

John's Gospel

THE LOVE
OF GOD

*No book in the Bible expounds on the
depth of God's love as this Gospel does.*

BY GERALD FLURRY

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I believe this is the most profound and inspiring *booklet* I have ever written. John was called *the one whom Jesus loved*. When Christ was on Earth, He probably spent more time with John than any other apostle—including Peter. Do you know why?

John was apparently the only apostle *not* to be martyred. He didn't write his Gospel until about 30 years after Christ's death. Later he wrote his epistles. He also wrote the book of Revelation while he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos.

John's Gospel discusses many foundational and deep subjects the other Gospels don't. He was the *only* writer to explain who the Word was and why His sacrifice should inspire us forever! No Gospel writer describes the God Family vision as John does.

Only John discusses these subjects: the mighty *I AM* and who He really was; the resurrection of Lazarus and how it relates to your incredible human potential; the Samaritan woman and what she means for the world; why Jesus wept, which even most of God's own people don't understand.

I believe you will be joyfully stunned when you understand these mind-gripping subjects. You need to read and *study* this powerful message. If you do, it will help you mightily in building God's joy in your life.

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Chapter 1 *The Word Made Flesh*

PETER, DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT HOW I WORK WITH JOHN—*YOU just follow me!*

The Apostle John recorded this statement of Jesus Christ near the end of the 21st chapter of his Gospel.

Jesus Christ, after enduring a brutal beating and execution, was resurrected and returned to show Himself to His disciples (John 21:1). After instructing Peter to “feed my lambs” and “feed my sheep,” Christ said to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (verse 18). Then verse 19 explains the significance of that statement: “This spake he, signifying by what *death* he [Peter] should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

Peter knew he was going to be a martyr for God. That is not an easy burden to live with. Of course, Christ endured the same trial in a spectacular way. But how difficult would it be to do God's Work when you know you're going to be **KILLED** in service to God?

Jesus Christ told Peter very bluntly, *Just follow me—don't worry about anything else*. This was a mild rebuke.

Those were pretty strong words for Peter—as well as for the other disciples who knew they would be martyred. Following Christ meant that they would be brutally murdered. Of course, these men had an inspiring vision that propelled them forward in God's Work, and they also had the ultimate example of Jesus Christ, who had given Himself to be martyred for God's cause.

Each of those 12 apostles is going to rule over one of the 12 tribes of Israel in God's Kingdom (Matthew 19:28). They will all be rewarded handsomely for what they did.

But at this moment, Peter had doubts. Peter looked at John, and thought, *Why should I have to die if he gets to live?* This really bothered Peter. Knowing he would be a martyr became more difficult for Peter when he learned that John would not be martyred. So he asked Christ about it.

“Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me*” (John 21:22).

What is that to you, Peter? Christ asked him very directly and personally.

Christ asks the same question of you—of each one of us. God gives each of us different responsibilities, but we are all *critical* to the functioning of the Body of Christ, and to finishing God's Work.

After Christ's statement, Peter and the other disciples talked about it like it was big news that one of them wouldn't die (though Christ didn't say that—verse 23). But the truth is, it is appointed for all men once to die—and God says that **THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS SAINTS IS PRECIOUS!** (Psalm 116:15). **PRECIOUS!**

Which one of us wouldn't trade places with Peter and the apostles today—when you consider what God is going to give them? Those men glorified God, and God is going to glorify them in a spectacular way!

You'll never go wrong if you follow Christ. Glorify God now and He will glorify you *forever!*

THIS IS A VISION WE MUST CLING TO. Then nothing can stop us—not even death.

IN THE BEGINNING

The Gospel of John may have as much depth as any book in the Bible.

John the apostle was a deeply spiritual man, and had an unusually close relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ gave him special instruction during their time together like no other.

The first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—are called the Synoptic Gospels, meaning they all cover essentially the same sequence of events in Jesus Christ’s life.

John was different. He had quite a radically different message than the other Gospel writers. John didn’t write this book until about 30 years after the events it depicts, so he had a lot of time to contemplate what had occurred and what it all meant.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

In the first verse of his Gospel, John takes us back to a time when there was just God and the Word. What a way to introduce his Gospel. It is unlike any other introduction in the Bible—it talks about BEFORE ANY ANGELIC OR MATERIAL CREATION—BEFORE TIME BEGAN!

Westcott Commentary says, “In the Synoptic Gospels, there is no direct statement of the preexistence of Christ.” But John introduces his Gospel talking *a great deal* about the preexistence of Christ—when He was inhabiting eternity with God as the Word (Isaiah 57:15). John went back to the origin—to before there was an angel or a universe or a man—to before these two Gods were Father and Son.

The Synoptic Gospels discuss the history of Christ on Earth. John focuses more on the history of the Word—the great God whom Christ was before He came to this Earth. John brings us in at the “beginning of the movie.” John also gives great emphasis to the end of the spiritual movie. He gives a deeper meaning to the Synoptic Gospels. John shows us that God the Word had to be sacrificed. Only the death of God could pay the terrifying penalty for our sins.

Follow John's story flow in the first 18 verses of his Gospel, and you will see that he skips over the angelic plan—what we could call Plan A. He goes from that earliest beginning straight into the plan for man. Plan A had obviously failed in a grandiose way. That should sober us, because WE CAN FAIL TOO!

God commissioned Lucifer and one third of the angels to govern the Earth God's way, so all of the angels could be given rule over the universe. However, the angels failed this test. At that point, God knew that *only He* was qualified to rule the universe. So He implemented Plan B—that of recreating Himself in man.

JOHN TOTALLY OMITTS THE ANGELIC PLAN A. THERE IS A HIDDEN BUT EXTREMELY OMINOUS WARNING IN THAT OMISSION.

The angels failed because they refused to administer God's government on Earth. Today, God's firstfruits are being tested to see if we can administer God's government in His Church and in our own lives.

At the same time, we see that the angelic Plan A has been blotted out—it is no more. That knowledge should sober all of God's people in this most majestic calling. We have seen 95 percent of God's people turn away in this Laodicean era of the Church (prophesied in Revelation 3:14-22; request our book *Malachi's Message* for an explanation), so we realize how dangerous this knowledge is.

John immediately began talking about Plan B, the plan that would *work*.

“So mark well this super-vital truism,” Herbert W. Armstrong explained in *The Incredible Human Potential*, “that perfect, holy and righteous *character* is the supreme feat of accomplishment possible for Almighty God the Creator . . .” God's supreme feat is to RE-CREATE HIMSELF. Plan B was His plan to do just that.

“Now came the CROWNING PINNACLE of even God's unmatched creative POWER!” Mr. Armstrong continued. “Now came the very zenith of all divine accomplishment! Now came a project so *incredulously transcendently* AWESOME it is hard for the human mind to grasp.” GOD WAS GOING TO RE-CREATE HIMSELF IN MAN!

But there was tremendous risk involved in Plan B. It required sending one of only two Gods to Earth—in order to die for the sins of the world.

WITNESS

“The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:2). The Word was “with” God. That means He had been perfectly united with Him for all eternity!

There was no disunity in the entire universe until Lucifer rebelled.

Can you see why God is trying to bring us together and unify us? That is how God and the Word have lived forever! They know that their eternal Family **MUST** have that unity if it is to extend peace and beauty throughout the universe.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (verses 4-5). Some prejudiced people say the Jews are to blame for Christ’s death. God tells us that, in fact, the **WHOLE WORLD IS RESPONSIBLE!** Anyone who can’t recognize that is spiritually *blind!* The world is in darkness—and it is about to get much darker. This whole world desperately needs to receive the light of God. **HERE IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE AND LIGHT.**

The Apostle John captured the Word’s eternal past, which sheds a bright light on the present and our transcendental future. We see the whole movie—and it is full of God’s magnificent light and eternal glory!

With this history, we can understand who Christ was before He came to this Earth. We get a deeper understanding of the penalty that had to be paid for our sins. God used John to open up a vision of when we become God beings!

