

# *new covenant* Choice

*Then saith Jesus  
unto his disciples,  
The harvest truly is  
plenteous, but the  
labourers are few;  
Pray ye therefore the  
Lord of the harvest,  
that he will send  
forth labourers into  
his harvest.*

*Matthew 9: 37,38*

**But ye are come unto mount  
Sion, and unto the city of the  
living God, the heavenly  
Jerusalem, and to an  
innumerable company of angels  
to the general assembly and  
church of the firstborn, which are  
written in heaven, and to GOD  
the Judge of all, and to the  
spirits of just men made perfect  
and to JESUS the mediator of the  
new covenant, and to the blood  
of sprinkling, that speaketh  
better things than that of Abel  
See that ye refuse not him that  
speaketh**

**HEBREWS 12:22-25**

# HARVEST TIME IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

GEORGE W. NORTH

MATTHEW: 9:36-38; JOHN 4: 35-38

When the Lord Jesus Christ entered into His ministry on earth, He did so with intent to set up the Messianic kingdom on earth, and to reap a long awaited harvest among men. It was while standing in Samaria, by the well at Sychar, that the Lord made this known, and the listening apostles must have been astounded. *'I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour, other men laboured and ye have entered into their labours'*, He said. They did not know He had taken them there primarily to learn this truth, but that was His purpose. It was harvest time, and as He spoke He was about to demonstrate it to them. The things the Lord Jesus was saying to His men at that time were mysteries to them. All the things He did and the utterances He made as recorded in this Gospel were mysterious to His disciples; not one of them understood Him or what He was saying. He was the mystery man. They had heard Him say, *'Ye shall see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man'*: *'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again'*: *'Verily, verily I say unto you ye must be born from above'*, and they were baffled. Whatever was He talking about, and what did He mean by these things? And now this! Surely He was living in another world, in another age! Everyone with eyes to see, including children, knew that the harvest would not be ready to gather for four months; the green shoots had scarcely appeared above the ground, yet He was saying, *'Look, the fields are white already to harvest'*. He was talking against facts and against nature and against the evidence of their own eyes, as everyone knew, why did He say such things? Whatever did He mean? He said, *'I sent you to reap'*. Reap! What?

They had come into Samaria, He had sat down on the well and they had gone into Sychar to buy meat; had there been anything wrong with that? But He said that they should have gone to reap. Had they done anything wrong? No! It was not what they had done, it was what they had not done: they had reaped nothing. Had they gone into the city to sow even? If so even that would have been commendable, but it seems not even that had been in their thoughts, He and they, though so close, were poles apart, there was a gulf between them. Nothing revealed this more than their utter surprise when they returned to Him at the well. He was speaking to a woman, and such a woman; she was a thoroughly bad lot. They did not approve of that, and they made their unspoken thoughts very clear indeed, so plain that embarrassed, the unnamed woman fled, her waterpot abandoned by the well. Perhaps she thought she could come back for that later when these offensive men had gone. What a difference between Him and these men. However could He have chosen such creatures? She was so grateful He had come to the well. He had not despised her, He had not even reproved her: she was sure He was Messiah, He was wonderful, she was not so sure about the others though. Had He chosen the right companions? He must have done of course; He who had

known so much about her must equally have known all about each of them, but they were nothing like Him. They had scarcely bothered to veil their hostility toward her. But He loved her - she was sure of it. All she expected and desired of the long awaited Messiah, shone out of His eyes and sounded in His voice. Meanwhile, assured of her, and she of Him, He turned His attention to His men and His purpose in bringing them to Samaria. She was useful. Other men had sowed and He had entered into their labours - He had reaped what Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses had sowed, and He had gone to Samaria to reap.

## SOWERS

Throughout the centuries devoted men, patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings and judges had laboured for God, either to form or shape the people for whom they were born and to whom they were sent. They had sowed the seed faithfully, looking forward all the time to the coming of the Messiah. Abraham had seen His day. All of them knew He would bring everything to the climax to which all were moving and working, and for which everyone and everything was waiting, or so they thought. Their hope was that at His appearing and under His ministry the harvest would ripen and be gathered in, and the kingdom be established on earth. Perhaps that is how it all appeared to His disciples too, when He said, *'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest'*. It must have been very exciting to listen to Him talking like this: harvest time; consummation, the end. It must have sounded as though He was saying, *'There is no need to wait any longer, the harvest time is now'*, the reaping must immediately commence, for the Messianic kingdom was at hand. But this was Samaria, not Israel. Confusion! They had no dealing - absolutely none - with the Samaritans. Had they eyes to see as well as ears to hear they would have realized that already the reaping was actually in process.

These disciples, all too natural to be spiritual, had been looking at the fields in this all too matter-of-fact world, and predicting that it would be harvest-time in about four months, any man would have said so, but not He. *'Do not talk or think like that'*, He was saying, *'the harvest is now; here in Samaria; start reaping'*; but they did not: they could not. Unlike them, the Lord had gone to Samaria with that purpose in mind, and that is exactly what He did, but not they. Other men had laboured in expectation of this day though, ploughing in hope and sowing in faith, some of them knowing that they were not ministering unto themselves but unto another people of another age. The years had passed, times and seasons and ministries had come and gone, and still no Messiah, and no reaping. Longing hearts had cried out in their disappointment and pain, *'How long, O Lord?'*. And now that Messiah had come to recognition, and so had

harvest-time, but few, perhaps none, had recognized either Him or that - an isolated one here or there perhaps.

## ONE SOWETH, ANOTHER REAPETH

John Baptist, being full of the Spirit from birth, had known who He was and had announced Him to the multitudes. He was a man specially selected by God and given detailed instructions about the ministry for which he was born. Few there were who received his testimony unreservedly: none of the authorities did. All these were waiting to see whether he and the Lord he promoted proved to be right according to their opinions. Nathaniel, a man later added to the apostolic band, recognized and accepted Him at once, but people like Nathaniel were very rare in the nation. Religious dogma and popular superstition abounded everywhere, and the people in general were trying to struggle through to faith and acceptance of the truth. Certainly the Samaritan woman who found Jesus sitting on the well and came near to Him only for that reason, did not recognize Him, she had no idea who He was at first, He was only a prophet at best, she thought. Whether or not by the time she left Him she was utterly convinced of His true identity and what was really happening in the earth is difficult to assess. She was forthright enough about Him when she spoke to her fellow Samaritans about the conversation which took place between herself and the stranger at the well: *'Is not this the Christ?'*, she asked, *'Come, see a man which told me all things ...'* She was going back to Him and taking others with her! Already? She was reaping already! Whatever had those apostles been doing? All these Samaritans were convinced. This was the Christ the Saviour of the world, and they said so: they begged Him to stay, and perhaps to their surprise, He agreed. The Lord took the opportunity and reaped among a people where He had not sowed, upon whom He had bestowed no labour at all. It was harvest time.

*'He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal'*, He said. He was keen to do so. Fulfilling the will of His Father that sent Him, He knew He was also entering into other peoples labours; how truly He said, *'One soweth, another reapeth'*. His apostles had neither sowed nor reaped, and were astonished that He should do so. They never understood Him; they saw what He did, and heard what He said, but they understood very little of what He meant, and why He said, or why He did what He did. Many of the things He said and did, and His reasons for doing and saying them were hidden from their eyes. Their view of the Messianic kingdom and ministry was proscribed, and their view of Him was so circumscribed. They were not entirely to be blamed for this, He kept back some things from them, only gradually did He release truth to them or to anyone, the episode at the well being a case in point. It was to the woman He revealed Himself to be Messiah, His men were absent when He said, *'I that speak unto thee am He'*. They were offended to find Him talking to a Samaritan - and a woman at that - when they returned from the city. They had no idea of the extent of His Messianic mission, they thought it was to Jews only - but there was Abrahamic blood in Samaritan veins as well as in theirs. In them it was purer than in the Samaritans, but Jesus was as concerned for the least as for the greatest, *'I have meat to eat ye know not of'*, He said; *'My meat is to do*

*the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.'*

## SHE SOWED AND REAPED

The woman's claims to Israelitish ancestry were as genuine as the disciples. She spoke to the stranger at the well boldly, *'Art Thou greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well and drank thereof, and his children and his cattle?'* She was questioning His authority and His claims, His right to be sitting where He was sitting - it was Jacob's well, within a short distance of Joseph's inheritance, it was Samaritan territory. She came of a mixed background, but she knew where her roots were and where her future lay; her hopes, hazy though they were, were as much in the Messiah as His, she thought. But were they more hazy than those of the men who were following Him? They did not understand Him either. They had better knowledge, better beliefs perhaps, better privileges also, they certainly had great advantages, but what were they if the men themselves did not know Him? To which of them had He said He would give him living water if he asked? To which did He speak of, *'A well ... springing up within unto everlasting life'*? Not one. Yet to her He said, *'If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that said unto thee give Me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him'*. Three years later, speaking in the midst of His men, He said, *'Have I been so long time with you and yet thou hast not known Me?'* What difference was there between them? The woman, with all the Samaritans who responded to her testimony, were included in the Messianic mission - it was harvest time.

It was such a pity that the woman came when His disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat: they missed so much. John writes of the meeting between the Lord and the woman as though he was there throughout. Was he? Did he stay with the Lord while the others left for town? Had he already become so attached to the Lord that he just could not tear himself away from Him? The Lord never ordered His men to go to the shops, they simply went, and going missed some of the choicest things the Lord ever spoke. Would it not have been wonderful if they had remained and heard the conversation between Him and the woman? He spoke about the gift of God, the living water, the eternal spring and the eternally quenched thirst - about the abolition of places of worship and the importance of knowing what is being worshipped - that God is Spirit and can only be worshipped in spirit and truth - that God is a Father seeking true spirits to worship Him - that He Jesus was Messiah - but the disciples missed it - missed it all. The woman went back into the city, but she left her water-pots: she was coming back!

