel that one is reminded of it in

many Bible stories. The olive was known as the "tree full of fatness." With knotty, gnarled limbs, it has rugged beauty. The yellow four-parted flowers may be followed by enough fruit from one tree to produce a half-ton of oil each year. This oil was used for food, as fuel for lamps, and in the ritual of anointing men to sacred office. Jesus spent His last night before His crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane, which, translated literally means, "garden with the olive press."

Because of the regard that Jewish people held for the olive tree, they spoke with deep affection of its representing God's chosen people. "The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit," wrote the prophet Jeremiah (11:16). With the same feeling the apostle Paul indicated that Gentiles could become part of the chosen company in the following allegory: "If some of the

branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and the fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches..." (Rom. 11:17-18).

Most sublime among Biblical pictures of the olive tree is its use in symbolism in Zechariah's vision, in which two olive trees are represented as pouring oil out of themselves into the bowl of the candlesticks. From this source the lamps of the sanctuary burned continuously. So those human representatives of the Living God dispense to others divine light and understanding, by being themselves channels for the oil of God's truth and law. Each of us may be one of these channels through which the golden oil of God may flow to others. ●●

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## Steadfast

## or Wavering?

**WE** OUGHT to stop more often and consider. Are we steadfast, or wavering?

Steadfastness is a Christian grace all of us need to cultivate, steadfastness in the things of God and His Word. After his sublime affirmation of the resurrection hope, the apostle Paul concluded with a great "therefore" of persuasion: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). He repeated the same assurance when he wrote to the Romans, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Again and again in the Word of God we read admonitions to steadfastness: "Wait on the Lord." Yet we find it so difficult to obey, because we feel we must put our hands out to steady the ark. God's words through Isaiah still apply: "In returning and rest ye shall be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). Or again we hear Isaiah saying, "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable" (Isa. 40:28, RSV). Or we hear David singing, "He that keepeth Israel

shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). God is steadfast—are we?

Adversity is a God-sent discipline sent not to vex but to strengthen Christians. Fainting in the day of adversity comes from wavering faith, from looking at the problems instead of looking at the Lord of those problems; from looking at the waves, and not to the Lord of the waves. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10, RSV).

God has not seen fit to place us in a sinless Eden. We live in a dying world where sin abounds and where sinners are more and more brazen and perverse. Our Lord said such a time would come, and for it He expects faith and endurance.

Perhaps we feel faint when we see evil men and evil forces prospering; this results from faith that needs strengthening and a mind that needs stabilizing in God. Wrote King David, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (Ps. 37:1-2). In this same psalm he advises the most effective cures for such wavering fretfulness: "Trust in the Lord, ... Delight thyself also in the Lord, ... Commit thy way unto the

Lord, . . . Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, . . . Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. . . . Depart from evil, and do good. . . . Wait on the Lord, and keep his way." All these admonitions are designed and recorded to bolster our faith, to remind us that God is sovereign, and to chide us to patient endurance.

Perhaps we waver because we forget the object of our faith. At such times we should remember Jesus who endured in prospect of the joy before Him (Heb. 12:2).

Again, there is the temptation to evaluate our problems in the light of our own unfortified strength and capability. When this happens, the heart grows faint and the knees weak. If we keep ourselves built up in our most holy faith, God will measure our trials to meet our endurance (I Cor. 10:13).

Again there is the temptation to blame God for our problems, rather than to recognize them as tokens of His loving concern, special blessings for the perfecting of our faith.

We are engaged in a spiritual battle against the forces of evil. For "the weapons we wield are not merely human, but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that

rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

Because we are engaged in warfare, we must expect battle fatigue (discouragement) and shell shock (wavering faith)—unless we fight the battle on the Lord's terms, protected by His armor, by the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small"—this is a warning to us to stay close to the One in whom we believe, who supplies the weapons and the strength necessary for the daily battles in which we are always engaged.

The pessimism that would overwhelm us when our faith wavers in the face of difficulties is exceedingly dangerous. It produces brooding, fear, and stifles the initiative God would have us exert. It breeds an attitude of defeat, a "what's-the-use?" philosophy of life. It forces us to admit, at least secretly to ourselves, that the flesh is stronger than the spirit, that the evils of our nature are too strong to be overcome. Let us keep ourselves armed with mental weapons that will defeat any such thought before it defeats us.

Wavering comes from a loss of confidence. Many a battle has been lost because the soldiers lost confidence in their leaders. In the battle of life, a Christian should never lose confidence in the One who has called him to be a soldier, for his hope is firmly fixed in the certainties of eternity.

"In this confidence, let us hold on to the hope that we profess without the slightest hesitation—for he is utterly dependable" (Hebrews 10:23, Phillips). Thus when we faint in the day of adversity, when we waver in faith and in practice, we are denying the faithfulness and the ability of the Lord who has promised to be with us when we stay with Him.

Steadfastness is one of the fruits of faithfulness, and faithfulness is grounded in our assurance that God is faithful and that He is willing and able to do all that He has promised. For this reason, writes the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, "Don't throw away your trust now—it carries with it a rich reward in the world to come. Patient endurance is what you need if, after doing God's will, you are to receive what is promised. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. Surely we are not going to be men who cower back and are lost, but men who maintain their faith until the salvation of their souls is complete" (Heb. 10:36-39, Phillips).

Need anything more be said? ●●

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# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## The Trinity

**L**AST MONTH we began our study of the Trinity by reviewing the origin and history of the belief. We learned that it came not from the Holy Scriptures, but rather from the pagans who antedated Christianity by many years. Ecclesiastical history gives ample proof of the origin of the dogma. And the fact that the Trinity was formulated into a church doctrine by the Council of Nicaea, a council convened by and presided over by a man of questionable religious convictions, does not add to its veracity.

To determine whether or not any doctrine is the truth we must resort to one standard: The unerring Word of God. Some admittedly accept tradition as a basis for doctrine, but this practice is condemned by Jesus. Any rule of faith based solely on tradition is only the doctrine of men and is no part of God's Truth.

The accepted doctrine of the Trinity was formulated more than three centuries after Christ. There is no evidence whatever that such a belief existed in the Apostolic Church nor in the Christian Church that grew out of their missionary efforts. The writings of the "Christian fathers" of the early centuries after Christ contain no indication that such a doctrine was in existence.