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist]. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light” (verses 6-8). God is the source of all that light. John the Baptist came to *bear witness* of that Light.

No writer in the Bible even comes close to emphasizing the word *witness* as the Apostle John does. Here is the number of verses in which the word is used: eight times in his epistles and 21 times in his Gospel. The other Gospels use it a *combined* total of 18 times. The *Anchor Bible* says the verb *martyrein*, which means to bear witness or testify, and the noun *martyria*, which means witness or testimony, occur *64 times* in the Gospel of John and his epistles. The Apostle John emphasized these two words, *witness* and *testify*, far more than all the other apostles.

You can see that those Greek words are closely related to our English word *martyr*.

If you *witness* for God, sometimes you end up being a martyr! Witnessing for God can be rough in some situations. We don't *know* exactly what God is going to require of us.

Did people love John the Baptist because he bore witness of Christ? No, actually he was thrown in prison—where he did his greatest work. To his last moment of life, he was a witness for God. Herod had John's head delivered on a platter. What a noble ending!

Why was he a witness? “[T]hat all men through him might believe”! God used John to try to get some hard-headed people to BELIEVE—both in John's day and, because his example is recorded in Scripture, through the ages to today! Being a witness for God can bring trials—but it also brings a multitude of blessings now, and a beautiful outcome in the future!

POWER TO BECOME SONS OF GOD

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:9-11). John didn't spend any time pleading with evolutionists. But he did imply that they were rebels! Christ created mankind—and they rejected Him. That means the world rebelled and continues to rebel against Christ. There is something dangerously incomplete about man.

But notice: “But as many as received him, TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, even to them that believe on his name” (verse 12).

IT TAKES POWER TO BECOME SONS OF GOD! THE WORD AND GOD GAVE THIS POWER TO YOU AND ME—AND WE MUST USE IT!

The word translated *power* also means *right* or *privilege*. And what a privilege it is. How can we not be excited about this right and privilege? We have a BIRTHRIGHT to become sons of God! How deeply do we understand that?

God’s firstfruits are the most blessed people on Earth many times over! These words ought to RATTLE THE UNIVERSE! We have the RIGHT AND THE PRIVILEGE TO BECOME SONS OF GOD AND RULE WITH GOD AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR ALL ETERNITY!

This is what John was trying to get everyone to see. What a future! How can we be Laodicean about that?

Look at a close relationship between a father and a son in a strong physical family. Take that up to the God level, and that is GOD AND YOU—GOD AND HIS SON. THAT IS WONDERFUL TIMES WONDERFUL TIMES WONDERFUL!

Fiery, brilliant angels were never given the opportunity to become sons of God. This is the ultimate creation of God.

Man has now been given the transcendental potential to rule the entire universe forever—not as angels, but as sons of God!

We will be God beings like you read about in the first chapters of Ezekiel and Revelation. This vision should take our breath away.

To none of the angels—which are so powerful and fiery that we would faint if we saw them—did God ever say, *You are my son* (Hebrews 1:5). That potential is reserved only for men. What a calling we have!

Do we understand that truth as John understood it? It truly challenges our thinking!

THE WORD MADE FLESH

“And THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH...” John 1:14 begins. That statement is the essence of these first 18 verses in John’s Gospel.

The Word was made flesh. We need to understand *why* He was made flesh—and *why* John took us back to this earliest beginning.

That verse continues, “And the Word was made flesh, *and dwelt among us . . .*” The Word became Christ, who dwelled, or *tabernacled*, on Earth as a flesh-and-blood man. He is not asking us to do anything He didn’t do. He became a human being and assumed a “temporary booth,” a physical, corruptible body, just like you and I have. He had to die, just as we have to die.

GOD BECAME DUST—so that WE might become SONS OF GOD!

John was different from the other Gospel writers—and *all* of the biblical writers, for that matter—in a number of ways. He is the only one who wrote about *the Word*. John provided an overview and showed us how God views everything! JOHN GIVES US A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE WORD—FROM GOD HIMSELF! Christ helped him in a special way to achieve that perspective.

The Word was made flesh. Why? How wonderful and exciting this is!

Look at these events from God’s view, and it will just about make you faint. Imagine the God of Revelation 1, whose face is like the sun in its full strength, DECIDING TO BECOME DUST! And why? So God could have a Family, and give people the RIGHT AND THE PRIVILEGE TO BE A SON OF GOD! So His Family could extend His Work out into the universe, which scientists say is still expanding.

How do you describe a love like that? It should cause us to shout for joy! This is THE LOVE OF GOD; there is nothing like it in this world—nothing to even *compare* it to. Look at the world and see what happens without God’s love: nothing but rebellion, chaos and destruction.

We now have a transcendent potential: The Messiah and the Father are re-creating themselves in men! Men now have the privilege and the honor to be sons of God. The problem is, we don’t see that as fully and as powerfully as we should.

This is revelation about two God Beings expanding to billions of God beings! Not an easy feat. The God of Revelation

I became *dust* and risked His eternal life to make it happen!

THIS WORLD HAS NEVER UNDERSTOOD GOD'S LOVE. The Father took a chance on losing His only eternal Son so He could have a family of billions. The Eternal was made flesh that we might be made eternal Family members.

It takes the Holy Spirit to fathom this love of God.

DECLARE THE FATHER

“John bare witness of him [Christ], and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:15-16).

The word *cried* means to speak with a strong voice, to cry out publicly. John cried out boldly about Christ's first coming. We have to publicly proclaim about Christ's Second Coming—the greatest event ever to occur in the universe!

WILL OUR VOICE MATCH THE EVENT? This is the greatest news that mankind has ever heard! You and I have the honor to introduce Christ to the world.

Grace keeps being heaped upon grace. Each blessing received becomes the foundation of another blessing. THE MORE WE KNOW, THE BETTER IT GETS. THE MORE WE SEE, THE MORE WONDERFUL IT IS, TO THE POINT WHERE WE CAN *FACE DEATH* AND REJOICE!

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *he hath declared him*” (verse 18). That was Christ's number-one job, and He passionately declared the Father.

That is exactly what God wants us to do! If you don't declare THE FATHER, you don't understand about the Family of God and the gospel. If you don't get beyond Jesus Christ, you don't get it! CHRIST DECLARED THE FATHER. We are commanded to follow His example. Study John's Gospel and take note of how often he refers to the Father. It far exceeds any other book in the Bible. When John talks about declaring the Father, it doesn't mean Christ just mentioned His name. This subject just keeps unfolding and unfolding and unfolding

because it is so, so deep. Christ's mind was ABSOLUTELY FOCUSED on the Father. THE WHOLE TIME HE LIVED ON EARTH, JESUS CHRIST FOCUSED ON HIS FATHER CONTINUALLY AND ALWAYS! He was passionately loyal to His Father and totally committed to His Family! THIS WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN SUCH AN EXCEPTIONALLY BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF FAMILY DEVOTION.

Thayer's Lexicon defines the word *declared* as "to draw out in narrative; unfold in teaching." *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* defines it, to "declare thoroughly and particularly ... unfolding through teaching."

Learning this profound message is a lifelong process of hard work. We must study long and hard to show ourselves approved.

Traditional "Christianity" has no concept of what Christ is teaching here. If we are ever going to understand the God Family—which is the essence of Christ's gospel—we must focus on the Father. This is the foundation of all that Christ taught! That teaching was followed by a *perfect masterpiece of submission* by the Son to the Father! The Word—this *eternally existing God Being*—came to this Earth to declare His Father.

This is the most inspiring message there ever will be, and yet Christianity and the world have been blinded to it!

You could spend your life studying the Gospel of John and never reach its full depth, and it all revolves around the Father—the God Family. THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH TO DECLARE THAT MESSAGE—NOT TO TEACH A MESSAGE ABOUT HIMSELF!