For the first time the Lord had said He was Messiah. He said it to a Samaritan woman and to Him it was eating meat to say so. He was doing His Father's will, and He told His disciples that: He had been doing His Father's will and had reaped a soul. And what of her - the soul He had reaped? She went home and entered immediately into the business of reaping. *'Come'*, she said, *'see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?'* And they went with her. The Lord sowed and reaped, and the woman sowed and reaped, but the disciples/apostles had done neither. What-

ever must they have thought and have felt like when they saw the woman returning with these men! *'I sent YOU to reap'*, He said. They had not done so, and hardly had He said it when the sounds of the approaching company reached their ears - hurrying feet and excited voices - the Samaritans were coming to see the man who knew all and could tell them everything. *'Thou art the Christ (Messiah) the Saviour of the world'*, they said; they were Samaritans, they could never be His disciples publicly, but which of His disciples had said or even thought such a thing?

## NEW FIELDS

They did not think it was harvest time - in a few months yes, but not yet - not now - tomorrow - another time - always tomorrow. They were so natural, so earthbound and unaware, they did not have their Lord's spirit.

The Lord had gathered to Him a band of Jews to assist Him in the harvest, but they did not do so, why then stay longer in Sychar? What was the point in staying at all? They had not accomplished anything there, if anything at all they had been a hindrance: He moved them on. There was much to do elsewhere, fields had to be reaped, the harvest gathered in; the ground must be cleared and prepared for another sowing, a different one altogether. He was not quite ready to tell them about that yet though. He had hinted at it earlier in the temple at Jerusalem, but at the moment they were not ready for the great disclosure, and though for other reasons than they, neither was He. Both He and His band must first enter into other men's labours, centuries of faithful peoples' work must be brought to fruition and harvest - what had been commenced and continued by others must be brought to completion. The onus was upon Him and He knew it; He must train His disciples to help Him accomplish this, their thoughts must be shaped, their energies harnessed, their lives re-directed to this end. This was a day of new beginnings and from Sychar He led them on to another day when in full flow of ministry He said to them, *'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth labourers into His harvest'*. At that time He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

## LORD OF THE HARVEST

The multitudes loved it: they flocked around Him wherever He went, invitations to speak in synagogues multiplied: He was very popular. Miracles were happening everywhere: stories about Him were passing from lip to lip, He had just performed His greatest miracle to date. Jairus, a ruler of a local synagogue, had asked Him to come to his home and heal his twelve year old daughter, she had died before they could get there though, the crowds had hindered Him, the father was heart-broken. One woman's need had prevented another person's cries being answered. She had snatched healing from His robe while a child's last breath was departing from her body. Virtue was flowing out from Him, healing everyone, it was there for all Abraham's children to take: He pressed on. Eventually He reached the house, and there, with a word and a touch, He raised the girl from the dead. Touching her He touched the crowds; their hearts were

moved. They had heard the wailing die away: the mourners had fled the house, life had chased away death and joy and peace filled everyone's heart. It was a tender occasion, absolutely marvellous, nothing like this had ever been seen in Israel. He was irresistible.

So were they: He loved them and loved doing miracles for them, they drew out from Him everything of which He was capable, He was giving His all, but He was not made of stone, the task was beyond His physical powers - human as He was He could not cope with it. To Him the multitudes were not only a harvest to be reaped, they were also as sheep, fainting and scattered, and without a shepherd, they needed more than healing, they needed gathering together, caring for, feeding, answering, guiding, they were flocking together, asking to be led, harvested for God. *'Pray'*, He said to His men, *'pray the Lord of the Harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest'*. What they thought of His words, however they may have understood by them, He was clearly indicating to His disciples that He was not this Lord of whom He spake - there was obviously a higher authority to whom they should pray. He Himself was working under the Lord, and He never made any secret of it either. In the field He was the Lord, there could be no doubting that, but He had made plain to them that He was not the overall Lord of the harvest. This wonderful Jesus, this person they acknowledged to be their Lord and who WAS their Lord, was a man under authority. That is what they expected Messiah to be, He was David's son, Abraham's son: they had lost all vision of Him being God's Son.

## UNDER AUTHORITY

On one occasion the Lord received a delegation from a Roman centurion very much respected by the Jewish community. He was a noble and caring man, good and generous to all, and his appeal to the Lord was on behalf of his servant lying ill and dying at home. This centurion was a most humble and respectful person who thought Jesus to be so great that he dare not ask Him to enter his house. Like the Samaritans he was not a Jew, yet he felt that neither his home nor he himself were worthy of the Lord's presence. *'Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed'*, he said, *'for I also am a man set under authority, having servants under me; and I say to one, go and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh'*. Jesus marvelled at him! *'I have not found such faith'*, He said, *'No, not in all Israel'*, and He healed the man's servant instantly. This centurion had discovered something; he was a man of observation as well as of authority. He had watched and listened very carefully when people spoke of vast crowds gathering round a man. Was it the beginning of a revolt? It was his business to find out; he did. Observing the Lord's powers he concluded that He was no insurrectionist, but a benefactor. There were parallels between the powers vested in himself and the powers Jesus had. Messiah was a man set under authority, operating under a superior power; there was someone set over Him from whom He took orders - the man's conclusions were correct. Being convinced of this, when he acted on his convictions his servant was healed. By that act he became the greatest man of faith in all Israel.

The Lord Jesus was exactly what the man had concluded; He was more than that, but He was that. On one occasion He said that He could of His own self do nothing, and on another said He could do nothing except His Father showed Him. That was the secret of the success of His ministry. He had authority because being set under a higher authority He kept under it, His responsibility was to do that. He knew the time was short, He was working to a pre-set plan, and being in touch with His Father on all points He made His next move. Having prepared the disciples by urging them to pray, He called His chosen twelve and delegated to them some of the authority He had received from the Father, and sent them out to reap. Their commission was to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were not to go to the Gentiles, nor to the Samaritans, but rather to their own people, and tell them to repent for the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. In Samaria the fields were ripe already to harvest, yet He did no miracle there. Just one visit had been sufficient because other people had sowed. He warned His men though, they needed it, they would not meet with such success among their own countrymen. Their ministry would be acceptable, many would be delivered, thousands would be healed, but their message would be rejected. What the people believed to be kingdom of heaven conditions were welcome, but their Messiah they would not accept. In the end they would not accept His servants either.

## BEARING THE CROSS

The Lord laboured unceasingly in His kingdom on earth under His cross, bearing it all the time. He walked and worked among the people, conscious of their total misconceptions about the kingdom and Himself: it was as a sword piercing His soul. They saw no cross, it was invisible to them, but He left no illusions about it in the minds of His men. He placed the cross squarely on their shoulders. They were not to take much with them, as they went in search of the lost sheep. They were to travel light, they must go immediately and in haste, just what they stood up in, the barest necessities - one coat, the pair of sandals they wore, no money bags, no staff, no food - they were pilgrims. Echoes of the past were sounding in their ears. It was as if Moses was speaking again, giving instructions to Jacob's children on the eve of their departure from Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus' instructions were basically the same, only they were more stringent. Whenever He handled Moses He always made his teachings more exacting. Men of old were allowed a staff, and could take a kneading trough with them. They carried out with them Egyptian gold, silver, precious stones, and a coffin full of Joseph's bones. They were laden with the spoils of God's victory, and the skeleton of the dead champion and hero. Israel was rich then, but not so these men. Jesus' disciples were allowed nothing, they were the poorest of the poor, and must appear before men to be so. As poor, they would make many rich, as having nothing, they would possess all things.

What need had any man of staff or rod? Every man had the cross, that should be his staff. What need had he of gold and silver and precious stones? The power and the authority and the commission were his treasure. What need to lumber

himself with shoes and clothing, the Lord would give those and his shoes would never wear out. As for food - every man must work for that - earn it. He would receive food as being his wages. This was penury, slavery, addiction to their work, obedience to His word, their Lord was teaching them, sending them forth to learn of Him as they ministered to others. In the end they would find nothing more than disillusionment with their nation, the pleasure and blessing and joy with which they began would turn to rejection, persecution, abuse and ill-treatment. People would bless them when they ministered healing and preached Messianic abundance, all would be well then, but when they sought to lay the cross on people and preach Jesus first and last and above all, everything would change. When people listened to what they were saying, when the euphoria was over, when they heard that the only way to find life was to lose it, thorns would be given them instead of food. But should not the man that bore the cross wear the thorns? They went. He gave them authority, and the cross, and sent them. They went - it was harvest time.

## THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM

They found that the fields of Palestine were not so white unto harvest as the fields of Samaria though. They wrought no miracles at Sychar, neither He nor they, yet the Samaritans confessed Jesus was Christ the Saviour of the world. In Jewry they wrought wonders and did miracles, and the Jews crucified Him. The Messianic kingdom passed, in three years it was all over, the seed of the kingdom of the Father and of God fell into the ground and died, rose from the dead, flourished and took its place. There was no skeleton, the rejected Messiah became the Head and Lord of the Church.

Very little evidence of any harvest in the Messianic kingdom remained when the Lord was crucified. There was plenty of evidence in the country of His disciples miraculous powers, but most of it was only skin or flesh and bone deep; it was all very sad. Only one of the ten lepers He cleansed came back to give Him thanks and to be made whole; *'Where are the nine?'*, He asked. Yes - where were they? If He had counted harvest according to the numbers healed, or fed, or helped, or according to the multitudes of folk who listened to His preaching and loved His stories, He could have claimed a bumper harvest - marvellous results, but He was not so dishonest. As though He was leprous, or a Samaritan, even His chosen ones forsook Him at the end. Daniel wrote of Him, *'He shall be cut off and have nothing'*. So died the Messiah. Passers by, reading His superscription, written by another and placed on His cross, might have felt certain that Pilate had buried the Jewish nation. Finis. Where was the harvest? The whiteness had passed, reaping days were over, the darkness that had descended upon Messiah on the cross hung like a pall over the land and all the people: Messiah was dead.