It is admitted by Trinitarian writers that the "Trinitarian statement" was of gradual growth. Church history also shows that the early church was disturbed by the admixture of heathen philosophy with the doctrines of the Bible. As noted in the previous lesson, many false doctrines had their roots in pagan mythology and Greek philosophy. These doctrines were often the result of attempts to reconcile Christianity with heathen philosophy. Paul witnessed to "the mystery of iniquity" already at work among the believers. He also warned Titus to hold fast to sound doctrine "for there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" teaching other doctrines.

In this issue we will continue the study of the doctrine, following our outline:

### III. Proof According to Theology

#### B. New Testament Proof

### IV. Proof According to the Scriptures

#### A. God is One

The doctrine of the Trinity as established in the fourth century remains today in most church creeds. In the words of one writer, "it has been retained in the creeds of the church from a superstitious regard for antiquity, for the fathers, for the church; for fear of being called singular, from indolence, and from unwillingness to take the pains to investigate."

We are not unwilling to investigate. We have no "superstitious regard" for the words of the church fathers, but contend that one word from God is worth more than all the sayings of men. Hence we go to the Word of God to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is "built on men's thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said" (Col. 2:8, Living Letters).

### III. PROOF ACCORDING TO THEOLOGY

Theology claims that the Bible gives abundant proof of the existence of a Trinity and that those who reject the doctrine "have left unnoticed the many statements implying the Trinity or have twisted the meaning to suit themselves." In our previous study we covered two passages adduced by Trinitarians as proof of the doctrine: Matthew 28:19 and I John 5:7. The text cited from Matthew signifies nothing more than "God the Father, the Creator, the Ruler, the Provider, God the Redeemer and Savior, as manifested through His Son,—God the Sanctifier and Comforter;—that is, the one God in all His fulness, in all the aspects of His character relating to the salvation of men."

And although I John 5:7 is considered by some as a "clear and positive assertion of the doctrine of the Trinity," we cannot accept it as such since it is an accepted fact that it is not found in the oldest and best copies of the original Greek manuscripts. Actually, the spurious words are part of verses 7 and 8. These verses, with the interpolation in brackets, reads: "For there are three that bear



record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost (Spirit); and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one."

The interpolation is certainly at variance with other Scripture and is believed to have been added about the time the formal doctrine of the Trinity was established. The Bible as a whole teaches that God is one and not three, a fact well-stated by Paul: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him" (I Cor. 8:6).

As stated in our previous lesson, the bracketed words above are omitted in most of the newer translations of the Bible and are rejected as spurious by the majority of Bible students. Therefore, this passage offers no proof for the Trinity.

According to the text in the New English translation "there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement." The spirit signifies the Word, God's saving knowledge, not the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us in John 6:63: "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." This is the spirit we have today, the spirit of truth, the Word of God.

The water represents the water of life, signifying that there must be a cleansing accomplished, and the blood signifies the death to sin, being "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), being dead to sin as was Christ (Rom. 6:10-11). **We have these three witnesses: The spirit or Word; the water of life or the cleansing medium; and the example of Jesus' death to sin. These three agree—not as one person, but as one record, the Word of God.**

## B. New Testament Proof Continued

3. **John 1:1, 14.** These verses in our common version of the Bible are among those most often used to prove that Christ existed from the beginning as the second person of the Trinity. The verses in question read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Theologians see in these verses proof that Christ existed at the time of the creation and that He became a man and came to the earth to live. Accepting the translation as literal, they reason that since "the Word was God," and the "Word was made flesh," the "Word" is **Christ and Christ is God**. (If this reasoning were correct, it would prove only a duality, not a trinity.)

Such reasoning is faulty. Other translations shed some light on these verses. Goodspeed translates John 1:1 as follows: "In the beginning the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was divine." The Greek word translated "Word" is **Logos**, which authorities claim should have been left untranslated. Dr. Moffatt leaves **Logos** untranslated in his translation of the Bible since the word has no true equivalent in the English language.

The Greek word **Logos** signifies a word spoken, speech, eloquence, doctrine, reason, or the faculty for reasoning. **Hastings' Encyclopedia** credits the philosopher Philo with establishing the Platonic philosophy that the **Logos** was a person. In Greek philosophy the **Logos** was "the cosmic reason giving order, purpose, and intelligibility to the world." The authors of the Septuagint used it to translate the Hebrew **emer** spoken word of the Deity.

**John 1:1 does not teach that Christ was in existence at the time of the creation. It is God's Word, His Truth that was in the beginning with God, and that Word, being the Word of God was divine.**

John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh," again uses the Greek word **Logos** and is likewise left untranslated in the Moffatt Bible. **Jesus was the personification of the Word and He dwelt among men.** He did His Father's will so completely that He could say "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). He spoke only the words received of His Father: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). He exemplified the Word of God in every word and act of His life: He was the Word in action. There is nothing in these verses to indicate that He was coequal or co-eternal with His Father. Jesus Himself stated unequivocally: "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). We cannot deny His word, else we deny Him.

4. **II Corinthians 13:14.** This verse, often spoken of as the "Apostolic Benediction," is also given as proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. The text reads: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], be with you all." Just why this text should be singled out as the "Apostolic Benediction" is not clear, for no other apostle than Paul used this phraseology, and he but once. All other benedictions used omit any reference to the so-called "trine formula." Paul's most common salutation was, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." If such a doctrine as the Trinity had been known in Apostolic times, it would be indeed

strange that it should appear but once in the many benedictions in the New Testament. **The use of the three names here in no way proves a triune God.** Two or more names or titles of God are frequently used in succession in the Scriptures with no intent to indicate a plurality of Gods.

5. **Luke 3:22.** This verse is likewise said to be proof of the existence of three distinct persons. The verse reads: "And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

This phenomena occurred at Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. The occasion marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The Holy Spirit power was necessary to the success of His ministry and His heavenly Father chose to send it upon Him with the appearance of a dove that the assembled people might recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The voice from heaven is that of the Father's messenger assuring those who stood by and us that Jesus is truly the Son of God. According to one source, the words, "Thou art my beloved Son," could have been translated, "Thou art my **only** Son," since Greek Biblical language uses a word with two meanings, "beloved," and "only."

The incident must have caused the Jews to think about the meaning of this manifestation, but we can be equally certain that they saw nothing of the Trinity in the act; and we are confident no such teaching was intended.

6. **John 16:13-15.** These verses also supposedly prove the Trinity. Granted, the verses make mention of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son—but where is any mention of the three being one, or coequal or coeternal?