Christ prepared John in a special way to write this message in a book for all mankind. John had a unique and awesome gift for writing. He was used to give an inspiring depth to all the Gospels—and to the entire Bible.

This is the vision that Satan tries to confuse or destroy first and foremost. That is exactly what happened to the Laodiceans today. In the first verse addressed to the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14), Christ discusses "the beginning of the creation of God." God warns them very severely about where they have gone astray. The Laodiceans lost the Word, or *Logos*, vision first. They have forgotten *why* the Word came to this Earth as the Son of God!

Satan knows this is the foundation of all deception. If he can deceive us here, our spiritual house will collapse.

What a marvelous introduction John gives us here. This is an introduction like no other in the Bible. THE WORD BECAME FLESH. The other three Gospel writers touch on it, but John puts this epic event on center stage.

In the next chapter, we will see where *you* come into the picture.

Chapter 2

John Reveals God's Work Today

RIGHT AFTER THE INTRODUCTION INTO HIS GOSPEL ACCOUNT, John records a conversation between some religious leaders and John the Baptist. He is the *only* Gospel writer to record John's statement: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:23).

Like John the Baptist, Herbert Armstrong made that statement, quoting Isaiah 40: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Both of those men were *types* of Elijah. Both of them were voices crying out in the wilderness.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's first coming. Mr. Armstrong prepared the way for Christ's Second Coming. He was a type of Elijah doing the Elijah work. However, the Elijah work didn't end with Mr. Armstrong.

The Philadelphia Church of God continues the Elijah work until Christ returns (Revelation 11:1-15). There is also *the voice* crying out in the wilderness of religious confusion today. (Read the prophecy in Isaiah 40:1-9—this is explained in our book *Isaiah's End-Time Vision*. All of our literature is free.)

This final voice crying out *introduces Christ to the world*—"Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

The original Elijah revealed the true God to Israel. John the Baptist introduced the true Christ at His first coming—continuing the Elijah work. Mr. Armstrong prepared the way for Christ's Second Coming. We finish the Elijah work that he did and introduce the all-powerful Christ to this deceived world.

Elijah means “my God is God”—implying that all other gods are false. So those firstfruits who did and do the Elijah work throughout the ages will be used by God in the educational institutions of the World Tomorrow. We will teach the whole world about the true God—the God Family.

We are *being prepared* for those jobs today. The original Elijah had three colleges. Elisha finished his work. Herbert W. Armstrong had three colleges. The PCG finishes his work with one college—a *type* of Elisha's work.

There is a great emphasis on education in the Elijah work. We are being prepared to establish colleges all over this Earth! We must get ready for this job. Are you ready?

The Apostle John gets very specific about how we finish the Elijah work.

In verses 21 and 25 of John 1, the religious leaders mention a prophesied individual called “that prophet.” *Lange's Commentary* says it was “the ‘well-known’ prophet, a personage in their messianic theology presumed to be familiar.” This prophet was familiar to them because of their knowledge of prophecy. “This particular prophet, therefore, is meant, who should COMPLETE THE FORERUNNING OFFICE OF ELIJAH...” (ibid.). In other words, *that prophet* and those people supporting him would FINISH THE ELIJAH WORK. (This passage is thoroughly explained in our free book *Who Is “That Prophet”?*)

This is a prophecy of our work today!

Why was John the *only* one to write about this? He was the only one to talk about the voice crying out—a prophecy we know a lot about in this end time—and also the *only* one to discuss the work that carries on the Elijah work. This all *immediately follows* the introduction to John's Gospel.

This is where John's message starts right after the introduction—and it is about YOU! You who support this Work of God!

There is a connection between THE WORD MADE FLESH and the WORK OF GOD TODAY.

*THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
THE WORD AND THE WORK*

God wants us to realize that when He talks about the Word becoming flesh, those people who finish the Elijah work in this end time had better know that Jesus Christ's Second Coming is almost here! They must realize that HIS BECOMING FLESH WAS NOT THE END: HE IS COMING AGAIN, THIS TIME TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM DESTROYING ITSELF!

John the Baptist, in his Elijah work, was honored to introduce *the Word made flesh*—a mind-staggering event. But it gets better. The PCG is privileged to introduce the omnipotent, almighty, glorified Christ to this world!

What a grand-smashing climax to the Elijah work!

There is a reason John discusses *that prophet*. There is a reason that John, in his epistles, reveals the truth about “the last [hour]” and our specific work in the same context (1 John 2:18-20). There is a reason that John, in the book of Revelation, talks about the little book and “prophesy again” (Revelation 10), and describes the inner court (Revelation 11). The PCG is specifically discussed in three of John's books.

The Apostle John *only began* discussing that prophet and his supporters in his Gospel message. He would discuss them much more in two of his other books, which mostly emphasize this end time.

This is the Apostle John—surely one of the two or three top apostles of all time—talking about *you!*

Do you realize who you are? I'm not trying to appeal to your vanity; I'm trying to help us all to see REALITY! We do not accept the world's evaluation of us, because this world doesn't view things the way God does. WE ARE WEAK AND FLAWED, BUT WE MUST REALIZE WHO WE ARE!

The PCG has a fuller understanding of Scripture than any of God's churches ever. God used Mr. Armstrong to *restore all things*. Now He has given much revelation to the PCG.

No two eras have been given more revelation than the Philadelphia and Laodicean eras. God has revealed more to these last two eras than all the other eras combined!

God knew the Philadelphians would play a key role in educating the whole world. So He used the Apostle John to enrich our education, which will help us build God's colleges around this Earth.

These future colleges will be filled with God's revealed truth, produced by the best technology this world has ever had. There will be many printed books and booklets from the Philadelphia and Laodicean eras.

GOD IS GETTING US READY TO EDUCATE THE WORLD!

Realize who is really behind John's message. When John wrote this, he thought he was talking about his own time—but he was a couple thousand years off! We must not look to men—we must look to God and the Word! Only God can reveal to us about John the Baptist and Elijah and that prophet. Everything we are doing would amount to nothing if the Word wasn't behind it. We must always look to our Head, Jesus Christ. The Laodiceans have failed here (Colossians 2:19).

To have the High Priest of the true Church mention your work is quite an honor! Just to be mentioned in that group is an honor of the highest magnitude.

THIS IS A DIRECT PROPHECY ABOUT YOU IF YOU SUPPORT GOD'S WORK. Christ is giving us specific encouragement.

John made a direct connection between the Word that was made flesh and us. It is no exaggeration to say that we are a *key player in this end time*. We must warn the world about what is happening and prepare for the return of Jesus Christ! Why wouldn't we be a vital piece of the puzzle? How exciting to be on the scene, prophetically just "*minutes*" before Christ returns! We can look at the cities of Judah, which are steadily being attacked and besieged, and we have the privilege to say to them—even more emphatically than what we have—"Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

We must tell people that God is the only solution to their problems and **THEY DON'T YET KNOW GOD!** That is a message that will upset people!

Remember what happened to Christ? But did that make Him wrong?

What an exhilarating opportunity the people of God have: to *speak for God!*

If you speak for God, you know you're a son of the Father and the Bride of Christ. Nobody else *speaks* for Him. You are a part of something truly spectacular.

The Apostle John did a marvelous job of bringing this truth alive!

This truth should help us conquer our trials. Of course we experience rough times—but this is the real world, this is the real Work of God, this is the real coming of Jesus Christ we are talking about! It is going to happen! NOBODY can change that!

There is a reason we are mentioned right in the context of John's introduction of the Word made flesh and of Elijah and that prophet. The reason is simply this: IT'S ALL ONE. Unless we become locked into the Word the way the Word is locked into God, nothing happens. It is all one unit. Christ prayed to His Father that we would all be one as God and Christ are one! (John 17:11). That is the only way we can achieve anything.

THE LAMB OF GOD

When John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ coming, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). To strengthen the point, John repeats this in verse 36: "Behold the Lamb of God!" An exclamation point gives emphasis to this Lamb.