## THE HARVEST

They carried His corpse to the tomb, His skin torn, His flesh broken, His head still crowned, but not a bone of Him was broken. They could not break Him: He had broken His

own body as bread and poured out His blood as drink for His own men a few days before. Jews and Romans could not do it, they had not been able to, He had prestalled them. HE had not died, He had dismissed His human spirit from His body, that is all. He had reconciled; He had redeemed; He had justified; He had endured on the cross till He had accomplished these things and never left His body till He had done so. Then He left the exhibition of man's devilish cruelty against God hanging on the cross, a testimony to the finish of the Messianic kingdom and the divine statement of the end of an age. Oh how different it was from what people had hoped and at first might have thought they foresaw. But man's foresight is far inferior to God's, of foreknowledge he had none; they did not even recognize who and what they had seen. Witnessing His death they were witnessing to their own.

The attempt to establish the Messianic kingdom on earth was short-lived. Messiah's kingdom and intention were as completely misunderstood as Messiah Himself. His overtures rejected He therefore left this world, a man of sorrows, disappointed and rejected, but not frustrated.

Rising from the dead He departed to establish it elsewhere and now as time ticks away man and woman, being translated into it by God, are living in it at this very moment. God the Father is doing this, looking upon and calling this kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is a kingdom within a kingdom and He taught His entirely unapprehending disciples to pray that this should be, saying '*Our Father ... Thy kingdom come*'. It is come, the harvest is being reaped in Father's kingdom, sons are being born to Him all the time all over the earth and being translated into the kingdom of the love of the Father to the Son, and the Son's love to His Father.

The cry in Samaria, which was never in Jewry, '*Thou art the Christ, the Saviour of the world*' involved the cry which now rises from millions of hearts the world over: it is harvest time. '*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth labourers into His harvest*'. Let us enter into other men's labours that in time to come others may enter into ours.

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## THE HUMAN FAMILY

GEORGE W. NORTH

When God created man and envisaged the human family He did not do so simply to express Himself or to demonstrate His power. Self-pleasing and self-indulgence of fancy are not divine weaknesses. Though man is the greatest creation of God's universe, He did not create him to be the crowning glory of His handiwork. The Lord created the human family that by it, though to a limited degree, He should set forth His being and nature. The vast difference between God and Man is that God is three Persons in one Being with one nature, while the human family is at its least three persons in one unit, sharing one human nature. As God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so is the human family father, mother and child. God's nature is the Love expressed of three persons living together in perfect union and harmony - eternal bliss.

When originally created, the human nature of the man was love also, and was intended by God to develop into the extended human family according to His will. The tragedy of the human family is that God's original intentions and high ideals never found fulfilment in it. Before the family unit was completed it had fallen away from God's ideals; sin had entered, severing the union with God. God intended that in human measure according to each person's limitations:

1. The father should represent the Father, and express His love;
2. The mother should represent the Holy Ghost, and express His love;
3. The child should represent the Son, and express His love:

### NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE

The love of God is one perfect whole, expressing itself in many and diverse ways. In scripture He is always referred to in the masculine gender only: He is never referred to in the feminine gender. This is not to suggest that God is a man - He is not; He is a far superior Being, unimaginable and indescribable. We are informed that in Christ there is neither male nor female, so we understand that God is neither male nor female, per se: God has neither male nor female form. The form of God (in which the Son had being before He was found in fashion as a man) is not describable either in shape or fashion. God is not of human fashion nor is His being like the human figure whatsoever, whether male or female. God must not be conceived of in any human or humanistic forms at all, His form is spiritual; His being is benign. God is the sum total of all that is good and perfect and righteous and beneficent. If shape or gender can be ascribed to Him at all, it is the complete unification in absolute unchangeableness of being. He is that original and ultimate perfection which has no beginning or ending, nor can have - to which nothing can be added or subtracted, nor need be.

God's form or shape can only appear to the understanding: it lies in character: He is love, having no solid form nor certain figure understandable to man. Therefore although He has being, no gender can be ascribed unto it, we can only call Him God. That God is always referred to as being masculine is of His choosing: it is a concession to our finiteness and linked with God's intention to create Man

male and female, giving man premiership and headship. In doing so the Lord did not mean to imply that He is a man; the fact that when 'found in fashion as a man' God was in masculine form is not to be taken as proof that He is male as distinct from female. God is neither. That He chooses to be referred to in the masculine gender is simply an exercise of His sovereignty, not an indication of His sex. Conformity to intellectual inadequacy on man's part is not abandonment to spiritual absurdity on God's part. Man is incapable of assessing or comprehending God: He is infinite. It is not possible for humans to explain God; we are privileged and expected to believe Him.

## HE IS LOVE

From the basis of His great Being in three Persons God developed and projected the idea of the human family. It was He who called it 'Man'. He did not call it Woman, but Man. This is a collective noun chosen by God for humankind and in no way does it confuse the mind. We understand quite readily that the term Man embraces male and female; we use the masculine not the female gender to describe the species. Within this word Man we include male and female, father, mother and child and recognize also that there are other forms of relationships such as brother and sister and co. without in any way distorting its meaning. May not this also be true of God? It would be an insult to God to think or speak of the eternal Being as 'it', yet if we eliminate the masculine and feminine gender when referring to Him there is no alternative term of reference than 'it', which is unthinkable.

When in conflict with the priests of Baal on Carmel, Elijah ascribed personality and being to what he knew to be an idol. He was referring to Baal, a figment of the

imagination, but he never referred to it as 'it'. Upon reflection this may be surprising, but he was speaking in terms the priests of Baal used and thought they understood, not those which he believed and knew. Doing so he proved that Baal was an 'it', a non-existent thing, not God; but the point is that in speaking of it as a god, he used the masculine gender. Again, we should note the accommodation to limited understanding and popular misguided belief. Yet there is that in God which cannot be comprehended in the male gender, He altogether transcends what we understand by it. Nevertheless to our limited understanding there is nothing in our vocabulary better suited to describe that greatness than 'He'. God just is, and God is Love.

## LOVE OF GOD

The basic human family is father, mother, child; man and woman without child is not a family. To say of a man and wife, 'they have no child', is to say they are not a family. Indeed it is quite common to hear it said of a childless couple, 'they have no family'. When a child is born of a man and a woman, God intends that from its parents it should learn the love of God. From its father it is to learn the love of the Father, and from its mother the love of the Holy Ghost. From and by these the child must love them in return with the love of the Son. This is the parent's responsibility: they must recognize that in its babyhood, infancy, and childhood, the only god a child can recognize and know is the parents. This is an ENORMOUS responsibility, for the child cannot know God personally, nor does God expect it to: but this is another matter. Feminism, as propounded in these days, though sometimes practised in ignorance, is anti-God, and must be repented of and forsaken.

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# THE EARTHQUAKE - 'Yet once more'

## DICK HUSSEY

What a fearful thing an earthquake is! Truly a manifestation of great power, shaking and rending the earth, demolishing and shattering buildings large and small, and often taking a heavy toll of lost lives. In Matthew 24:7-8 our Lord predicts that *'there shall be famines, and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows'*. This last word in the Greek means 'travail' or labour pangs, which, as we know, begin on a light note and gradually increase in intensity and frequency. It is significant that over the last five or six decades this is precisely what has been happening with earthquakes, surely yet a further sign of the end time.

This article, however, is about what might be termed 'spiritual earthquakes', by which one means operations of God's power which produce effects allegorically similar, but always leading to the good of His people and the furtherance of His Kingdom.

First of all, some of the Old Testament occasions when great men of God were implicated one way or another in this type of divine operation:

**1. MOSES** - Exodus 19:18 *'...and the whole mount quaked greatly'*, and Hebrews 12:21 *'And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake'*. Mount Sinai is a great landmark and deserves great study. Such an overpowering manifestation of the awesome holiness of God, if rightly understood and absorbed, will surely produce that healthy fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom and which will in turn put us well on our way to the discovery of the full light and revelation of Christ.

**2. DAVID** - Psalm 4:4 *'Tremble and sin not'* (Young's literal translation) *'commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still'*. In short, a trembling which comes from a deep awareness of the holy majesty and glory of the Lord, causing

us to cease from sin, engage in quiet communion and relax in deep stillness before Him.

**3. ISAIAH** - Isaiah 66:2 '*... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word*'. Isaiah 66:5 '*Hear the word of the Lord ye that tremble at his word*'. How blessed to be found among such - those of a contrite spirit, with hearts so tender to him that they often shake with reverential fear as the living word of Him whom they love most comes to their heart.

Of course one is aware that there is a trembling that is man-made and also that there can be sensations of this kind when operating in the soulish realm which will produce extravagances and eccentricities both harmful and dangerous. Conversely, the genuine will always happen in sacred times of wholehearted waiting on God, within the context of lucid minds and clear spirits and the effect will be a deep, often sublime, consciousness of being blessedly immersed in God, with a sequel of utmost inner peace.

Isaiah 6:3-4 'And one cried unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory". And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke'.

The revelation and proclamation of the holiness and glory of God powerfully moves and shakes the posts of the door of the temple, bringing out the important principle which is later to be transferred to the spiritual temple of the New Testament.

**4. JEREMIAH** - Jeremiah 23:9 '*Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake ... because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness*'.

When he was very young Jeremiah received that outstanding revelation of the God that had known him before his conception and sanctified him before he came forth from the womb, to be a prophet of the Lord. The very hand of God Himself had touched his mouth, sealing and confirming him for that one purpose in life: to speak God's true word to His people and to the nations. At this stage we find him fully given to such a calling, with some of the true hallmarks of those really raised up by God - not an accomplished scholar perhaps, cold and analytical, but a man who indeed knew much about the heart-breaks of God and of the ministry and of the mighty shakings with which He often moves on His chosen ones.

**5. DANIEL** - Daniel 10:7 and 9 '*And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.*' Daniel 10:9 '*Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground*'.