These verses form part of Jesus' long discourse to His disciples the night preceding His crucifixion. He was informing them concerning the Holy Spirit which they would receive after His ascension and glorification. It is evident from the context that the disciples did not understand all that was about to happen, for they did not have foreknowledge of it as did Jesus. **The Holy Spirit was a power, not a person, and no part of a Trinity.** After Jesus' ascension, the disciples were given the Holy Spirit, and by it they were able to recall and record the teachings of Jesus as well as to perform many miracles while teaching the Gospel.

7. **Luke 4:8.** In this text we find Jesus' words to the tempter: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Trinitarians use this verse to prove the Deity of Christ: God only is to be worshiped, and since Je-

sus was worshiped (Luke 24:52), then Jesus must be God. This reasoning is incorrect. Jesus worshiped no one other than His Father, for only His Father was greater than He.

During the course of His ministry, Jesus said, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." And in His last sermon to His disciples, He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 3:35; 16:23-24). **After the Father had given Him authority, it was quite proper that He should be worshiped, but that does not make Him God, or put Him in the place of God, or prove that He is any part of a Trinity.**

Jesus repeatedly identified Himself as the Son of God, addressing God as His Father. He prayed that His followers "might know thee [the Father] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). **If the Father is the only true God, there is no place for a second or third divine personage.**

8. **Ephesians 4:4-6.** These verses plainly state that there is but one God, one Lord [Jesus Christ], and one spirit [the Holy Spirit], yet supporters see in them a Trinity of the three. The verses in question read: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all..."

Contrary to the claim of the Trinitarians, these verses can in no way be said to ascribe deity to all three personages. The verses also mention one body (the church), one faith, and one baptism. All were essential elements in the Apostolic Church.

Paul was exhorting the Ephesian brethren to be of one mind in the faith, and to realize how privileged they were to have been called to such a glorious calling. Certainly he was not teaching the Trinity nor attempting to prove the Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The three supposed parts of the Trinity do not even appear together in the verses in question! **Attempting to prove a tri-unity of one God in these verses is a case of men reading into the Scripture something that is not there.**

Other New Testament Scriptures used to support the doctrine are too numerous to cover here in detail. The meaning of some of them may be obscure, but **we are confident that there is not a single verse in the Scriptures that supports the theory of a plurality of divine persons: that Jesus, His Father and the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal. On the contrary, the Bible teaches the absolute oneness of God.**

#### IV. PROOF ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the preceding section we have covered verses of Scripture commonly accepted as proof of the existence of the Trinity. Theology makes the claim that the "same Bible that says there is but one God, continually implies, side by side with statements of the unity of the Godhead, that there are three Persons in the one Godhead. Certainly the writers could not contradict themselves in so glaring a manner."\*

The writer continues: "But does the fact that there is but one God have anything to do with the manner of existence of that one God? May not God be one as to essence and three as to persons?"\*

**We are confident that the Bible does not contradict itself, that it can be established from the Word of God that there is but ONE GOD, that He is indivisible, that He exists as but one Person, not three. We believe the Bible is so plain on the subject that men of ordinary intelligence can comprehend the teaching and that we are not asked to believe in anything so puzzling as a God who is "one as to essence and three as to persons."**

##### A. God IS One

All Christian churches, whatever their denomination, profess to agree in the belief that there is but one God. And at the same time, they adamantly contend for the doctrine of the Trinity. A statement in the manual of one of the leading Protestant churches reads thus: "There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, but in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost."

The statement contradicts itself, yet it is purported to be a "fundamental doctrine for everyone who pretends to accept the Bible." That the doctrine is not stated in the Scriptures, but at best only implied does not seem to faze its supporters.

Shall we believe God and the Bible or theology and tradition?

We have to this point studied mainly what theology declares to be the doctrine of the Trinity. We will now go to the Bible for proof that the God who lived in Moses' day is just the same today: ONE GOD.

**1. Old Testament Proof. The Old Testament teaches categorically that there is but one God, that He is without equal and without rivals.**

This is in accord with reason; it is unreasonable to suppose two First Causes. The Scriptures state that God is One; we cannot say "God is Three."

**a. God's Word Through Moses.** "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord"; "The Lord he is God; there is none else beside him"; "The Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else"; "The Lord thy God is a jealous God among you" (Deut. 6:4; 4:35, 39; 6:15).

**b. God's Word Through Isaiah.** "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God... Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any"; "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:... that they may know... that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else"; "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it;... I am the Lord; and there is none else... I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right... They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save... There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 18, 22).

**To be a messenger you must know the message.**

#### TEST YOURSELF

1. Why may we not rely on I John 5:7 as proven foundation for a belief in the trinity?

2. Quote two verses that prove that God is **one** God, not three.

3. Who or what is the Logos of John 1:1? What was Christ's part in the creation of this physical earth?

4. Prove from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is not a third **person** of the Godhead.

5. Why is the so-called "Apostolic Benediction" no proof of the existence of a trinity?

6. Did Jesus administer with God's authority because He is God?

7. What was Isaiah's position concerning the oneness or the trinity of God?

*Reprints of these studies are available upon request.*

\* Brooks, Keith L.; *The Trinity, Must We Believe It?*

# THE SABBATH

WHEN WAS IT GIVEN?  
TO WHOM WAS IT GIVEN?  
WHY WAS IT GIVEN?  
WAS IT TO LAST FOREVER?  
IF NOT, WHEN WAS IT TO CEASE?  
WHAT LAW ARE WE NOW UNDER?

The Adventists contend that the first "recognition of the observance of Sunday as a legal duty" was a constitution of Constantine in 321 A. D. This statement is factual. But was this action the first change in Sabbath law?

In other words, was Constantine's action in legalizing worship on Sunday the law which *started* Christians worshipping on the first day rather than on the seventh?

Who withdrew the law that we must observe the Sabbath? It was not the pope, and not Constantine, but *Jesus Christ* Himself. The law of the Sabbath, as we have seen, was part of the law of Moses, and ceased with it.

Historical evidence shows that the first day of the week was being recognized long before the time of Constantine. Let us review the subject briefly.

## The Sabbath and the New Testament Church

What did the early Christians do? Did they observe the Sabbath, or the first day, or what?

Biblical references to the subject are few and indefinite:

1. After the resurrection of Jesus, the eleven were "gathered together," and it was the first day of the week: "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:33-34).