What lamb could take away the sin of the world? Could a goat do that? Could an angel, or just any man? No—this was THE LAMB OF GOD! A Lamb who WAS GOD had to die for our sins. It couldn't happen any other way.

Christ was a Lamb—He truly was a martyr. All the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to that Lamb. *John 1:29 connects the Old Testament and the New Testament through that Lamb.*

The fact that the Jews wouldn't believe Christ unless He gave them a sign is almost a joke! ALL THE PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT pointed to that man who was the Lamb!

BUT THESE FEW DISCIPLES WERE REALLY EXCITED, SAYING, "WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAS"! (verse 41). WE HAVE FOUND THE GOD WHO WAS PROPHESIED TO COME TO THIS EARTH! MOSES AND THE PROPHETS PROPHESIED ABOUT THE MESSIAH, AND HE'S HERE! (verse 45).

The Greek expression *Messias* means *the Christ* or the Anointed One. Christ was anointed by the Father to come and deliver us from sin.

THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A BIGGER EVENT IN HISTORY TO THAT TIME. This was *the first coming of Jesus Christ!* These men had every reason to be excited—and they didn't even have God's Spirit yet. *John gives us all the names of the people who received this news with such gladness—like Philip and Nathanael—and none of the other Gospel writers do.* Why? John was bringing all this to life—to make it as real as he possibly could. HERE WERE MEN, JUST LIKE US, RUNNING AROUND WITH EACH OTHER AND BURSTING WITH EXCITEMENT OVER THIS EPIC EVENT!

John was emphasizing the search for and finding of the Messiah! There was nothing more important ever in the history of man. This was the most epoch-making event mankind had ever experienced to that point.

What did the Jewish people think? They didn't even know what it meant!

Neither do most people today know what our work means. But they shall know. We are introducing that same Christ to this evil world. Every person on Earth will know why our work was here!

God's true Church today has the Messiah leading us, revealing truth to us, giving us guidance, helping, providing us everything we need. WE HAVE THE MESSIAH! So we need to be running around with some excitement! The Messiah is here! The Messiah is directing this Work—the one prophesied to come and take away the sin of the world and open up the God Family to ALL MANKIND!

If we don't get excited about that, we have to acknowledge that we have some Laodicean traits we need to overcome. There is nothing more exciting than this.

God works with real men and women. I'm sure people called them nobodies—but they recognized the event of the

ages! Everybody else was in darkness.

Let people scoff if they want to, but the truth is that we recognize something that the world doesn't. We know that the Word is directing this Work, and that this is the only hope of mankind. We know the Messiah is here! We know this is all leading to the return of Jesus Christ. All these other events have been fulfilled to the letter, and so shall the Second Coming be!

“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see” (verse 46).

Can anything good really come out of Edmond, Oklahoma? Only if the Messiah's there! If the Word who became flesh is there, GREAT THINGS will come out of that city! It doesn't have anything to do with the city—it has to do with knowing God and understanding what He is doing on Earth.

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael had a somewhat *negative* attitude.

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (verse 47). Christ led him to think about his strengths and become more positive.

Christ does the same for us today, unless we shut Him out as the Laodiceans have (Revelation 3:20).

We need Christ's encouragement to endure. The Messiah is here now to help us.

Christ knew the thoughts of Nathanael. He also knows your thoughts and my thoughts. We must change our thoughts in order to have Christ's mind (Philippians 2:5).

UPHOLDING PETER'S OFFICE

“And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called *Cephas* [in Greek, *Peter*], which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:42). Mark 3:16 shows that *Peter* was the surname, or title, that Christ gave to Simon, designating him as the chief apostle.

Here is what Mr. Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*: “In Mark 3:14, 16, we read: ‘And he [Jesus] ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. . . . And Simon he surnamed Peter.’ A surname is, according to Webster, ‘an added name derived from occupation.’

“The surname Peter had for centuries been a surname or TITLE, designating a religious LEADER, HEAD OF HEADQUARTERS. Peter was the first and chief apostle. An apostle is ‘one sent forth to proclaim or preach.’”

What is interesting is that the other three Gospel writers often referred to Peter as *Simon*. John always used the name *Peter* (or *Simon Peter*). Why?

I believe this also shows John's depth. In those 30 years he was mulling events over, he must have considered this carefully. In writing his Gospel, John was speaking from the perspective of the Word. HERE WAS AN OFFICE THAT THE WORD—GOD HIMSELF—ESTABLISHED AND GAVE TO SIMON PETER.

Certainly Peter had his problems. But this was the man who God chose to lead the Church—over John and all the others. I believe that the more John thought about it, the more he realized, *I don't believe it's right for me to write about the leading apostle of God's Church as "Simon." I'm going to call him Peter and respect that office. I want to view it the way the Word does!*

Every time John wrote about “Peter,” it was a reminder of who he was and that the Father and the Son gave him that office! John always tried to see God behind the man.

Do we deeply see who is behind this Work?

John took on God's perspective and tried to deeply respect everything He does! We need to do the same. That doesn't mean we follow men; that means we follow God, who uses the men who lead us.

I certainly wasn't perfect in this myself, but for the life of me I could not understand how the ministers who left after Mr. Armstrong died—who had preached all their lives about Mr. Armstrong being the end-time *type* of Elijah—could begin to talk about how they didn't really think he was the Elijah. What hypocrites! They *used* to refer to him as the end-time Elijah when Mr. Armstrong was alive—what happened?

The end-time Elijah was used to restore ALL THINGS in the Church of God! He did in God's Church what Christ is going to do in the whole world. That is a rather prestigious calling!

If those ministers had learned the lesson that John did, they would still be doing God's Work today.

John had the Word's view. That is why I believe it is inspiring that he specifically describes the *inner court* in Revelation 11. By the time he wrote that vision, he *knew* he was talking about this end-time Church. In fact, God used him to put everything in a time frame. John didn't just use the word *temple* in the book of Revelation. He spoke of a people who would reside in the *inner court*, dwelling right there with God.

Do you deeply understand who you are? That is the challenge that John hurls at us in this Gospel.

Nathanael was astounded. "Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:48-49). Nathanael was now convinced that Christ was the Son of God. He knew this was the King of Israel. Soon the whole world will become Israel, when the Gentiles are grafted in.

The King of kings and Lord of lords is about to rule this world. We are being *prepared* to be the kings and lords under Christ.

Are you ready to be a king and a priest? We all must work hard to qualify for those eternal positions!

The Word was made flesh to make this spectacular future possible. This is not some religious fantasy. This is our future, and we can't qualify for these offices by acting like this vision is some hazy dream. This coming world is more real than the world you see around you.

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS

John 6 relates the story of Christ feeding 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two fishes. *Only* John recorded this event, and it certainly fits his theme.

After all the people had gotten their fill, Christ said this to His disciples: “*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*” (John 6:12).

Certainly you can take the simple lesson from this that we should not be wasteful. But what was Christ really talking about spiritually? Later in this chapter He makes it very clear.

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (verse 26). That is pretty blunt: Christ accused the people of being interested only in getting a free meal. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed” (verse 27).

They believed that Christ was a prophet from heaven. But did they stay with Christ? No! How hard and selfish mankind is.

Notice what Christ is saying: YOU MUST LABOR FOR SPIRITUAL FOOD. Even in your personal Bible study, you must *labor* to study as you should. Spiritual food requires genuine *labor and effort!* After all, God came from beyond the stars—and the spiritual manna comes from there as well. Doesn't it make sense that we ought to labor for it? That is the manna that will give eternal life (verse 33).

You can see throughout this chapter that Christ is speaking spiritually. *Labor* for that spiritual food. *Work! Gather up all the fragments! Gain all you can from the royal education God is offering you! God is giving you spiritual manna! Gather all the fragments you can. Don't lose anything! Gain everything you can from it!*

It is *our responsibility* to gather all the fragments we possibly can. God is serving His people. The *Logos*—the Head of the Church—and the Father are feeding their Family. THEN GOD IS GOING TO LET HIS FAMILY FEED THE WORLD! That is why we are here!