In these days when in so many quarters so much is made of falling to the ground, mostly backwards, it is right to note that in the Scripture, whenever men of God fell before Him, and we are told how they fell, it was on their faces, not backwards, eg. Daniel on this occasion, Ezekiel (Ez.1:28), Abraham (Gen. 17:3), Moses and Aaron (Numbers 14:5,

20:6) etc. The only two occasions of falling backwards that one can recall are ELI, THE PRIEST, when the tragic news about the ark being taken by the Philistines reached him and he came to a sad, immediate death (1 Sam. 4:18), and JUDAS ISCARIOT AND THE BAND OF MEN coming with him to seize Jesus. (John 18:6) The words I AM, quietly spoken by our Lord, fully expressive of His Deity even at that point of His humiliation that preceded His passion and death, made them go backwards and fall to the ground (John 18:3-6).

To return to Daniel 10, the whole passage is most rich in spiritual significance. Verse 10, '*And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees ...*', coupled with verse 21, '*... the Scripture of truth ...*' brings out those two absolute pillars - prayer and the Word of God - which centuries later the first apostles knew full well they daren't be deflected from without vital loss.

In verse 11 we see the typical paradox - '*... O Daniel, a man greatly beloved ... And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling*'. The most tender, loving words we could imagine, make him tremble and shake, a blessed, chosen quaker indeed!

Verses 17-19 - '*... There remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong*'.

Another precious paradox later to be demonstrated perfectly by our Lord on the Cross, and learnt and developed wonderfully by Paul over the years of his glorious ministry - being reduced to impotence or great weakness to gain the inestimable strength and power of God. In vain may we try to produce this by our own efforts or sacrifices - it is only the Eternal Spirit that can bring us into these blessed depths and heights, bearing us sovereignly, as He will.

In the New Testament we find the thread of the earthquake principle continuing consistently:

**6. ON CALVARY** - '*Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent*' (Matt. 27:50-51).

*THE VEIL IS RENT* - that magnificent, costly veil of blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, beautifully embroidered with cherubim, day and night had been there to convey, silently but clearly, the solemn and sad message that we were all barred, because of sin, from the Holiest of all. But now the Lamb of God has, by the Eternal Spirit, completed the offering up of Himself without spot unto God, thereby taking away the sin of the whole world - and with great dispatch and delight the veil is immediately ripped from top to bottom by a sovereign act of God 'that all mankind may enter in'.

*'THE EARTH DID QUAKE AND THE ROCKS RENT'* - The perfect, eternal offering having been received above, our God can think of no better sign to follow the rending of the veil than to send a mighty earthquake and rend the rocks, foreshadowing the tremendous repercussions that

were to follow on planet earth and for man, made from the dust of the earth.

**7. RESURRECTION** - *'And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it'* (Matt. 28:2).

Our Lord's resurrection was unique in that there was no human mediator or agent involved and that - unlike all others risen from the dead - He rose never again to die. Death, the greatest enemy, is gloriously overcome and Jesus is *'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'* (Rom. 1:4). As the Firstfruits of the Resurrection, He is now to head a new creation of men and women to be risen from death in trespasses and sins unto new life for evermore.

Again, divine wisdom can find no better way to mark and hail such a stupendous event, than to send a great earthquake!

Before moving on into the Acts, let us look back at another great Old Testament highlight:

**8. ELIJAH ON MOUNT HOREB** - *'...And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice'* (1 Kings 19:11-12).

Yet another striking paradox: the overpowering wind, earthquake and fire and the still small voice. This still small voice spoke into Israel's crisis at that point of time with a three-pronged divine answer: Hazeel, Jehu and Elisha. The story of Jehu, narrated many chapters later in II Kings 9 & 10, pinpoints the great power borne by the divine still, small voice - albeit preceded by the wind, earthquake and fire - which resulted in the whole of Baal worship being thoroughly destroyed.

However the prophetic stream from this great Old Testament summit, projects itself right up to Pentecost and beyond.

**9. PENTECOST** - *'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 there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak ...'* (Acts 2:2-4). Here two of the three elements present on Mount Horeb appear to mark the birth of the True Church of the Living God: the wind and the fire. The living word of God also follows immediately, but with one substantial difference: it is now spoken by men and women filled with the Holy Ghost, a glorious new thing that could never happen on Sinai or Mount Horeb.

Next landmark is in Acts 4:23-37:

**10. THE CHURCH IN PERSECUTION** - *'... And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were*

*assembled together ...'* (4:31a). The earthquake, the third element - not present on Pentecost - now appears on this later occasion. There is no record in Scripture of the wind or the fire tangibly or visibly manifested again after Pentecost, whereas the earthquake principle reappears later, both in the Acts and in the epistles.

*'... And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness'* (4:31b). Complete and wonderful as their Pentecost experience had been, in this back-to-the-wall all-or-nothing crisis, a new infilling with the Word of God coming forth again with boldness, was necessary. This can only emphasize beyond any doubt or question, the fact that no matter how great our past experience, there must always be an on-going and renewing in God if we are not to dry up or become blunted.

Some of the results of this shaking were:

*'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul ...'* (4:32a). In situations where, for all we have received and known, there are cross-currents, distrust, divergence of viewpoints and positions and many other forces to rob us of power and effectiveness, how much need there is for a mighty divine earthquake - to shake out of us, all such things and leave us anchored firmly in true love, meekness, mutual trust and solid, deep-down oneness in Christ. Our strength lies heavily in our unity, hence it is so fiercely contested all along the line.

*'And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus'* (4:33a). Quite concisely, the earthquake communicates an immediate release and renewal of power.

*'... and great grace was upon them all'* (4:33b). No discordant notes but rather a blessed harmony, with love, joy, peace and every other precious virtue flowing richly on all sides so as to give days *'as the days of heaven on earth'*. Hallelujah! May the Lord again and again move in our lives so as to make this our most blessed portion.

**11. THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL** - the outstanding apostle and servant of the Lord, whose life and writings have so challenged and enriched the true Church of Jesus Christ over the centuries.

*'... And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' ...'* (Acts 9:5-6)

The revelation of Jesus in that flash of heavenly light was so overpowering as to produce, among other effects, that of trembling powerfully, just as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and others had many centuries before. However, it was to be unto a far greater glory and perhaps it was for this reason that dear Paul was to pay so high a price in later years.

Without disregarding many other important features that were present it can be safely said that this mighty trembling was one of Paul's clearest birthmarks. Nor was

it to be a once-for-all, never to be repeated experience, but rather the opposite:

*'And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'* (1 Cor. 2:3-4).

Here we see, years later, the deep honesty of Paul, who having received so much revelation and heavenly light, was very careful not to resort to human wisdom or excellence of speech that could have held his hearers spell-bound and yet be a hindrance to the Spirit of God. Rather he preferred to be in simplicity and even use unpolished language as long as the power of God could operate and be the sure foundation on which their faith would stand. To this end, letting all else go as of little or no account, he was in weakness, in fear and much trembling, knowing full well that, self-effacing and even painful at times as it was, it provided the ideal conditions for maximum reality and effectiveness. Surely the lessons and challenge that all this brings to us should be considered deeply and seriously.

**12. FRUIT AFTER ITS KIND** - Just as love begets love and life begets life, so does the earthquake in us bring forth the earthquake in others.

*'And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake ...'* (Acts 16:25-26).

Here is another significant landmark: the Gospel is setting foot on Europe, where later it was to break forth in many countries with mighty movings of God and great missionary thrust to all the ends of the earth. For this a high price was paid by the two warriors, Paul and Silas. At the same time, again by divine ordination, the occasion is marked by yet another mighty earthquake. The God of the Wind, Who is a consuming Fire, is also the GOD OF THE EARTHQUAKE.

Again, there follow some striking repercussions:

*'... the foundations of the prison were shaken ...'* (16:26) - the very strongholds of sin and darkness quake mightily.

*'...and immediately all the doors were opened...'* (16:26) - in many situations of impossible deadlock, only the earthquake can do the miracle, flinging the doors wide open and making a way where there was no way through.

*'... and every one's bands were loosed'* (16:26) - the mighty, releasing power of the earthquake - ALL ARE SET FREE.

*'Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came TREMBLING, and fell down before Paul and Silas'* (16:29). At this point, how deeply it must have stirred Paul to see the implacable, steel-like jailer shaking and trembling at their feet, just as he (Paul) had that unforgettable day when he was met by Jesus on his way to Damascus. This is all more than words can express - one really has to experience it.

*'... And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ...'* (16:33). The stony and ruthless heart has now become tender and sensitive, the coarse, cruel hands now become gentle and kind to wash the stripes, as a vivid expression of repentance and love - a new heart, a new life, a new birth - by the earthquake, the living word and the Spirit of the Living God.

**13. A CONTINUING PRINCIPLE** - *'Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven'.*

*'And this word, 'Yet once more', signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain'.*

*'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear'* (Heb. 12:26:28).

**'YET ONCE MORE'** are the key words here. The God Who on Mount Sinai and on so many other occasions over the unfolding dispensations has revealed Himself with mighty shakings, is committed to do so yet again, in His own blood bought Church and in our own individual lives, as we press on for His highest - that all things standing in the way should go by the board and only His precious works, that cannot be shaken, may remain in us as pure, untarnished, eternal gold.

One's heart's desire goes beyond merely setting forth a few thoughts on the subject - deep inside there is the longing that this may find a deep echo in many hearts, that **'YET ONCE MORE'** the God of the Earthquake may come and shake many of us mightily, that those richest and highest yields of His Calvary love and sacrifice shall be fully achieved in each one of us - even so, LORD JESUS unto your eternal glory - AMEN.

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# THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

GEORGE W NORTH

REVELATION 13:14

When the Image of the Beast is at last set up, who can foretell what shall finally be seen? Not even the inspired John could tell us. We do not know, therefore, what the hideous thing will be or look like, and it would be idle to guess! It is to be made and inspirited and empowered to speak, and to command worship, and have power of life and death. It will be a most fearsome thing, and sad and painful will it be for all who bear 'the testimony of Jesus' in that day. God grant to us mercy that in whatever day we live we shall be found faithful. Proven true in our day, we shall be counted worthy to stand in the last day alongside those who shall live through the days of the Beast and his Image, and have overcome all things.