2. One week later, the disciples were again gathered together; this would have been the eighth day: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you" (John 20:26).

3. The day of Pentecost falls on the first day of the week, being the "morrow after the seventh

sabbath" (Lev. 23:15-16), and on this day "they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

4. The disciples gathered to "break bread" on the first day of the week: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7).

5. The church at Corinth met to take up an offering for needy saints on the first day of the week: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Cor. 16:1-2).

These are the only references to the "first day" of the week in the New Testament. They do not call the "first day" the Sabbath (it isn't) and they do not say we must observe it, or that it was observed. But they do suggest that the day was set aside.

Revelation 1:10 is quoted to support worship on the "Lord's day," as though the Revelator here referred to Sunday. However, the meaning of the text is far deeper. In the Bible, the terms "day of Christ" and "day of the Lord" are synonymous, referring to the time of Christ's return to earth. In other words, John was caught up in vision and beheld what will happen at the day of Christ's coming (see Rev. 1:1, 19). The Lord's day is the Day when God's long silence is broken and man's period of freedom to mismanage his own affairs is terminated by the coming of Christ. The significance of the "Lord's day" in this verse is far deeper than the mention of a mere day of the week.

There is no commandment in the New Testament that we should observe the first day of the week, nor is there any command to keep the seventh. Let us repeat: the strict observance of the Jewish

Sabbath was withdrawn with the rest of that law which was "written and engraven in stones." Consequently, references to the importance of the Sabbath commandment in New Testament times are conspicuously lacking. One historian tells us that we may "conclude from this silence that it was also demonstrably plain to Christians that the sabbath commandment could no longer be binding on them in the Jewish manner: otherwise they would certainly have unhesitatingly reproduced it."\*

## THE SABBATH AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Did the early Church keep the Sabbath, or the first day, or what?

Understandingly, the faith and zeal of the early Christians centered around Christ. His ministry, the example of His life, the power of His teaching, and the triumph of His resurrection were all so vivid in the minds of the primitive Church that all aspects of their religion centered around Him. Life for them could never be the same again. One could not talk about the Sabbath without at the same time mentioning the greater, future Sabbath, or meet with the Jews on the Sabbath without at the same time being conscious of Christ's own attitude toward the old law.

### Some Kept the Sabbath

Very likely, observance of a day of rest and worship varied throughout the Christian churches. Jesus having abolished the law of Moses, customs for a day of worship could be governed largely by circumstance and convenience.

Apparently some found it advantageous to keep the Sabbath of the Jews—however, not as Jews observing the old law but as Christians following the example of Christ.

What were their motives for resting on the Jewish Sabbath?

We quote from a current historian: "In the early centuries of the Church's history down to the time of the Emperor Constantine it would in any case not have been practicable for Christians to observe Sunday as a day of rest, on which they were obliged, for the sake of principle, to abstain from work. The reason for this was simply that no one in the entire Roman Empire, neither Jews, nor Greeks, nor Romans, stopped work on Sunday. The Christians, who for a long time belonged principally to the lower strata of society and in particular to the slave class, could not observe a

day of rest which recurred after every six days, in addition to observing the official days of rest; their economic and social circumstances would never have permitted this. There was the further consideration that, by observing Sunday as a day of rest, they would have publicly acknowledged that they were Christians, and until the time of the Emperor Constantine this would have placed them in peril of their lives first among the Jews and then, above all, among Gentiles. Whenever we study the first three centuries of Christian history, we have constantly to bear in mind that Christianity was a proscribed religion. . . . Whoever remained steadfast at his trial and did not deny his faith had to reckon with the prospect of death. . . . In such a situation it would have been suicidal for Christians to have observed Sunday as a day of rest and so to have announced to all and sundry that they were Christians."\*

However, we must remember that these early Christians were observing the seventh day not because of a law given to Israel in the Decalog but because of the divine principle of one rest day out of seven. To them the seventh day in itself was no holier than the first, or the third, or any other day. Christ had abolished the law of the Sabbath.

Some members of the primitive church in Jerusalem may have had still other motives for apparent compliance with the Jewish Sabbath. "It could well be that in some matter the Christians conformed only in their outward observance in order not to cause necessary offence, which would endanger their whole missionary work; this work was much more important for them than these questions of detail. It could even be that for this reason they did originally observe the religious customs and usages of their own people, although they felt themselves inwardly liberated from them [the Jews]. May not Matt. 17:24-27 be an example of this? The children of God have, properly speaking, no temple tax to pay; yet they may pay it in order to avoid giving offence. This became almost a rule of thumb for Paul in his missionary activity. He aimed at being 'all things to all men' so that he might gain some (I Cor. 9:19-23; 10:33). He circumcised Timothy on account of the Jews (Acts 16:3)."<sup>†</sup>

(Continued Next Issue.)

\* Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 107, 154ff.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 123.

*Man needs divine help most in the conflict he has with himself.*



# Bible A B C's



**C** IS for Cain.

Cain was the oldest son of Adam and Eve. He had a younger brother named Abel. These boys grew up together, but there was a big difference between them.

Abel learned to love God and keep His commandments, but Cain did not really love God. Cain wanted his own way, and he grew up to be a very wicked young man.

When these two brothers grew up, Cain became a farmer. He cultivated the ground and grew fruits and vegetables. Abel was a shepherd, one who raises sheep and watches over and cares for them.

One day Cain and Abel both made an offering to God. Cain brought some of the produce he had harvested from his farm and burned it on an altar to the Lord. But God was not pleased with Cain's sacrifice, because Cain was not a good man.

Abel brought a sheep and offered it to God on the altar he had made. God was very pleased with Abel's sacrifice because Abel was righteous and was living the kind of life that God wanted him to live.

**C** is for  
**C**ain

When Cain saw that the Lord accepted Abel's offering but not his, he became very jealous of his brother. If Cain had been a good man like Abel was, God would have been just as pleased with Cain's offering as He was with Abel's. It was not what was sacrificed that pleased the Lord, but the godly life of Abel that won God's approval.

The Lord spoke to Cain and said, "Why are you angry? And why do you look sad and dejected? If you do well you will be accepted and if you do not do well, then sin is at your door waiting to become master of you; but you must master it." But Cain still allowed evil to remain in his heart until he did a very, very wicked thing.

One day when Cain and Abel

were in the field together, Cain killed his brother. Cain had allowed hatred and jealousy to grow in his heart until he could no longer control these evil feelings.