The disciples gathered all the fragments, and they ended up with more food than they started with! But they had to *labor* for it.

God is telling us to LABOR for this bread. It is from another world! IT REALLY IS BREAD COMING FROM THE COSMOS—FROM THE TRUE GOD! It is worth all the effort we can muster to gather it up!

Do we attend all the Bible studies we can? Do we really hunger and thirst for God's truth? This is how we build our faith, hope and love.

This Work is going to grow, and it will astound this world. But we are going to have to LABOR—LABOR—LABOR to gather all the spiritual food God wants to give us!

Chapter 3

The Voice of the Bridegroom

“**T**HERE WAS A MAN OF THE PHARISEES, NAMED NICODEMUS, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:1-2). Nicodemus saw Christ’s miracles and knew no man could do that—but that is not a good basis for faith. Faith does not come from what we can perceive with our senses.

This Pharisee had a wonderful opportunity to be right there with Christ—but he was afraid to come to Him except at night! Later on, he was also present when Christ was crucified, which, it seems to me, is rather pathetic. Perhaps that assuaged his guilt.

Christ explained to Nicodemus the truth about being born again. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” He said. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (verses 6, 8). Jesus Christ was talking about a new creation.

Nicodemus was clearly puzzled by the explanation, and Christ said, "Are thou a master [or teacher] of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (verse 10). Nicodemus was one of the leaders in the Sanhedrin—their supreme court at that time—and Christ asked, *You mean you don't know this?* Nicodemus couldn't even understand the physical analogy.

Again, *John is the only Gospel writer who records this discussion with Nicodemus.* He chose examples that fit the theme, or the specific purpose, of his message—and this one illustrates that beautifully. It's simply that WE ARE GOING TO BE BORN AGAIN! Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, said we will experience ANOTHER BIRTH—and what a birth it will be! We will receive a *new body*, and a *much more complete mind*. BORN AGAIN!

The Word became flesh so we could be born into the God Family as God beings! There are no parallel accounts in the other Gospels. John kept hammering away at our magnificent potential.

CHRIST PERSONALLY PREPARED JOHN TO MAKE THIS CALLING AND BIRTH MORE REAL TO US. John understood this subject more deeply than most of God's apostles.

Exalted scholars like Nicodemus can't get this because they won't humble themselves so God can reveal it to them. Satan has totally blinded the people of this world to their astounding potential. He hates this subject with intense passion, because it was never promised to him. Satan never received this potential, and it really agitates him! Angels never had the potential to be sons of God. Only man has this mind-stunning potential. This future is breathtakingly awesome *if* we comprehend it.

You *must* let John's message sink deeply into your mind. IF YOU DO, IT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

The Word became flesh in order to make this birth possible! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (verses 16-17). What a price the Father and the Son had to pay in order to give us that potential!

HUMAN NATURE

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19).

So many people believe that men are essentially good. At the burial site of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan is a plaque stating that he believed man is basically good.

But is that true? Is that what Christ said? No, He says **THEIR DEEDS ARE EVIL**. Just look at this world—read your newspaper! There is a tremendous amount of *evil* in this world.

The profession of psychology also believes that man is essentially good. If it starts with a false premise, then the whole field of psychology is tainted and dangerous. It is built on a foundation of sand.

Men trust their own human reasoning. God says that man’s heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

This world would destroy all human life if Christ didn’t intervene and save us (Matthew 24:21-22). How evil is that?

People hate light and love darkness! Just look at what they did to John the Baptist. Jesus Christ said there was none born of women greater than John the Baptist—yet the people cast this great man of God into prison and cut off his head!

Scripture indicates John the Baptist knew he would be martyred. He knew and he lived with that. You would think that knowledge must have depressed him horribly, but it didn’t.

Do you know why?

THE BRIDEGROOM’S VOICE

The Apostle John uses John the Baptist to illustrate an important point. Here is an earth-shaking statement he quotes from John the Baptist: “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom . . .” (John 3:29).

THE OTHER GOSPELS TALK ABOUT THE BRIDEGROOM, BUT ONLY THE APOSTLE JOHN MENTIONS THE BRIDE. We know how Jesus

Christ suffered. So it shouldn't surprise us if His Bride needs to suffer as well. But there's another part of the picture we must never forget!

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, REJOICETH GREATLY...” (verse 29). John is not talking about something of the world. He is talking about *something spiritual* that really makes you rejoice GREATLY! Not just rejoice, but REJOICE GREATLY.

What is it?

Verse 29 concludes: “... REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

Only the Bride hears the Bridegroom's voice. Who is “the friend of the bridegroom” John the Baptist mentioned? It is THE BRIDE OF CHRIST! We are honored to be THE FRIENDS OF GOD!

When John heard the BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE, he really REJOICED—his joy was fulfilled.

THIS VOICE COMES FROM BEYOND THE STARS. God always speaks to His very elect.

Any husband who loves his wife gives her a lot of attention. Do you think Jesus Christ, the perfect Husband, is different? Look at the attention He gives His Bride. Christ woos His Bride because He loves her so. He gives you His attention because He wants your attention. There is nothing like this in the history of man before the Word became flesh, except in a few isolated cases. What a wonderful Husband we have.

John the Baptist continued, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (verse 30). John knew it was winding down for him. He probably knew he was going to die. But at the same time, he was talking about REJOICING—*because he listened to the Bridegroom's voice!*

WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPEAKS, THAT MEANS HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE BRIDE AND THE WEDDING! If you *hear* the Bridegroom's voice, YOU ARE BLISSFULLY ANTICIPATING YOUR MARRIAGE TO CHRIST! Your whole life is focused on that wondrous vision. You are not going to get the depth of this concept, unless you prayerfully study this booklet! It is that profound.

John the Baptist listened to the wonderful, spiritually romantic voice of his Husband. It inspired him so deeply that

he wondered how he could be so honored to have his head cut off for the Bridegroom!

What an extraordinary attitude!

Yes, we suffer. We suffer with the Bridegroom. BUT DON'T FORGET THE MARRIAGE!

Realize *why* you have trials and tests. It is suffering that gets us ready for the marriage!

A righteous death only means *you've got it made!* Of course there is sadness in death; it's not that it doesn't matter. But look at the whole picture!

John was about to be thrown into prison and have his head lopped off, and he was listening to the Bridegroom's voice! I suppose he knew Christ's evaluation of him, and as a result his joy was made full.

How easy would it be to get depressed in a situation like that? John could have said, *Here I am, doing everything I'm told—and I'm about to have my head cut off and presented on a platter to a bunch of pagans! I've got to find a different religion!*

But that isn't the way he reacted at all. John the Baptist knew that the marriage to the Bridegroom was *real*—and, no matter the physical circumstances he faced, he really REJOICED WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPOKE, AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MARRIAGE.

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Why did John the Baptist discuss the *Bride* and the *Bridegroom* shortly before his head was cut off? He was keeping this eternal and most exalted marriage in his mind! He knew that this trial was getting him *ready* for that marriage without equal, which would last forever.

That vision caused John the Baptist to rejoice in the worst situation he ever faced.

As it says in Revelation 19:7, "Let us BE GLAD and REJOICE, and give honour to him: for THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME, and *his wife* hath made herself ready"!

We must have this vision in order to get ready! Without it, we will fail.

Do you have deep joy that you have been invited to be

a part of this marriage? That you have been honored to be called out of this world and to serve God for a short time—and in the end MARRY JESUS CHRIST?

IF WE DON'T KEEP THAT WONDERFUL MARRIAGE IN OUR MINDS, WE WON'T BE POSITIVE AND STIRRED AND INSPIRED. But if we think about it deeply, we will say—even when we're in the midst of trial—even if, like John, *we're in prison and facing execution*—that we “REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: THIS MY JOY THEREFORE IS FULFILLED”!