John describes the unimaginable brute; he is horrible; an uglier creature could scarcely be imagined. Artists have attempted to capture its vile features on charts or paint its hideous form in prophetic papers, projecting images from personal imagination, but that is all. Who has power to portray its combined animal parts with its seven terrible heads, and properly place its ten crowned horns? This beast is a grotesque and horrible caricature of man, a blasphemy against God, a burlesque of the animal creation, an impossibility; but it is. The Beast is; John saw him rising up out of the sea of humanity and standing on the shore - the ultimate man of sin, the master from the sea of men who have forsaken God, crucified Christ and denied His Gospel.

## IN SATAN'S IMAGE

He is the Antichrist, the absolute opposite of the Christ, and His implacable enemy. He is the child of the Dragon and his church, the Woman, the synagogue of satan, the Mother of whom all harlots and men of sin have been born. He shall exist on earth as the worst and last most powerful product, the outcome, the child of adulterous mankind and satan cohabiting, the result of their conniving together to overthrow God and His Christ and His Saints. He is born-produced - by men's and satan's joint effort to produce the superman - He is a Beast - THE BEAST. His outward words and works are those of satan and his inward spirit is satan's image.

In Eden satan appeared in actual outward form as a serpent, but in his inward form and ego he was the dragon who had rebelled against God in heaven, and had been cast out. The serpent and Eve in the beginning and the dragon and humanity in the end combine to give birth to the man of sin, the monstrosity of all hate and cruelty and blasphemy and wickedness. He epitomizes all the devilish traits of atheism and wicked spirits, and displays in full all the corruption and depravity latent in the human race. He is the outworking and

fruition of the seed of sin sown in Eden, the very likeness of unseen satan.

## A NEW RELIGION

Following his reign, a second Beast, who greatly admires the first, arises in the world. He is not described, but his role is to perpetuate the personality and memory of the former beast by creating an image of him. This he does with amazing success and miraculous power, animating the image, and causing all to worship it. The world that first wondered after and admired the dreadful Beast now accepts him as god and follows a new religion. Just what the image was like, who can tell? We may with certainty suppose it was as perfect a reproduction and expression of the original invisible Beast as possible, a work of art par excellence. The new religion spreads like wildfire all over the earth, and by it satan takes over the hearts and lives of men with ease. It is the ideal religion for men for it is so comprehensive, embracing art, science, politics and economics, commerce, and magic power. The world finds some sort of rest and peace in it, for though nations are armed to the teeth, they find it impossible to make war with the Beast, his image is paramount. In those days the obtaining of his mark is counted as the highest of favours, as well as plain common sense. This mark is the seal of true conversion, and of total obedience to him, the proof also that the whole personality is under his dominion; it is the passport to life.

Totalitarianism will be the doctrine and condition of the world at the end of time. What John has prophesied in vision is the most cunning counterfeit and subtle substitute for God and salvation this world will ever know. Instead of the Father, the dragon; instead of Christ, the Beast; instead of the Holy Spirit, the second beast; instead of eternal life, social security; instead of the seal of the Spirit, the mark in the forehead; instead of man in God's image, man in the beast's image. It is a total deception, an iniquitous blasphemy, the devil's masterpiece, a complete fiction - the lie. It is designed by satan to eradicate and blot out from the memory all belief in and knowledge of the Lord in the earth and destroy His people. The devil is determined on eradication - programmed extermination accompanied by substitution of the lie for the truth. He intends to purge the earth of all knowledge of God, and only those will survive who stand on Mount Sion and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth - virgins who will not defile themselves with women.

## THE FAITHFUL WIFE

One of satan's major strategies from the very

beginning has been to defile woman, and through them defile men. This was his original ploy with Adam; first he deceived the woman and through her defiled the man. In the more immediate context of this book the Lord unmasks Jezebel, the adulterous prophetess working in the churches, and also Mystery Babylon, the great whore and mother of harlots. By contrast at the very end of the book and of the entire Bible, the virgin woman of the churches, the great mother of virgins, New Jerusalem, true and faithful wife of Christ and mother of the church, is revealed. She has neither been beguiled by Satan, nor bewitched by the beast's magic, but has remained firm on her foundations, true to her Lamb-husband. She is exactly as the Lord Jesus pictured her to be, the revelation of His heart, the fulfilment of His hopes. In the end everything will be entirely as He imagined and fore-ordained, New Jerusalem will not be a distorted image of God and His Lamb, she will be the perfect reflection of His heart.

The dreadful beast standing on the shore is the son of Satan, the man of sin, antichrist. He is the image of his father Satan, the devil/dragon/serpent god of this world, the spirit now working in the children of disobedience. He usurped the position of God in this world when he came as a serpent to Eve in Eden, and by her destroyed Adam the image of God. He did not then appear as the dragon he is and was when he appeared in heaven. He has always appeared as that in the eyes of the hosts of heaven - that is why, when he was called up into heaven and saw him, John described him as a great red dragon. He is the opposite of God and the opponent of the woman who brought forth the man-child whom he hates, and he is now on this earth seeking to devour the woman and all those who have the testimony of that man-child Jesus.

## GENERATION OF VIPERS

All who bear that testimony and keep the commandments of God as He did are the image of the Lamb, the true virgin church. The dragon is seeking ceaselessly to wash her away, pouring out floods of lies, rivers of abuse, torrents of vilification - his voice is as the sound of many waters and from every quarter his spirit and spiritual powers flood the world constantly invading the church. At present the earth is helping the woman, her testimony is still being received in the world, but not for much longer. The church was attacked and persecuted by the dragon as soon as it was born. Right at the beginning he raised up Saul of Tarsus who gave his voice and spirit to the destruction of the church; this man bore the image of the beast, and was as a dragon breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and doing his works by the same powers as his master.

At that time Saul was a child of Mystery Babylon, mother of harlots, through whom the devil fathers all his children into the world. Saul was a member of the sect which both the Lord Jesus, and John Baptist before Him called the generation of vipers. All the while Jesus was on earth about His Father's business, the devil used his serpent guise. He was chief viper using men as vipers to constantly attempt the

corruption and fall of new Adam. Satan had ranted and roared as a lion seeking to devour the infant Jesus by having Him rejected at birth. Failing his wishes then, in an effort to destroy the babe, he assumed his most basic natural form of dragon by inciting Herod to slaughter all the innocents in the land. Serpent again, he came to tempt the Lord to destruction in the wilderness; failing that, through his viper brood, he kept up his stream of temptation and persecution throughout all His working life. All these efforts having been expended in vain, the devil at the last returned to the attack as a roaring lion breathing out threats and slaughter, until he finally succeeded in having the Christ crucified to death and buried. But far from destroyed, the Man-child of God lived throughout all, conquering the dragon, and, rising from the grave, was caught up to heaven. From the very beginning He was perfect, the very image of the Father, and now He is perfect God utterly perfected as Man.

## HIS BODY

Upon receiving Him back into His bosom, the Father sent another to the earth, the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus He also is the image of the Father, and between them these three in one made man in the beginning, reproducing the form of their own spiritual likeness in a human body: inwardly Adam was the image of God.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one substance and being, they have one body (though possibly at least two eternal manifestations in New Jerusalem - the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb). Because God does not have a material body, it does not mean He has no body or form of substance to His being: He is not unsubstantial. In the eternal future we shall understand how that which we think of as material substance is not substantial material at all. We shall also know that the things we thought had no material substance are the real substance, that is spiritual. We, all too humanly, are far too prone to think of body only in terms of flesh and blood, whereas the Lord taught us otherwise, calling bread His body and wine His blood. Moses tells us that the nobles of Israel who accompanied him part way up Sinai saw under the feet of God a pavement 'as the body of heaven in his clearness'. What we would perhaps best describe as empty space has body. We also speak of the body of Christ, meaning (as we say) His spiritual body. The actual Hebrew word translated 'body' means 'bone' - a very solid thing indeed. The very fact that God made a body for Adam and breathed into him spirit is a fairly safe enough assurance that God has body also, and is in truest sense body (though not flesh), and substance.

## THE IMAGE OF GOD

Into Adam God inspired His Spirit, so the man should be in God's image immediately. God did not, because He could not, create Adam in His own image without the Holy Spirit, the creation of that image is the prerogative and function of the Holy Spirit of God. It was He who came upon and overshadowed the virgin Mary that she should bring forth

her firstborn son in the image of God. The Holy Spirit though not the human flesh and blood image of God, is nevertheless that image, and because He is that image, He could bring forth the Son of the Father in that same image humanly. Now, the firstborn has returned to His Father, the Spirit of truth, has come forth to give birth to other sons, to reproduce that same image in all of them. This then, is the precise reason why the dragon has masterminded the great deception unmasked by John. He could not become God and establish a kingdom in heaven, he attempted to do so, but was overcome and cast out. From that moment he made up his mind to establish a kingdom on earth. He has planned to bring it to power on earth when humanity has reached ocean-like proportions, because he can then affect the greatest number of people. Then he will bring in his kingdom with outward show, and in great power, so that it will quickly spread all over the world.

First the beast will be manifest. This one will have such powers of leadership in the corrupt society that men will speedily recognize his ability and give him allegiance. Especially so because he will be a financial giant as well as a military genius, possessed of a magnetic personality and a mighty intellect. He will be a civil and political head of international fame, and will establish his authority with ruthless skill and proficiency. He will have no difficulty with this, for long before he appears on the scene and becomes lord of mankind, his mother will have been ruling over the hearts of men. Mystery Babylon sits a queen. She has long since lost whatever degree of virginity she may have had; she is a religious, political, financial system in league with the devil, practised in the black arts of satanism. Masquerading as the true Church for man, she will boast her international standing and fame and wisdom in the ways of the world. She will talk of a 'new age' of humanism and the spirit of the earth and declare Sodomy as an alternative way of life. John presents her unmasked for the discerning eye to see her as she is, drunk with the blood of the martyrs of the true Church, and full of the blood of those who have been God's saints and prophets throughout all time. The Beast will emerge to premiership and force and power from this system and being smitten in one of his seven heads will lose his seemingly perfect invulnerability, but he will speedily recover and the damage be repaired. By this temporary setback, and subsequent marvellous recovery, he will gain more admirers and instead of losing peoples confidence thereby, he will impress them still further with his miraculous powers of healing and bind souls the closer to him.