In the Bible, God does not tell us only of good people. He tells us of evil men and women, too, so we can take a lesson from them and not do evil as they did.

We can take a warning from the life of Cain and not become jealous of someone who is better than we are. Instead, let us try to live good lives ourselves. Then God will love us. ••

*I've often been told, and I find it is true, we're sure to be paid for more work than we do—provided, of course, we try hard to be good, and do the things we are told that we should.*

*And that is the way that it seems to work out. Each time I do good, someone turns it about, till, strangely enough, as you all will agree, much more than I gave, has been given to me!*

*But if I am selfish, or stubborn, or mean, or try to deceive, it can quickly be seen, it makes others sad, but I hurt myself most, and soon I am wondering, how much I have lost.*

*Now, here is the moral of this little rhyme: a thought that should help us to spend well our time: In weighing the evidence, as we all should, I'm doubly convinced that it *pays to be good!**

# Eyes Front!

*"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee"* —Prov. 4:25

DID YOU ever wonder why we have only one pair of eyes, and that they are in the front of our head? Some insects have hundreds of eyes, and they can see in all directions. Sometimes we wish that we had a pair in the back of our head so that we might be able to see what is going on behind us without turning around. Schoolteachers often wish that.

But on the whole, two pairs of eyes would be rather distracting and confusing. Some of us have hard enough work to manage one pair. Perhaps God had a purpose in giving us only one pair of eyes and in placing them in front. Perhaps it was because we are meant to look straight before us and not turn our head in any other direction.

That is just what our text tells us. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." And that means that the best way to look is straight ahead. We are to fix our eyes on our goal and let nothing distract us from it.

The queer thing is that a great many people seem to forget this. They look in any other direction but just straight on, and so they get into dreadful difficulties and are terribly hindered. There are two big mistakes people make in this way, and they are mistakes which you can avoid.

First, there are some people who insist on looking over their shoulder. They are always thinking and talking about what is past and gone, and so they lose valuable time, and heart, and energy, and make themselves thoroughly unfit for the present.

Here is a boy who has worked hard for a prize at school and has won it. He pats himself on the back

and says, "Well done, Sonny. You can rest now, you have done your work. You have succeeded." And he immediately begins to relax. That boy is looking over his shoulder. He is contenting himself with what he has already accomplished. There is a strong likeness between him and the fable of "Little Jack Horner" who sat in a corner eating his sugary pie. He

put in his thumb

And pulled out a plum

And said, "What a good boy am I!"

If you are inclined to be that kind of boy, remember that it isn't the prize that's going to matter in the years to come, but what you have learned in gaining it. If you don't keep adding to your knowledge all the time, you'll never be anything but a stick-in-the-mud.

Here is another boy who says, "It doesn't matter how hard I try, I never get away from the bottom of the class, so what's the use of trying at all? I'll just be in the same place anyway." This is false reasoning. In the one case, you will be a hero; in the other, you will be a coward. And besides, you will be making the mistake of looking over your shoulder. You sat at the bottom of the class yesterday, but what is to hinder your being two or three places higher today? Forget about yesterday, and give your work fresh energy today. Make a new start every day.

What would you think of a racer who kept looking over his shoulder all the time? Do you think he would get along very fast? Well, we are just like that racer if we keep looking back at the past. We shall never get very far.

There is another mistake some other people make. Instead of looking straight before them, they look all around them, and so they hesitate and falter and sometimes never reach their goal at all.

Some people are always looking about them to see what others are doing, and how they are getting on, and so lose ground themselves. Others are always looking down side-paths instead of keeping to the main road, and so they very often lose their way. Others, again, are always gazing at something else except their own particular line of work, and so their own work—which nobody else can do so well—is neglected and lost.

Now if you want to do anything worth doing, you will never accomplish it by thinking about something else. You must put your whole heart and mind and soul into it. There is an Indian proverb which says, "Do one thing; do it well; do it today," and that is good advice. A successful businessman once told me the secret of his success in one word: Concentration. And concentration just means doing one thing; doing it well; and doing it today.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

We have been thinking of everyday things, but I want you to think of our text in a higher way also.

We are traveling along the road of life, you and I, and at the end of the way is a great reward God has promised for all who are faithful to Him. We can turn our backs on Him if we like. Some people have done that. But it is a harmful thing to do—harmful to those who do it. So I hope all of us are trying, although many times we may stumble, to

walk along the path that God has laid out for us.

If we are doing that, we must remember to let our eyes look right on and our eyelids straight before us. If we turn around to look at our past mistakes and failures, let it be only to remember the lesson we learned and to go forward. We must keep looking to the end of our journey. It is the only safe and sure plan. ●●

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## What We Are

*If we look for the good in each person  
And find something kind to say,  
And smile when we see him coming,  
'Twill turn out a much brighter day.*

*If we look for the answer to problems,  
And just don't stand there and stare,  
But try to work out a solution,  
Most problems won't even be there!*

*If we start each day with our Saviour,  
And trust in His strong, strong arm,  
Then all of the Philistine army  
Can bring us no grief or harm.*

*If we stand in a snow-covered forest  
And see the beauty that's there,  
And realize who made it possible,  
We're beginning to get somewhere.*

*If we stand on the top of a mountain  
And behold the valley below,  
We know that only God made it,  
And why it must be so.*

*If we walk in the beautiful sunshine  
Or watch for a falling star,  
And place our hand in the hand of God,  
That makes us what we are.*

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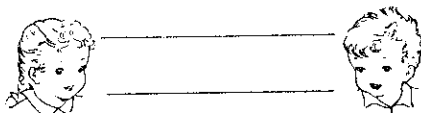
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## The Pre-Existence of Christ

(Continued from page 5)

in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. . . . For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:17, 11). If He pre-existed, His brethren also must have pre-existed.

Moreover, *Christ was tempted*: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The Deity cannot be tempted. "God cannot be tempted with evil" (Jas. 1:13).

Jesus Christ also *suffered*; a God cannot suffer. And more, *He died*. If Christ had always existed with the Father He must have been immortal, hence could not have died on the cross. An immortal being is not subject to death.

### Discussion

In this and in subsequent articles we shall discuss the subject of the pre-existence of Christ with a correspondent who is a strong believer in this doctrine.