Is that marriage vivid in your mind? Do you think about when the marriage is consummated and you're in that headquarters temple with Jesus Christ? I know that God's very elect have this vision in their minds. But IS IT DEEP ENOUGH IN YOUR MIND TO CAUSE YOU TO REJOICE IN YOUR WORST TRIAL? You need to ponder that question!

We must suffer, but let's never forget *why* we suffer.

Throughout eternity, people will be looking at us and saying, *Why, that is the Bride of Christ!* Is that vision deep enough to keep you stirred and moved to realize where all this is leading—even if you have to die?

WE WERE BORN TO ACHIEVE THIS FUTURE!

THIS IS THE GREATEST MARRIAGE THERE EVER WILL BE FOR ALL TIME IN ALL THE UNIVERSE! THIS IS AN EPIC EVENT THAT WILL NEVER BE DUPLICATED!

BUT THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY IS THAT 95 PERCENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY ARE TOO LUKEWARM TO WANT IT!

Unless you have this vision in your mind, you will be susceptible to falling away. Unless you see that *marriage*, you WON'T GET READY! We MUST have this vision in order to be motivated to make the changes that we need to make.

Jesus Christ—your Husband, your Friend—is doing EVERYTHING HE CAN to try to woo you so you won't turn away as the Laodiceans did! He is spreading the table and offering EVERYTHING to His Bride! And He wants us to keep the marriage in mind so we won't be drowned in our problems and want to give up.

This marriage is a million times more exciting than any physical marriage ever was!

Think about what our Laodicean brethren are missing! It is a terrible tragedy. *Dying* is not a tragedy. **MISSING OUT ON THIS MARRIAGE** is a tragedy!

THIS IS ALL THAT EVEN GOD CAN GIVE US!

Even on a physical level, when a man and woman are going to marry, they are filled with excitement about planning that wedding, and preparing for that marriage. They can see the marriage so vividly! It's so stark and striking in their minds that they work to do everything they need to do to be ready for that marriage.

That is what John is telling us we have to do. We must see it very clearly! Only then will we be motivated to make the changes necessary to become the Bride of Christ.

Chapter 4

‘I Am’

JOHAN IS THE ONLY GOSPEL WRITER TO REALLY TALK ABOUT THE “I Am.” I Am was the authoritative God of the Old Testament. The Jews knew all about Him because of the Scriptures—at least in their limited way—but they could not grasp that Jesus Christ was also that I AM in the flesh. The truth shocked them and they rejected it. Still, Christ undeniably proved He was the I AM.

The Most High God used Christ to establish His government. We could call it the I AM government. That loving, powerful government is going to rule in the Kingdom of God. Without it, this world would return to its rebellion and sin; the problems saturating the world today would swallow the World Tomorrow as well.

But *with* that government, ALL MEN AND WOMEN will have the wonderful opportunity to be ruled by God’s loving authority! The I AM Family government will bring peace into their lives for the first time.

The utopian vision of the Kingdom of God can only be achieved with that government—the same government that God is establishing through His people today. Simply getting rid of human governments won’t solve problems. This world

needs a NEW GOVERNMENT—one ready to rule with the love of God *immediately* when Christ returns.

‘YOU ARE GODS’

Jesus Christ described the beautiful fruit of the I AM government when He said, “*I and my Father are ONE*” (John 10:30). These two have *perfect* unity, harmony and agreement.

With the I AM government, we can enjoy that same unity. We possess the thrilling potential to be ONE with our Father as Christ is!

Christ told the Jews of His day about this potential, but it offended them and they rejected it! The very next verse in John 10 reads, “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him” (verse 31). “*Again,*” it says; these deeply religious and utterly deceived people *repeatedly* tried to kill the Son of God!

Trying to stone Christ was breaking the spirit of the Ten Commandments—one of which states “you shall not kill.” This law was the foundation of all that they supposedly believed. Still, they didn’t hesitate to break it.

When Christ asked what motivated their violent attitude toward Him, they said He had committed BLASPHEMY, “because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (verse 33). *You’re a man and you’re making yourself God.* That was BLASPHEMY to them. But *they were speaking to the Word made flesh!*

What does this have to do with you? Notice Christ’s inspiring answer: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?” (verse 34).

What a powerful statement! That should provoke every person in this world who considers himself Christian to study deeply what Christ meant! Jesus Christ—the Word made flesh—said, *Why are you so upset when I tell you that I am the Son of God? Look—it’s right there in your own Bible that YOU ARE Gods! You all have the potential to be God—with a capital “G”!*

Look at the passage Christ was quoting. It is found in Psalm 82—scriptures those Jews would have known well but didn’t truly understand.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH

Psalm 82 opens with a vision of God judging the affairs of this world. He sees much injustice: wicked people being accepted, the poor and fatherless being overlooked, the afflicted and needy being exploited. The world aches with deadly social problems.

Verse 5 concludes, “[A]ll the foundations of the earth are out of course.” WHEN ALL THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE OUT OF COURSE, THE WHOLE STRUCTURE IS DOOMED TO COLLAPSE! And surely the problems today are 10,000 times worse than when this psalm was composed.

How is God going to solve that monstrous problem? The psalmist and Jesus Christ had an answer. The answer has been there, but man has not wanted it because he has not yet suffered enough, and he still believes he can work out a solution on his own. But the harder he tries, the worse the problems become! Just look around: ALL THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE OUT OF COURSE!

Because of man's rebellion, “all the foundations of the earth are out of course.” What does that mean? It means that all religions, politics, education and science have foundations that are out of course. We can't possibly solve our problems without FOUNDATIONAL CHANGES!

Christ spoke to the Jews. But this is not just a Jewish problem—ALL the foundations of the Earth are out of course. Our evil human nature must be foundationally changed. Once that occurs, then Christ will use His saints to help Him put *all* the foundations of the Earth on course.

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children [or SONS] OF THE MOST HIGH” (verse 6).

It is impossible for man to solve his problems apart from God. Without God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we are incomplete. We need that Spirit to become sons of God and set the Earth's foundations on the right course!

Our potential to be part of God's Spirit-born Family, and to assist our Father forever, is the answer to the problems of this world!

SONS OF GOD

The word *Gods* there *could* read *judges*—and you might get an argument with some scholars, but *what did Jesus Christ say about it?* When He spoke with the Jews, He Himself said, “You are *Gods*.” That same Greek word is used over 1,300 times in the New Testament to refer to GOD HIMSELF! Christ wasn’t talking about *judges*—He was talking about these Jews’ potential to *enter the very FAMILY OF GOD*! He was refuting their anger over His saying that He, a man, was God.

If we are begotten today, we are sons of the Most High Father! What a magnificent, mind-staggering potential you have!

That is the INSPIRING TRUTH OF THE BIBLE!

The Jews were very bothered by what Christ said, though He supported His statements by quoting right from their own Bibles! They wanted to stone Him for it! Elsewhere, Christ told these same individuals that they were worshipping the devil. Still, *here* He was trying to help them see how truly AWESOME their potential was—if only they would accept it!

The same human nature that affected those Jews also drives people today; this truth still bothers people. When we proclaim it, some people become angry and label us a cult. But it’s what the Bible says! “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?”

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THIS TRUTH OUGHT TO SHAKE THE WHOLE UNIVERSE! Shouldn’t ANYONE ask, *What do you mean, Christ? What were you talking about when you said to these rebellious Jews, “You are Gods”?*

Christ continued: “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). It cannot be broken! You can stake your life on this!

“Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (verse 36). Truly converted people are *sons of God*. That is not blasphemy—it is the truth. Saying it may make somebody want to kill you, but it is still the truth. WE

REALLY ARE SONS OF GOD!

Why did God—the Word—come to this Earth? He came as the *Son of God to declare the Father* (John 1:18). We were created to be the sons of our Father—to be born into the Family of God.

That is *why* we exist—*why* we were created.