## **A LIVING IMAGE**

Having accomplished the devil's will, this Beast soon passes from the scene only to be replaced by another beast whose role in the devil's scheme is to masquerade in the place of the Holy Spirit: his business is to make a living image of the former Beast and compel people to worship him. So the subtle plan is exposed. As in the relationship of Jesus to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit to Jesus and the Father, so is the relationship of the Beast to the devil and the

second beast to the first Beast and the devil. The Holy Spirit has come with express purpose to create the living image of the Son in each of God's children, and cause us to fall down and worship Him. It is a contest of power and wills between God and satan. The two plans are directly opposed and mutually exclusive - it is impossible to worship God and the god of this world. If a man is sealed with the Spirit and listens to His word, he cannot receive the mark of the Beast and listen to the false prophet. But if a man refuses to receive the mark of the Beast he cannot live for he shall not eat because he will not be allowed to buy or sell anything. Man will either have to go right into the Babylon/Beast system or be cut off from it completely - he cannot exist in both.

All that Christ, the High Priest of our testimony, has said to the churches now appears very relevant. From the moment of His first appearing to John on Patmos He faithfully testified of the need to love Him, cling to Him, be faithful, and walk with Him in white. He also spoke of dwelling where satan's seat is, and about false prophetesses and the cult of a 'superior' priesthood, of spiritual adultery and worldliness. The warnings are very clear and so are the exhortations and promises; we can and should partake of the fruit of the tree of life and eat of the hidden manna and sup with Him - it is essential. Only they who walk with Him and live by Him will be able to withstand the pressure, and overcome when the one condition for existence is 'bow down and worship the image of the Beast or die'. Whichever choice is made the result is death; to worship the image of the Beast is spiritual death, to refuse to do so is physical death.

## **IMAGE OF THE LAMB**

Viewing it now from this safe distance it is easy to say the latter is infinitely to be preferred to the former - and surely the most sensible. God grant that if we were ever forced to make the choice, we should have the courage to face slow starvation for Jesus' sake. It would not be easy for parents to stand by as their children starve to death when agreement to bend the knee would prevent it; 'after all' says the subtle serpent 'it's only an image, ye shall not surely die.' But it would be a total denial of truth. To bow the knee would be abject surrender, an acceptance of the blasphemy, confession that the devil is God, admission that Jesus is the antichrist, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This would be unforgivable sin and would result in being blotted out of the Book of Life.

We who have life, have the life that is in the Son who is the image of God. It is this image and this alone we are to worship. The Holy Ghost has come to bring us to this. We become like what we worship; 'we know WHAT we worship', said Jesus, and John says, 'As He is so are we in this world'. They who live sacrificed to God become transformed in this world, for the image the Holy Spirit reproduces is the image of the Lamb. In the end it is impossible to avoid being in the image of one or the other. Beast or Lamb - there is no other alternative.

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# WAITING ON GOD

LES WHEELDON

The subject of this article is vast and hardly to be exhausted in such a short space. Only three aspects of this vital discipline are covered below:

1. Waiting on God - a moral choice - the death of the natural man.
2. Waiting on God - the discovery of God.
3. Waiting on God - the discovery of the call.

Each of these is an essential aspect of this truth, and it is doubtless the prayer and desire of many to be drawn into the wonder of deeper communion with God. Humility and the willingness to learn is the basis of this discipline, and undergirds all that we will ever learn of God. If we follow on in such a spirit, surely we will not be disappointed.

## 1. Waiting on God - a moral choice - the death of the natural man.

It may be thought that waiting on God is the habit of silent prayer. This would mean that quietness itself would indicate that hearts are waiting on God. There is no doubt that to some degree this is the case, but quietness is not the heart of waiting on God. The crucifixion of the natural man is.

Waiting on God is contrary in all its implications to the virtues and powers of the man who would follow this way. Man is capable of doing many things, he is brimming with natural powers and possibilities. The evidence of this is seen in the achievements of man all around, and they are many, and it is wrong to belittle them. Cars, ships, aeroplanes, space ships, telephones, satellites, radios, televisions.... the list is endless, and all are monuments to man's innate abilities. True they are the product of more than one man, but even one man is capable of stunning achievements. Some master many languages, obtain several degrees, design and accomplish great works of architecture, write beautiful poetry, play several musical instruments. Not only have many men done these things, but these powers lie dormant in all men to a greater or lesser extent. Their outworking depends on other factors as diverse as health, social background, drive and ambition, wealth etc.. Most of man's innate energy is directed towards the obtaining of wealth and power. Men use their strength to build their own kingdom, and their success depends on the development of their soul powers. Of course the lists above include only positive powers, but it would be naive not to mention that most of man's energies are in the end directed towards evil and destructive uses. Almost all man's inventions have in the end been used for direct military purposes, and military needs have often spawned great inventions, as in the case of the atom bomb.

The greatest man who ever lived was Jesus Christ. He

held within his heart all the secrets of creation, and if He had so desired He could have developed His soul and mind to limitless heights. He could have given mankind any of the discoveries that men now prize so highly. He could have opened the door for avenues of scientific discovery. He could have given man any or all of the inventions that men boast of so loudly, but He didn't. This fact alone is sobering and awesome. Instead of choosing a life of natural development, He consciously refused to develop His powers of soul and mind beyond the minimum necessary to fulfil the will of God. The most obvious outworking of this lay in His chosen profession. He became a carpenter with Joseph, and remained so for his entire youth. This required little intellectual concentration, but great spiritual challenge. He was faced with great issues of self denial, exercise of patience and humility, of faith and trust, of love and obedience. Because He followed this path in practical living, He was well equipped for the development of His burning passion, His desire to know God, to commune with Him, to plumb the depths of the compassion and the mercy of God. He chose to wait on God alone.

Let us pause here, and state a central truth: Waiting on God is not primarily a state of mind. That would be to reduce it to psychology. Waiting on God is a moral choice, that must be remade daily and continually. It is the constant denial of self in all forms, positive and negative, in order to choose the knowledge of God.

So far we have only considered the way that man in general has developed His innate powers and abilities. Sadly the truth is that men in the churches have done the same, and assumed that the way to develop the kingdom of God is to develop our natural resources. There are even books, seminars and courses devoted entirely to such ends. Bible schools emphasise degrees and diplomas, and their courses are directed towards the unfolding of intellectual powers of grasping the scripture, of preaching and teaching. Church meetings have men of natural talent at the centre, directing worship with skillful use of music and instruments. It may be subtle and undeliberate, but man himself stands at the centre of such churches, and the church is a celebration of what man can do rather than who God is. There is also a subtle leaning towards the achievements of finance, and the need for it. Tools and instruments become essential for the attainment of God's purposes. Appeals are made based on the need for buildings and equipment. 'It is only natural' of course, and therein lies the stubbornness of the disease. It is not normal for sinful man to rely on God, it is unnatural and strange and so it is that men use great inventiveness and cleverness, and all to avoid facing their spiritual bankruptcy, their lack of faith and love in the Holy Ghost.

The truth of waiting on God is not only a matter of prayer, it is also a matter of the way we conduct ourselves

in every realm. Look once more at Jesus, choosing His apostles, unlearned and ignorant men. He could have chosen men of means such as Joseph of Arimathea, or men of learning such as Nicodemus, but He didn't. Sometimes it is what men don't do that will mark them out in the end as servants of God. Men complain that they don't have the time for prayer. This is a lie. Men have not prayed. They have chosen other activities counting them as more important than time spent in the presence of God.

We must all face up to the fact that to wait on God is a choice that we must make. It is nothing to do with our personalities, it has all to do with our spiritual choices. Because waiting on God is a matter of spiritual choice, the cornerstone of embarking on this course is repentance. Men must repent of their independent selfish life styles and invest themselves in God alone. Men must not excuse their lack of prayer, their lack of spiritual awareness, their lack of faith, their lack of concern for the lost, their lack of fullness of the Holy Ghost. Men must not excuse these things, we must repent of them thoroughly and wholeheartedly.

For some the path of repentance will be harder, involving many tears and renunciation of patterns of life that have been long established. Others will find that they have built patterns of church life on a wrong foundation, and that their repentance will have endless repercussions for many others, bringing upset and upheaval to people who counted on them to provide their stability and assurance through natural means. Blessed is the man that fearlessly faces his personal emptiness, and is not afraid to face the consequences. Such a man does well to consider that obedience is hardest when it hurts others more than it hurts us. This is so often the case, and is no doubt the reason why many men shrink back from a life of consistent obedience, into a life of general obedience. Such a life may involve some personal sacrifice, but will avoid all the areas which causes pain to loved ones, be they family, friends or colleagues. This will show where our affections truly lie. Either we love Jesus Christ, or we love the world, we cannot love both.

There can be no doubt that this issue is best faced at the outset of the Christian life. How blissful to set this pattern to life in the first weeks and months of life in Christ. The babe in Christ should be taught to draw sustenance from God, by learning habits of prayerfulness, and attention to the word. How tragic if babes in Christ are led to see how useful they will be because of their natural gifts, or because of the impressiveness of their former careers and talents. 'Nothing in my hand I bring' says the hymn writer, and how true this is, and how much we need to dwell on the implications, not only when we come for salvation but also as we seek to go on with God.

## 2. Waiting on God - discovery of God

The foundation of life in the spirit is the inner witness. It is by this faculty that men know things without being taught them by man. They know things by the Holy Ghost. If a man is not indwelt of the spirit, then that man will not know or understand the spiritual truths revealed in the scripture. He will rather interpret scripture by his natural mind, desperately trying to explain the endless confusion that will reign in such a life. Truth can only be known by the Holy

Spirit. Of course the Holy Spirit is able to speak to men, and give them glimpses of truth before He indwells them, but it is only by the indwelling abiding witness that men come to the fountain of truth and the knowledge of God.