#### Jesus NOT the Logos

Our correspondent begins his argument by presenting the first chapter of the Gospel of John, often used as the stronghold of those who accept belief in the deity of Christ.

*"Bible testimony is very clear to all who are prepared to accept what it says. John 1 says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Word is a proper noun being the name of a person, a separate person from God the Father. John says, 'The Word was with God.' This denotes separate existence. If this was not what John meant, then correct grammar would have demanded that he say, 'The Word was in God.' The Holy Spirit who inspired John as he wrote would not be given to making grammatical mistakes."*

At the onset our correspondent's argument is weak, as grammatical treatment is the work of translators much more than of the writers of the original documents in the original languages.

We cannot concede that when John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," that the term Word, though capitalized, denotes a person. The Moffatt Bible leaves the term in its original Greek spelling, "The Logos existed in the very beginning, the Logos was with God, the Logos was divine. He was with God in the very beginning. . . ." Many

authorities claim that the word should have been left untranslated, as it has no true equivalent in the English language.

A footnote in Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*, referring to John 1:1, 14, reads: "In these verses 'Logos' has been transferred, rather than translated. Dr. A. Clark remarks, 'This term should be left untranslated, . . . the epithet Logos, . . . signified a word spoken, speech, eloquence, doctrine, reason, or the faculty of reasoning.'"

The authors of the Septuagint use *Logos* to translate the Hebrew *emer*, and its poetic synonyms, which mean primarily, "the spoken word of the Deity."

With the Hebrew writers, the personification of the Word, the Name, the Glory, the Wisdom of God—the Greek *Logos*—was poetical, not metaphysical. It did not depict a real person, or even a personality. Proverbs 8 is a classical example of personification in Scripture, the personification of wisdom: "I wisdom dwell with prudence, . . . counsel is mine, and sound wisdom. . . . I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment. . . . 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" (vs. 12, 14, 20, 22-23). But no one should surmise that the term "wisdom" as employed in Proverbs 8 referred to a real person.

Scholars, themselves believers in the pre-existence of Christ, understand that the meaning of the term *Logos* as used in the Greek language changed with time. It originally suggested an incorporeal, self-subsistent idea or a thought of God. Later, under the interpretation of Philo, it came to mean the intelligible world in two successive stages of existence, first as thoughts of God and then as real beings created by God.\* However, a change in the meaning of a word in no way affects its original usage. *Logos*, as defined in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, means: "language, talk; a sentence, . . . a saying, . . . the thing spoken of, . . . that which is laid down or stated"—there is no suggestion of a real being.

With this understanding of the term, let us read again the text in John 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was [divine]." In other words, in the beginning, when God set about to form His plans for the earth and mankind, there existed the Logos, that is, the wisdom or word or idea or purpose of God; and that purpose was with God; and that word

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\* Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. c. 1970, p. 258.

was divine. To use an analogy, the Logos is to God what thought is to man. The language is poetic.

### The Glory He Had

*"Jesus Himself lays claim to just such an existence as John refers to. He says, 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was' (John 17:5). He does not speak of a glory which He had IN the Father, but of a glory which He had WITH the Father. Again we must allow words to mean what they say. The inference is that the Father and the Son shared a glory in the days of eternity of the past."*

To a person believing that Christ pre-existed, John 17:5 seems conclusive evidence that He shared a glory with the Father before the advent of His life on earth. However, the definite statements regarding His birth, His being raised up from among His brethren, made of a woman, etc., forbid our believing that He pre-existed.

What then did Jesus mean when He said to the Father, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"? Does this text infer that Christ pre-existed, that God and Christ shared a glory in the eternal past before the world was?

The Greek word *para*, translated "with" in the text, is used with the dative case, and is defined as "A being by the side of any person or thing; . . . before; in the presence of; often of being heard before judges."

Therefore the true rendering of this text might be something like this: "O Father, glorify me in thy presence; before thee, with the glory which I had with thee [by promise] before the world"—the world to come (Heb. 2:5). It was for the future, the glorious world to come, that Christ's whole life on earth was spent. The Father, knowing all things from the beginning, foresaw that Jesus would live His life so perfectly that He gave Jesus the promise of future glory. Jesus had this future glory by promise and rejoiced in anticipation of it—not before the creation of the literal world, but before the new world, the "world to come" is established.

Jesus having been promised the glory, life eternal, He asked that it be given Him in the Father's presence, before the Judge of all the earth. If this text teaches that Jesus had been previously glorified in the Father's presence before the literal earth was made, that position flatly contradicts John 7:39, that at that time, Jesus was "not yet glorified."

### The Christ that Came Down

*"Jesus claims that He came down from heaven in*

*the following statement: 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven' (John 3:13). We should mention that the last clause of this verse has no business there. It is not in the earliest manuscripts, and does not appear in modern translations. It has been added by someone after John penned this statement."*

You are correct in saying that the words "which is in heaven" do not occur in many of the modern translations. And you feel that the omission of those words clinches your belief that the man Christ came down from heaven—but does it?

The man Christ never was in heaven prior to that time, hence could not have come down from heaven. Another "Son of man" is indicated—the system of divine truth termed Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This is the Christ which came down from heaven. It is the same Christ of which Paul spoke in Col. 1:27: "Christ in you the hope of glory." The physical Christ could not be dwelling in a person any more than the physical Christ could descend from heaven prior to Christ's birth; but the divine wisdom of God, the truth Christ taught, could.

*"Again Jesus speaks of His pre-existence when He says, 'I came down from heaven' (John 6:38). He speaks also of His ascending 'up where he was before' (John 6:62). He says also, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:50). These statements and the claims that Jesus makes can only be true in view of the fact that Jesus had previously existed in heaven. Then Jesus says, 'I came from heaven.' This denotes personal existence. Only a person can say 'I did this,' or 'I did that.' If all that came from heaven was a male cell provided by the Father, then Jesus did not come from heaven, because there was no such person to do the coming. Jesus would not have been telling the truth."*

To understand these words of Jesus let us approach them in the same practical way as we approach Jesus' words to the chief priests when they challenged His teaching in the temple. When they asked Him by what authority He did the things He was doing, He answered by asking them a question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (Matt. 21:23-25). We readily understand Jesus' meaning. The *authority* for the things John had done came from heaven; in like manner, the authority for Jesus' words and activities came from heaven. Thus Jesus could say, "I came down from heaven."

Let us sketch through John 6, beginning at verse 27, and we shall readily perceive that our Lord



was employing symbolism and shall understand *what* Christ came down from heaven.