The angels were not created to be sons of God (Hebrews 1:13-14); only men were. But still men fight against fulfilling their transcendental, utterly unique potential!

How blessed we are to be human. What a godly honor.

What a spectacular, inspiring message God has for mankind—a message that should illuminate your life now—far beyond anything from this Earth.

This is the *only hope* mankind has.

But don't forget this: We have a lot of work to do to drive out our carnality and to grow in the character of God. We must allow God to shape and mold us in order to fulfill our awesome, mountain-sized potential of becoming God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ sacrificed *everything* to open up this potential to mankind. If they are willing to endure that, it only makes sense that striving for our potential will be difficult. After all, we're going to be born into the very Family of God. WE'RE GOING TO BE GODS IF WE OBEY AND ENDURE TO THE END!

That was God's plan from the beginning (Genesis 1:26).

Think about this deeply. Human life is about to be extinguished. A new government must be ready to move into its place! *A new world requires a new government.* God's master plan ensures it will be there. God will have a whole host of God beings ready to implement the I AM government.

That is why we are here—to be that new government along with all the firstfruits from the past. We must be ready to give people God's loving government.

I AM!

In another instance, Jesus Christ came right out to these Jews and identified who He was. He was about to leave them, and said, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your

sins: whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:21). This statement perplexed them, and Christ went on: “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; *I am not of this world*” (verse 23).

Then notice what He said: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I *AM he* . . .” (verse 24). The word *he* is in italics, which indicates that the translators *added* it because they thought it would make the verse more clear. But here it *obscures* the fact that Christ referred to Himself by His Old Testament title: I AM!

I AM is the self-existent God! Remember, the I AM first identified himself to Moses, back in Exodus 3:14: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” That name means “I Will Be What I Will Be” or “I Eternally Exist.” He is the I AM—He is eternally there. If you examine the Hebrew root words of that name, it means that *He is what He wants to be, He will do what He wills to do, when and where He wants to*. It also means, *I will be what I want to be, when I want to be it, how I want to be it*.

Christ revealed Himself as the God of the Old Testament that the Jews were so familiar with. He was standing right there, looking at those Jews and saying, *I’m discussed in the Bible—that Old Testament which you praise but don’t obey—and I’m telling you, I AM that I AM! If you don’t believe that I AM, you will die in your sins!* The Jews virtually worshiped the Old Testament—even though they didn’t believe it. They knew that the I AM was the God of the Old Testament—the only Bible there was at that time.

Their God was standing before them! This was striking at the foundation of their religion. Either they repented foundationally, or they had to reject this God in the flesh who said He was the I AM. They chose to do the latter.

CORRECTION FROM I AM

“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I AM . . . and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these

things” (John 8:28). Christ was the omnipotent I AM. Yet He said He did nothing of Himself, He only spoke what His Father had taught Him.

He was the all-powerful God of the Old Testament, and at the same time, totally submissive to His Father. What an astounding example for all of us.

Any one of us can submit to the Father if we follow Christ's humble example.

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (verse 42). God sent the I AM, the Head of this Church.

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (verse 44). This is STRONG CORRECTION from Jesus Christ, the I AM.

Christ does give correction when we need it. As Hebrews 12:7-11 say, we don't even *have a Father* if we're not receiving correction! Our responsibility is simply to keep ourselves in a state of mind where we can humbly *accept* that correction.

These Jews, however, did not accept it. They responded, “Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?” (John 8:53). They were asking this of the I AM!

Christ again tried to show them just how deficient their religion truly was (verses 54-56). The Jews were talking about how they followed God and loved Abraham. Christ called them liars! He wanted them to realize that they didn't know God! (And neither does this world—Revelation 12:9.)

No wonder the Jews grew angry at Him. “Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Before Abraham was*, I AM. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:57-59).

Christ mentioned the expression I AM three times in this chapter. THE JEWS WANTED TO KILL HIM FOR SAYING THAT—BUT THAT IS WHO HE WAS! This is who the Head of this Church is! That fact should leave us tremendously inspired—not wanting to stone the I AM or His prophets!

JOHN'S PURPOSE WAS TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE *preexistence* OF CHRIST—THE I AM, WHO IS ETERNAL. He talks about the I AM three times in this chapter alone. This is the God of the Old Testament, who was very authoritative over Israel. He is the great Melchisedec, who said, *I will be whatever I want to be within the context of God's purpose and God's law and God's calling.* In implementing the I AM government, He did rule with authority. When the Israelites went astray, He corrected them. And here He was, standing before these Jews in the flesh!

AN ELECTRIFYING HISTORY

Why didn't the other Gospel writers discuss the I AM? This is some of the deepest truth in your Bible. Christ spent much more time with John than most of His disciples. Christ must have used this time to explain this profound concept to him.

Also, John lived to be an old man, when the others were killed. Since John didn't write his Gospel until years later, he had even more time to meditate on this extremely profound truth of God.

Christ took John into the world of the I AM's pre-existence. Not only was He the God of the Old Testament, but John takes us back into the time when there was *only* God and the Word (John 1:1).

It is hard to even imagine how electrifying and inspiring the history of the I AM is. But how can we really understand our transcendental future, if we don't understand the extremely far-reaching history of the Father and the Son?

Here is a biography a billion times more important than that of any human! John is trying to take us as far into that world as he can. Only then can we understand our extremely incredible future!

It is the most inspiring truth ever—by a million times over! And it is not easy to take ourselves out of this evil world into the world of God and the Word. It takes a multitude of hours searching and searching to even begin to understand. But if we continue to seek diligently, *this real world of the I AM WILL BECOME BEAUTIFULLY AND MAJESTICALLY REAL!*

Imagine what it means to *fully* understand the two Gods who created mankind, the angels, animals and the universe! Imagine the power and the minds of those omnipotent Gods!

How could we not be filled with joy and excitement if we comprehend this world of God and the Word and our future in it?

Now—as great as this Being was, consider again what a marvelous thing it was for Him to be as humble as He was.

THE I AM HUMILITY

The fact that Jesus Christ was the majestic and omnipotent I AM of the Old Testament makes His attitude toward God the Father all the more beautiful. “Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I AM”—He was the great I AM!—“and that *I do nothing of myself*; but AS MY FATHER HATH TAUGHT ME, I SPEAK THESE THINGS” (John 8:28).

What a precious scripture. This all-powerful God said, *I do nothing of myself. And whatever my Father taught me, that's what I teach you.* No person on this Earth has ever come close to that example of humility!

Throughout His physical life, Christ always remembered why He was there: *From the beginning, the master plan was that I come down to this Earth, not to do my own will, but my Father's will!*

How can the great God of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 1 be so humble? Consider the POWER—then consider the HUMILITY. *Shouldn't you and I have such humility?*

We are pitiful human beings. Compared to the I AM, we are less than worms. Yet, can you and I submit to the Father as the I AM did? Is this your greatest passion?

We are to follow Christ's example. Bring this down to your daily living.

Bring that humble attitude into your marriage. How blessed would a husband and wife be if they both said, *I do NOTHING of myself! Everything I do in this marriage, I do because my Father said do it.* If we could do that perfectly, we could have perfect marriages!

Can you husbands lead your families and submit to the Father the way He did?

Can you wives submit to your husband the way the Father and the I AM said you should? If you do, you are submitting to God.

Think about a husband and wife and children who all have a passion to please the Father, the Head of the whole Family. That will be a *spectacular family!*

To have great families, we must submit to the I AM! He established marriage to be a certain way. A woman must not disrespect the man who leads her; a husband must not fail to love the wife God gave him. If both parties in a marriage are submitting their own will to God's, and submitting to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21), they will be putting God's government into action, and they are guaranteed to have a beautiful marriage.

Marriage was established by the I AM, the great God who perfectly submitted to His Father, who has a plan to change civilization! We must realize it's going to take government to implement it. That is the foundation of the government in the World Tomorrow!