Once a man has received the Holy Ghost, it is the first lesson of all to learn to wait on God through the Holy Ghost, to abide in the inner witness. It is the things that a man learns there that will shape the rest of his life. This is true of all men, including the man Christ Jesus, and here as in all things He is our example.

### The witness in the womb.

The proof of this great truth is clearly testified in the statements that speak of the spiritual life of Christ before his birth.

*'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.'* Heb 1:5.

God spoke this into the spirit of Christ from the day of His conception in the womb. Clearly, Christ did not receive this word into his mind through physical ears as yet unformed, nor through language learnt from his parents. He heard the voice of God when he was in the earliest stages of his human existence. God speaks to our spirit, it is later that we understand what God has said with our conscious faculties. Spirit comes before all else in God's order for man's life. We must understand by spirit before we understand anything else. God's voice begat knowledge in the spirit of Christ, and Christ's spirit responded and spoke to His Father:

*'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.'* Hebrews 10:5-7.

Men must wait on God, in order for understanding to dawn upon their minds of what God is speaking to their spirit and what they are saying to God. When Christ was born, the witness of the spirit, steadily witnessed to the infant that He was the Son of God. As He grew He would have found His being drawn out to heed the inner speakings, to delight in them, to savour them, to feed on them. His mind would not have been filled with dry matter of factness concerning the unseen realm, rather His being was filled with wonder as He received understanding of who He was, and who God was, and what the greatness of the calling was. Who can tell the order of the revelation that came to Him? We must wonder when we think of the moment that He realised that He was the lamb that was to take away the sin of the world. But doubtless before that moment, there were many precious times of blissful communion as realisations of inner spiritual truth washed over Him. Perhaps as He lay on His bed in early childhood, no doubt in moments in prayer, during readings in the synagogue, during periods of silent meditation as He waited on God on hillsides or in the wilderness. Yet let no man think that he went to nature to find God. He went to places that were lonely to be undistracted by the noise of men. As He did so, He was taught and educated by the spirit. He

was educated in the ways of God, and taught in the pattern of living. Was He not perfect already? Yes He was perfect, but He still needed to grow into the fullness of the life that lay in His spirit:

*'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'* Luke 2:52.

If Jesus had to go this way, then how much more those who follow in His footsteps? The root carries the branch, and the root that held the ministering years of Jesus, was the thirty silent years during which His whole being was conformed to the attitude of waiting on God. Men must go this way, else all their fruitfulness will be severely limited. Men must be given over in childlike simplicity, being taught without striving and without intensity. There were to be intense moments in later years, but no man can pass through a Gethsemane unless He has first been steeped in the knowledge of God, that enables Him to trust God at the limits of sanity. There are realms that God would draw men into, but no man can take a short cut in these matters. God is far too wise to ever be drawn into the follies and presumptions of men. God will wait for men, till they learn to wait on Him.

*'For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible ...'* Heb 11:27.

This statement is true of Jesus much more than of Moses. Jesus would have been taught by those around him, at home, in school and in the synagogue, yet His inner anointing taught Him to put all He heard and saw into the right perspective. All around Him were sinners, they would have confessed this, and those who didn't would still have demonstrated they were sinners by their pride and arrogance. Yet Jesus knew that He was different. He didn't know it by scripture, for scripture said that *'There is none righteous.'* He knew it by scripture illuminated by the Spirit within. He was pure, He was inwardly without sin, He was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. Every child of God must be taught what He is, by scripture illuminated by the word of God, for a man is a new creation when he is in Christ, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. Ultimately, all men draw their doctrine from the inner state that they live from. Men whose inner states are sinful will twist scriptures to explain their inner condition. Men who have been cleansed by a mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit will witness to this by the doctrine they preach. Men must learn not to be swayed to conform to lesser standards and states that they see among men. Men must live according to the inner standards of love and holiness that bathe the hearts of the sons of God.

Jesus would have sat in the synagogue and noticed the man with the unclean spirit. He would have wondered from an early age why no one else saw it. He would have longed for the man to be set free. He would have observed the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the sick of all kinds, and longed for their healing, and yet He did nothing but wait for the time appointed of the Father. He was no doubt moved by need, and touched by it, yet He was restrained from all ministry. He subjected Himself entirely to His Father. Once more, it is important that men do not misunderstand the Son of God. He did not stand in indifference, and neither was there the

slightest laziness in His withholding ministry. Men must guard their hearts from using truth as an excuse for failure and sin. Christ did not wait on God because it was His 'thing'. Men must divest themselves of all motives of using God and His truth to their own ends, and throw themselves at the feet of Jesus, to be exposed in His searching gaze, and purified for the master's use. Jesus was guided from within, and yet He was moved by things he saw without. He knew bodily appetites, and yet He was not guided by them. He did not wait on sleep, food and drink, sexual needs, mental appetites for stimulating imaginations. He waited on God alone.

### **Wait .... for the knowledge of God.**

The man who waits on God, will be introduced into the knowledge of the person of God.

*'...as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ...'*

*... the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.'* I Cor. 2:9-12.

This is the work of the spirit, to minister the knowledge of God to the hearts of His people. Here there is need for great patience, for God is not like men. He does not have the aim to give us superficial thrills, which so many have set their hearts on. Men must wait patiently and quietly, stilling the ceaseless stream of thoughts and questions. These things will act as a barrier, until they be set steadily aside, and a man begins to hear and see the wonder of God in His heart. Men assume so much about God, most of all assuming that He is like them. This is not so, for God is greater than all. Men so easily become overfamiliar, and end up thinking of God as some powerful friend. It is to the waiting heart that is revealed the truth of infinite love, and everlasting being. It is here that men learn the true meaning of worship, as their beings are humbled before the revelation of God. God does not seek honour as the supreme ruler of the universe, rather He seeks the worship of loving hearts. God seeks to occupy a deeper position than that of master, he seeks that of God who is worshipped and loved in all His ways. This implies abandonment to the being of God, without condition, without reserve, without ulterior motive. God knows that men will only abandon to Him as they see Him, He knows that only those who love Him will be drawn to seek Him out as He is. Some will enter into the place of worship in an instant, others will have to pass through the softening of their stubborn minds. Others will have to pass through all their selfish reasons for needing God. God cannot be worshipped on the basis of our need. And so hearts wait and are sometimes disappointed because they were holding false hopes. But even there, let no heart draw back, but leaving disappointment and failure aside, let them press on and in. The Spirit of God leads me to be stripped of all personal plans and ambitions, of all other affections, until I am left with nothing but my naked spirit to throw at His feet in abandoned worship and love.

### 3. Waiting on God - the discovery of the call.

*'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.'* Heb 1:5.

It is sad that some truths are held and no longer wondered at. Here is one such truth, that a man should be called a son of God. We know that we are children of God, but the length, depth, breadth and height of this truth must be revealed by the Spirit. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah were great men, yet none of them called God his father. This is what caused the Jews to crucify Jesus:

*'Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.'* John 5:18.

Men must be born of the spirit and then live and walk in the power of that birth. We are called to be sons of God, not primarily to be servants, (though every son is a servant), and certainly not hired servants. The hired servants think of the work and calculate for rewards. The son works because he delights to do the will of the father, and expects no wages for his labour, knowing that he shares in the entire wealth of the father by inheritance. The man who has heard the inner call to walk as a son, will find that this calling motivates him to live tirelessly and unceasingly for his father. The call fills a man's heart with dignity, and peaceful assurance that his life and his work are hidden in the father's hand. The prodigal son desired to be received as a hired servant, but totally misread his father's heart. His father could do no other than receive him as a son. The elder brother also drifted from his standing as a son. When he finds that there is music and celebration in his father's house, he does not seek fellowship with the father but with the hired servant. When the father comes out to him he speaks in terms of reward:

*'Thou never gavest me ...'* Luke 15:29.

The Father's response is wholly love:

*'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'* Luke 15:31.

There are things that must be done in the kingdom of God, but these are things that can only be done by sons, and by sons who are utterly devoted to their father. It is this call that must possess a man, that he is loved, and eternally held in the father's bosom, and in this security he will be used and spent for the father's perfect will. Much has been said about the rewards and the inheritance of being a son of the Father, yet care must be taken not to see this as a grounds for carnal self indulgence. It is said in Romans 8:32, that God spared not his own son, and this is no doubt the realm of true calling and service, to spend and to be spent, to be so sure of Father's love and care, that He may use and even waste us as He pleases. How strange that those who are called to be sons, are also called to be wasted in the eyes of men. Yet it is precisely in this offering up of one's life to Him, that the heart of true sonship is revealed.

Service and zeal for Father's house will spring from a heart that has followed the call to Father's heart. The heart

must learn and become familiar with the blessed inner call of 'Father', and the warm response of 'Thou art my beloved son'. Here is the spring and well of all calling, of all life. Here is the definition of eternal life, and even the definition of God Himself:

*'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'* John 1:18.

The greatest mysteries are also the simplest. The most blessed states are uncomplicated and pure. Men must wait on God to know their calling. The inner witness of Sonship bathed the heart and mind of Jesus through all His life and does so still today. Men must give themselves to waiting on God in order to be bathed in the inner witness of what they are and what they are called to be.

#### ... Called a priest

*'...Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'* Hebrews 5:5 and 6.

As a man waits on God, there is first the dawning of sonship, and then the dawning of an everlasting priesthood. God's spirit speaks continually in the heart with this twofold witness, of sonship and priesthood. It is this inner speaking in the heart of the waiting saint, that forms the life into that to which God has called us. A man's personality is knit together in the will of God, as he abides in the inner anointing and witness of the Holy Ghost. The spirit will inevitably lead a man out of fellowship with the world and into fellowship with God, in offering up of himself in prayer to God. Who can say what victories are won as men devote themselves to priesthood? Who can say how minds and wills are fired and changed? Who can measure the response of God to the sweet incense of lives offered up in prayer and intercession to God? It is totally clear that no offering of man can ever redeem a soul from sin. One offering alone could do that. Yet it is also plain from scripture, that priesthood lies at the heart of God's kingdom, just as it lay at the heart of the nation of Israel.