In verse 27 we have Jesus' words to the people who were seeking Jesus and hoping He would feed them with loaves and fishes as He had done previously: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you. . . ." We can immediately sense the symbolic nature of this meat "which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give." But the people, thinking Jesus was referring to literal food, answered, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (v. 31). Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven" (v. 32)—symbolic bread again. The manna from heaven in the days of the Israelites was literal bread to sustain the physical body; what Jesus was offering these people was the true bread from heaven. "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (v. 33). Or, as translated in the New English Bible: "That bread that God gives comes down from heaven and brings life to the world." That bread is symbolic, an illustration of the divine knowledge that comes from God.

In verse 38 the symbolism continues, Jesus using Himself as the personification of the wisdom of God: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." The Jews murmured because He said "I am the bread which came down from heaven," saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" But Jesus' answer showed what He meant by the symbolism; it was a knowledge of the Father that had come down from heaven: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (v. 45).

Verses 51 through 56 are definitely symbolic. Jesus never could have taught that eating His literal flesh and drinking His physical blood could have anything to do with a person's salvation, which is what He would be saying were we to take His words that "He came down from heaven" literally. We would be making the same mistake His hearers made that day. Furthermore, to imbibe any part of the physical Christ would be utterly impossible. At present He is absolutely out of our reach.

Apparently some of His disciples understood the meaning of His words, for they said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" Or as translated

in the Berkeley Version, "This is a difficult message! Who can stand listening to it?" To eat the flesh and blood of Christ is a difficult proposition, calling for a full surrender of oneself to Christ; to accomplish it one must live as Christ lived, think as Christ thought, act as Christ acted. When we understand the profound symbolism Jesus was using, we, too, are ready to say, "This is a difficult message!"

Jesus answered the complaint of the disciples with more symbolism, saying, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man [divine wisdom] ascend up where he was before?" (vs. 61-62). Or in other words, You complain about the difficulty of surrendering yourself completely and living as I live; how would you feel if all the knowledge and opportunity I have given you were suddenly withdrawn, and you were left without God or hope in this world—what would you think then?

Verse 63 is an unmistakable key to all that Jesus has been saying: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

The disciples were struck with the impact of His sayings. If all that He had meant was that they should know that He literally descended from heaven so that they could partake of His physical flesh and blood, or as is taught in communion services in some denominational churches, the literal grape juice and bread changed into the physical flesh and blood of Christ by a process called transubstantiation, why should the disciples have felt the saying so difficult? The record runs that from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then He said to the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" And Peter's answer demonstrates that he understood Jesus' meaning in discoursing on His coming down from heaven. He replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (vs. 66-68). *Thou has the words of eternal life.* The personal Christ personified the spiritual Christ that came down from heaven—the words of eternal life. ● ●

(Continued Next Issue)

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Declaiming against pride is not always a sign of humility.

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It is an art to say the right things at the right time, but far more difficult is it to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"To obviate original sin you seem to apply Scriptures to all times, which apply only after the second advent. 'He that lives and believes in me shall never die' has application after the second presence of the One who said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' It is then that no one will die because of the original sin of the 'first Adam,' for under the discipline of the 'second Adam' everlasting life will be possible."

Jesus spoke the above-quoted words to Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus. Martha had just expressed her faith that her brother would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day" when Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:24-26).

By saying that He Himself was the resurrection and the life, Jesus was revealing to Martha the power He then possessed to raise the dead, even suggesting the course of action He was planning to take at that time. His next statement is general, applying to all believers: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." At His second advent, the "dead in Christ" shall be resurrected (I Thess. 4:16-18). In stating this He was confirming what Martha had said. He then proceeds to speak of those believers who would be living at the time of His second advent, and would need no resurrection, and these, if proven faithful, would never die.

The statement of our questioner, that after the second presence of the One who said "I am the resurrection and the life" no one will die because of the original sin of the "first Adam," has no Biblical support, hence cannot be accepted. Under the "second Adam," however, everlasting life will be possible, for the Bible states that Christ is coming the second time to bring the crown of life immortal to all those who "love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

"The Megiddo Church has not been taken in by much that is false, but your claim that Christ had no existence previous to His birth supports Calvin's unreasonable predestination. How could God know that Christ would be faithful and loyal unto death upon the cross if He had not had a pre-trial which demonstrated His loyalty and obedience to God's will?"

"The same can be said of John the Baptist, Elijah and others whose loyalty was foreknown and

forecast by God in His Book of books. I hope you will see and eradicate this 'fly in the ointment.' "

Are we to assume that an All-wise and Supreme Being must pre-test each plan He authors before He can be sure that plan will succeed? Must an Omnipotent Creator design a world and then stand by for a time to see that that world will function as He intended? Is His every act an unknowable venture and His forecasts of the future only wild and uncertain guesses?

No, if we acknowledge the God of the Bible we must grant to Him the powers He claims, and foremost among these is His ability to foresee and foreknow. As He declares through His prophet Isaiah: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:9-10). He has the ability to know "the end from the beginning"—a power to which humans can lay no claim.

But we must not confuse this power of foreknowledge with any idea of predestination. In foreknowing, that is, knowing in advance, what course of action an individual or a nation or a circumstance will take, He is not predestinating that person to suit His own designs. Every individual is absolutely free to choose His own course of action; God only knows in advance which course of action that will be. In this manner He is able to prophesy, as He did concerning the fate of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Read Deuteronomy 28, where Moses is enumerating the curses which would come upon His people if they persisted in their stubborn rebellion. The Lord was not predestinating these people to turn against Him against their wills, but simply foreknowing that they would forsake Him.

The same is true of the loyalty of such men as John the Baptist and Elijah. These men had shown themselves faithful under trying circumstances, and God in His omniscience knew they would continue in their faithfulness. Had they desired, they could have turned from their right course of action—the divine plan is "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve"—without interfering with God's plans. However, this action would likewise have been foreknowable to God.

No, there is no "fly in the ointment" of God's dealings with His human family. He is just and faithful, and promises to give to every man just according as his works shall be. There would be no virtue to such a plan were every man predestined to a certain tried-and-true course of action. ●

## Meditations on the Word

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as a merchant, he must see or hear much not to the glory of God. But wherever we are, the burning question with us should be, What is my reaction to the things I hear and see?

If the sights to be seen in public during these warm summer months: nearly nude small children, their mothers in shorts and scantily clothed above the waistline, and the older women wearing costumes that would have shocked their grandmothers and mothers; if such sights attract us, or even if we get so accustomed to them that we become calloused and indifferent to what we see, we are a part of Sodom and not acting the role of a servant of God. Remember, just Lot was *vexed* at the sights he saw in Sodom, or as a modern translator phrases it, he "was sore burdened by the immoral behavior of the lawless."

And the same rule applies to the things we hear. Lot was "vexed with filthy conversation of the wicked." Profanity often is the common dialect of men thrown together at work or at pastimes, in fact some men become so accustomed to vulgarity they can scarcely frame a sentence without its use. And what is still more disgusting is to hear women use vulgar language, and when in a temper use words bordering on profanity in reprimanding their children. If such verbal offenses fail to *vex* or disturb us, something is terribly wrong with us.

In Eph. 5:4 "filthiness," "foolish talking" and "jesting" are forms of disorderly conduct not becoming to one professing godliness and not once to be named among us as saints of the Most High. Yet to refrain from the use of these forbidden words ourselves is not enough. If we allow ourselves to be amused and entertained by the filthy stories or jokes of another, we still are a part of the Sodom destined to utter destruction. He that consents with a thief is a partaker of his sin.

The use we make of our functions of hearing and sight will weigh either for or against us in the day of Judgment. The psalmist David declared his intention not to be misled by evil influences, when he said: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (101:3). In Isaiah 33 the question is asked as to who shall live after God's judgments sweep the refuse from the earth, and the answer emphasizes the thought stressed in our meditation verse: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing

of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; . . . his . . . eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

In Ezekiel's vision of the six men who were sent forth into the city to slay, in addition was one man clothed in linen and bearing a writer's inkhorn, and he was commanded to place a mark for deliverance upon all the men who were sufficiently concerned about the prevalence of evil to "sigh and cry" for the abominations committed in the land.

Do we yearn to live in that glorious future Day when our eyes never shall "see evil any more"? Then let us cease taking any pleasure in the evils of "an adulterous and sinful generation," and so abhor sin in ourselves that we will cleanse from our hearts the last vestige of iniquity. ●●

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## Obituary

Alexander Ploughwright

On May 5 we met to pay our last respects to an aged friend and Brother, Alexander Ploughwright. Brother Ploughwright was born in 1883 in London, England, but spent most of his mature years in the vicinity of Rochester.

Brother Ploughwright's motive for coming to America and settling in the city of Rochester was principally his interest in the teaching of the Megiddo Church. Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, made two missionary trips to the British Isles in the 1890's. Our Brother was old enough to be impressed with the virtue of the doctrine our founder was teaching, and it was due to his desire to be near the church of his choice that he moved to Rochester in 1913.

During his active years, Brother Ploughwright engaged wholeheartedly in the missionary work of the church, covering many miles via railroad, bicycle, motor cruiser, and on foot. Later our brother initiated a program of advertising our Church literature, and for many years he devoted much time to the management of that branch of our missionary endeavor. It was only about four years ago that failing health necessitated his relinquishing his hold on that part of the program.

Brother Ploughwright is survived by one sister, Lilian Ploughwright, with whom he shared his home, and who faithfully cared for him during his years of partial helplessness. He is also survived by two nieces and two nephews.

Rev. K. E. Flowerday conducted the funeral services. Interment was in Mount Hope cemetery, where rest other of our beloved dead awaiting the great Day of the Resurrection. ●●



# Meditations

## On the Word

THE CONTEXT in which this passage of Scripture occurs shows Sodom was the urban center where the patriarch Lot was living when he deplored the godlessness and general moral degradation of his home town. To this very day the name Sodom carries with it the stigma of moral corruptness and depravity.

There can be no doubt that the people of Sodom were morally corrupt. If not corrupt the Almighty would not have designed to destroy the city *en-masse*. But perhaps they were not so much worse than the people of today as many think. Disturbing as this thought may be, yet it is upheld by Jesus' own teaching: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:28, 30).

The inhabitants of Sodom may have been honest and paid their just debts. They may have been pleasant and congenial, neighborly, and could have been classed as community-minded citizens. No doubt many among them were ambitious; for we are told "they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded." What then was wrong with them? They failed to recognize God or any authority higher than their own conception of right and wrong.

This description is analogous to the life pattern of the average man of today. He has in his make-up much evil with some good mixed in. But having outgrown the Almighty he is a law unto himself, his conscience dictating his mode of moral conduct. Living in an age of moral decadence with the rules of common decency once closely observed now almost completely abandoned, his—or her—conduct becomes more and more lax.

Many people today are honest in a business way. They pay

their just debts, are thrifty and aggressive; they are imbued with the community spirit, and according to prevailing standards are good citizens. Their attitude toward the possibility of divine intervention, however, is much the same as was the attitude of the Sodomites. When Lot warned his sons-in-law of the approaching destruction of their city, his words seemed to them as idle tales and they laughed him to scorn. God's pending judgments upon the earth seem equally as remote to the people of today.

If our service to the Eternal is genuine and our determination to live the higher life paramount, we have only to experience living in the world of today to understand the position of Lot living among the Sodomites and the sights and sounds that vexed his righteous soul from day to day. Lot dared to be different from the crowd. Although living among them, he refused to be dragged down to their level.

Likewise it is inevitable that the alert Christian of today must be surrounded by worldlings. He must earn an honest living, and to do this he must be employed, and in this way he will be thrown in the company of people careless and indifferent in speech and demeanor. God does not expect him to shut himself in a crypt or isolate himself within the opaque walls of a monastery; nevertheless he must be "vexed" at the things he sees and hears. Jesus in His prayer for His disciples said, "I pray

not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

If one is employed as a factory worker, a bus driver, in the coal mines, as a farm hand, or  
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*"And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)" —II Peter 2:7-8.*

## *The Righteous Man*

*Lord, who with Thee shall dwell?  
Who on Thy hill abide?  
The man who makes Immanuel  
His righteousness and guide.*

*No slander stains his tongue,  
Nor any false report,  
Nor would he do his neighbor wrong,  
For profit or for sport.*

*Not those who truth pervert  
Are by this man preferred,  
And when he vows to his own hurt,  
He will not change his word.*

*He takes no usury,  
Nor bribes will e'er accept:  
This man the peace of God shall know,  
And shall be safely kept.*