This inner calling is not a merely informative thing. The call is to guide and introduce the life to all the wonders of priesthood, through all the wonders of discovery of a heart that has been introduced into fellowship with God. This priesthood will follow a path through loneliness, hunger, pain, worship, seekings, intercessions, groanings and so the list goes on. Hearts pass through depths of searchings, in moments of being seared by the longings for spiritual reality, and then through even deeper searchings of the quest of love for others to be introduced into the bliss of eternal life. The height of priesthood is without doubt, that place of identification with the Father's deepest longings and will, in his unspeakable grief over sin. Few men have known God in His own grief and sorrow, and yet there lies the heart of all effective intercession, in losing one's life amidst the things that touch the heart of God, and our own hearts as we too are graced to be partakers of the love and grace of God.

The call of God is persistent and patient, and yet will never assume a dominating note. God rules by love, and inference is much more akin to the wooing tones of the spirit than shouting. As God cried out in the temple:

*'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'* Isa.6:8.

So God cries out still now, but only those who love Him and are drawn by His great love will have ears to hear. What great things God would gladly bestow on every one of us. Let us then wholeheartedly respond:

**Here am I Lord, send me.**

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# JOHN 17

**GEORGE W. NORTH**

This is the Lord's prayer, His very own. It is not the prayer He taught His disciples to pray - wrongly called the Lord's prayer - but the prayer He Himself prayed as He moved toward the cross. To have it to read is one of the greatest of all this world's privileges, and to read it with the heart is to be captivated by its sheer beauty. The sweetness of the Lord's relationship with His Father is as an aroma filling the soul, it is so exquisite. Everything depended upon this relationship and He knew it. All the while He was in this world He acknowledged His dependence upon it; He lived and moved under the authority of the Father all the time. The Father has been His overseer, even to the extent of the selection of the men Jesus chose to be His companions. Speaking to His Father about them, He said, *'Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me'*. How precious these words must have been to the listening apostles: what a wonderful statement this is. But did He mean His Father GAVE THEM to HIM or HIM to THEM? Or did He mean that He and they were given each to the other?

## THOU HAST SENT ME

One of the Lord's responsibilities to them was to let them know and make them understand that He had been sent from heaven by the Father expressly for them. With what joy therefore He could say to His Father at the completion of His earthly life, *'The world does not know Thee, but I have known Thee and these have known that Thou hast sent Me'*. His voice must have been tinged with sorrow as He spoke; it had taken Him three years to convince His men of this, it had been hard work. At first nobody had believed Him; He did not blame them for that, they had to discover it for themselves. They had left all and followed Him, but not because they believed Him to be the Son of God. Anyone who asked them why they did so would have received a variety of answers, each true enough of the individual, but none true of Him. When after following for years, (and having passed through seasons of great perplexity and serious doubts), they came to the conclusion that He was God's Son, it was only to the limits of THEIR understanding. This of course was human enough, and that is all anyone can be and do. Peter's great confession to him, to which they all subscribed, was, *'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God'*: it was bold and daring but within a short while the Lord called Peter Satan. Worse still, about that time also He said that one of them was a devil. They were not all devils, but in their thinking they were all satanically dominated, and sometimes satanically motivated

and controlled. Peter was only one among twelve, indeed among the whole nation, as the rejection and crucifixion of Christ proved. All men outside of Christ are both dominated and controlled by satan, under the deception of believing themselves to be free agents.

## HAST THOU KNOWN ME?

These men correctly and utterly believed Jesus Christ to be who He was, yet during that sacred supper in the upper room, He had to say to them such things as, 'Have I been so long time with you and yet thou hast not known Me?' - and preface some of His remarks with 'If ye had known Me'. Sadly He had to say also, 'believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works sake'. Their unbelief was spilling out of their mouths while saying they believed. The Lord knew this, He had known it all the time, and now He was pleading with them. These men had to believe - properly, correctly and they also had to believe soon, for there were only a few more hours left; He must convince them. He must concentrate on this. No more miracles, no more popular concern now - at least for the moment - He must finish the far greater work His Father had given Him to do.

He had finished so much. For weeks - months now, He had been finishing off things on earth, bringing things to a head. He had completed his ministerial life among the people - finished doing miracles and telling parables; no more visits to villages and towns and homes, all that had been preparation. The world of Palestine with its temple and synagogues and crowds and needs was all behind, He had ended that work - now for the bigger task. This must be finished too. He could then go on to the even yet greater task, for which above all He had come into the world: that done He would shout out the great and final victory 'Finished': then He would go home. Not yet though: He must concentrate a while longer on these men of His, His Father had given them to Him for this, they must be utterly convinced, really sure. These were to be the nucleus, the elder brothers of the family of God on earth, their teachers and leaders, yet up to the present they had not believed He was the Son of God in the way and to the extent they should. They must, otherwise they could not be what Father wanted them to be; no-one could be gathered to them and nothing could be built upon them yet, it was impossible. Worse still, failing this He would have failed completely, and His Father's trust betrayed.

## REMEMBER ME

What particular thing He had said that had convinced them can only be guessed. He had just kept on speaking to their hearts, ministering to their needs till in the end they were convinced. What a time it had been; He had washed their feet, broken bread and poured out wine for them, telling them to eat and drink, sharing it among themselves, *'Do it in remembrance of Me'*, He said. He never expected them to understand it all then, but in the days and years to come stretching out into eternity. *'I am going on alone to prepare for you'*, He said, *'I'll come back for you then.'* **I MUST go and do what I have to do, you MUST believe Me'**, and so He talked on. *'Believe Me, trust Me, abide in Me'*, He craved it of them. He was winning, winning their love, He wanted their trust, He must have it. They had never heard Him speak like this before, *'I want you to have part in Me, and in what I do, and be where I am; I want you there with Me also'*. It was all so wonderful; but whether they were convinced by that, or whether it was when He said, *'The Father Himself loveth you'* did not matter, finally their hearts were reached and convinced.

At last they spoke out what He wanted to hear - *'Lo, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no proverb'*; *'Now we are sure that thou knowest all things and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God'*. Had they been waiting these three years to ask Him this? Almost as though it was incredible to Him, the Lord said, *'Do you now believe?'* This was what He had wanted; He had worked for it and now they were saying it! It was accomplished. He had done what His Father had given Him to do. *'Do you now believe?'*, He exclaimed - and then the blow fell; they were all going to be scattered, the hour of separation had come.

He was going - the Shepherd was going to be smitten, the sheep would be scattered, all of them would be driven to their own (homes). Desolation! How would their newly declared faith stand up under that? He prayed for them - would they find as He had when He came to His own, that they would not be received by them? He had overcome all these things, He had to, it was part of the world into which He had come - they must overcome it too. This was all part of it, the cost to them, the price of eternal life to them - not to buy it, but to prove to themselves that they had it. Father had given them to Him and He to them for this; they must pay for their faith, know rejection and suffer for His sake too, they must feel it.

## KEEP THEM

They had come a long way in three years, and thought they knew Him; they had said they believed, but He wanted more than that of them: they would learn what as they listened to their Lord's prayer - *'This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent'*. It was not sufficient that they should know Him, they must know the Father. All they had seen and heard and shared in for the past three years had only been possible because HE knew the Father. They had lived alongside Him, and doing so had lived with eternal life without ever knowing Him and having it themselves, they STILL did not have it. They did not know the Father who had

known them from eternity, and now loved them the more because they loved His Son. Jesus was pleading with the Father for them, *'Keep them, THROUGH THINE OWN NAME KEEP THEM'* - *'for Thy own honour, Thy own love's sake - KEEP them'*; He had done His part, He had kept them and now He was handing them back to His Father; Father must do His part now.

This part of His task finished, the Lord felt He could now go on. He must, for the greater part of the task lay still ahead - He was facing into it. The tumult was near at hand, about to break upon Him: they had only about another hour or so together now - that was all. The transfer of responsibility from Himself to His Father had not been easy, He loved these men, He would love them to the end; they were His own, Father's love-gift to Him. It was not easy to leave them even though He knew they would be alright. He had kept them for His Father, now the Father would keep them for Him; their safety was ensured, He felt free to go on to redeem them, but He must go alone; where He was going they could not follow - yet. They would not understand this, it would bewilder them: they would feel lost, headless, aimless and afraid, but He would come back to them again, and He knew that when He did they would understand; they would be one step nearer knowing the Father, and O how He longed for that. They would understand Him a lot better than too. He was not going home permanently yet, He was only going home to visit His Father, He would be back, He had promised them that.

## HOPE FOR THE WORLD

If despite their grief and the mystery of it all they listened to what He prayed, they learned that:

- 1 - they would still be on the EARTH, but would be kept from the WORLD by the Father
- 2 - they must be sanctified while still in the world, by the word of the Father: *'Thy word is truth'*, He said to Him. What He was saying was, *'Father, I kept them from the world by speaking to them; now Father You keep speaking to them'*
- 3 - He had sent them into the world as He Himself had been sent into the world - sanctified and sent; he was asking for the same for them as for Himself in the beginning
- 4 - they should be one, that the world should believe that the Father had sent Him.

He had sent them out in order that men and women - the whole world - should believe that He had been sent by Father. What a hope: what a reason: what a purpose.

He did not pray for the world, He said, only for those His Father had given Him. It was not that He did not care for the world of men, it was the sheer downright common sense reality of Him. There is no hope - not a chance - for the world of men unless they believe that God sent His Son onto this earth, all must believe and know that Jesus was sent of the Father. Among the many reasons why he came into the world, none is more important than the substance of the prayer He prayed that night. He poured it into the ears of His Father in hope - more than hope - that he was pouring it into the hearts of His friends - the men God had given Him. His Father had decided that in His Son's place, in their measure they too should be the hope of the world.

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# Emmaus Print Ministries



34 Green Lane,  
Padgate,  
Warrington,  
Cheshire.

Telephone..... 0925 810345

Editor..... John Norris  
Production..... Nigel Cannell

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