The I AM had authority—but meditate deeply on how well He *submits* to authority! No *wonder* the Father gave Him authority! The Father *knew* what He would do with it. If He gave such authority to anyone on Earth—anyone who wasn't so humble—it would be savagely abused.

The Father created *all things* by Jesus Christ. IMAGINE THE I AM CREATING EVERYTHING *precisely* AS GOD WANTED IT DONE!

God wants you and me to follow that example. To rule in His coming Kingdom, we must rule *exactly* as God instructs us today. HE WILL NEVER TAKE A CHANCE ON HAVING ANOTHER

SIN-SATURATED WORLD LIKE THE ONE WE LIVE IN TODAY. We must burn into our minds this truth: We are here to imitate the I AM. *That means learning to use authority as He does, and learning to submit to it as He does.*

“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). This is one of my favorite scriptures, if not *the* favorite. He does ALWAYS those things that please the Father! He exhibits complete, total loyalty to God!

That is the beautiful attitude that will build the Family of God.

BUILDING THE FAMILY

Everything the I AM did, He did to please His Father. In a bad marriage sometimes, it is as though the husband and wife do *everything* to *displease* each other!

Isaiah 3:12 prophesied of the upside-down families in our world. Men won't lead. Even if they *will*, women won't submit!

This is the relationship God created in order to picture our marriage to Christ! Who do you think is inspiring the aggressive push to turn that relationship upside down?

I saw many examples in the Worldwide Church of God of upside-down marriages. I've seen a number of families leave the Church over the years where the husband wasn't the head. I know of many married people who would probably have come into the PCG if not for the twisted government in those families. Satan will exploit that every time!

I have seen Satan destroy many families. *Everyone* I have seen trying to conduct their marriages differently from the way God commands suffers breakdown in that relationship.

Wrong attitudes about marriage and family in this world surge like a flood tide! *Everyone* wants to turn family upside down! WHY? What's wrong with the man being the head? Why do people want so desperately for women to lead? People call it 50/50, but it's not—God says women *rule*. Children also brow-beat their parents and end up oppressing the family. But if someone is going to rule anyhow, why not have it GOD'S WAY?

Satan the devil wants to turn families upside down. He passionately *hates* God's way. He rebelled against it and is committed to destroying everything God is doing!

That spirit will be removed in the Millennium. Christ will not have individuals in His Family who desire upside-down government. Twisted families will not exist—they will be replaced by God-plane relationships! God's new civilization won't work with upside-down families—with men who won't lead and women who are determined to lead! How much more must we see before we deeply realize it won't work?

How much do you *LOVE* the I AM government? Do you husbands *love* being the head of the family? Do you wives *love* submitting to your husbands?

After my wife's death, I received a condolence card from a local elder I knew in the WCG. Today, he is with one of the Laodicean churches. I asked myself, *Why isn't he in the Philadelphia Church of God?*

I remember counseling him and his wife at one point years ago in the WCG when they were having problems with their teenaged son; they came to me for counsel, which I thought was very positive. I believe I clearly saw what the problem was: They weren't administering a loving government to their son as they should, and with the *right structure* of government, with the father taking the lead. When I told them this, as gently as I possibly could, I got a strong feeling that they didn't like it. I prayed they would, because I believe God guided me to see that this man needed to take the lead more than what he was doing. But I didn't see a change, and before long, I was transferred to another area.

I remember one sermon that minister gave in which he mocked the idea of wives following Sarah's example in 1 Peter 3:6, when she called her husband "lord." But I'm certain that their marriage would have been *wonderful* if he and his wife would have just acted like Abraham and Sarah! (I don't believe we have to use the word *lord* in our marriages—we show respect for that office differently today. But I'm talking about an attitude.)

Why do so many people think they have to tinker with marriage as God designed it? That is why society is so upside down!

The big problem the men have is LOVING THEIR WIVES, and the big problem the women have is SUBMITTING TO THEIR HUSBANDS.

Was it easy for Sarah to call Abraham *lord*? Not at all. I'm sure she remembered his weaknesses: the time he feared the pharaoh and lied about her not being his wife; and though she was in on it, I'm sure the episode with having a son by Hagar didn't lead her to respect him more. Carnally, she could have had all those images in her mind and said, "You mean to tell me I should call that clod *lord*?"

You can pick any man's character apart. We are all clods! But Sarah also *reverenced the office*. She believed it was an office of God. And she must be one of the "first ladies" of the Bible, if not THE first lady. Otherwise, why would Peter have used her example?

Sarah tried hard to submit to her husband as Christ submitted to our Father.

Abraham was called the father of the faithful. He would not be such a towering example in Scripture if he had abused Sarah. Obviously he had to overcome his weaknesses, but he did it in faith. He wanted to do everything RIGHT, just as the I AM said!

Because this husband-and-wife team submitted to God, He can use their examples to teach us. Husbands can aspire to be like Abraham, and wives like Sarah, as we submit to the I AM. What beautiful marriages that makes, and what a beautiful foundation upon which to set the Earth back on course.

Let me give another specific example. Occasionally we see a young woman in the Church wearing something inappropriate, so tight as if she was just poured into her clothes. When I see that, I have to wonder, *Where is the father?* or, *Where is the husband?* Usually it gets back to a problem with the man.

It could be that the individual is new in the Church and doesn't know any better. But something is wrong with the

thinking. It must change. That will *not* exist in the World Tomorrow.

When Christ told us in Ephesians 5 how to make a marriage work, He was thinking about our marriage to Him! At the end of that passage, Paul wrote, *I'm not even really talking about a physical marriage; I'm talking about Christ and the Church* (verse 32).

God designed and established the family, with its government structure, to bring us into the very Family of God. It is meant to help us set the foundation of the Earth on its course. Men arrogantly push that government aside and think they have better ideas! But their ways have ALWAYS failed! Whether angel or man, anybody who has ever tried a different way has ALWAYS FAILED!

If you don't have that vision in your marriage, you have nothing. If you don't realize it is a type of our marriage to Jesus Christ and work to make it like the Bride and Jesus Christ, it will not be a godly marriage.

Do you think like the I AM regarding marriage and family?

The I AM said, *I do NOTHING of myself!* He submitted to His Father perfectly! What a great and wonderful God! How worthy of worship!

Christ said, *My Father and I are one.* From the beginning, the I AM said, *When you marry, I want you to leave your mother and father, and I want you to become ONE FLESH. ONE!* Not tearing each other apart, but loving each other as the Father and Son love each other!

That is how we will build tomorrow's civilization. That is the family government that will make the World Tomorrow work!

What if a husband and wife brought that I AM humility into their marriage? Imagine both spouses saying, with all their heart and mind and being, *I do nothing of myself—if I find myself doing it, I will change.* You know they could only have a beautiful marriage!

Our children should be following with this same attitude. How beautiful could a family be with children who said, *Everything I do, I try to please my father and mother.*

We all have a long way to go before we would perfectly exhibit such an attitude. When I study the Gospel of John, I get *corrected* by it. God has shown me things I must change in my life. I hope the same is true of all of us, because unless we are changing, we cannot fulfill our incredible human potential!

HOW TO BE HAPPY

John 13 depicts Jesus Christ instituting the footwashing ceremony—a beautiful ordinance of humility.

When Christ started to wash Peter's feet, Peter resisted. But Christ said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8). This is speaking spiritually: If we don't humble ourselves and allow Christ to lead us, we have no part with Him. We will die in our sins.

After the ceremony, Christ said, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I AM" (verses 12-13). *I'm your Master and I'm your Lord. I'm the I AM.*

"If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (verses 14-15). Christ repeatedly emphasized this message: *Follow my example.*

Christ set us an example of suffering. When we follow Christ, we too will have to suffer at times (1 Peter 2:21). We are to follow in His steps. That is how we build the character to rule with Him as His Bride.

Only those firstfruits who are called before Christ's Second Coming will have that honor.

But notice here what it says. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM" (John 13:16-17).

HAPPY ARE YOU! If you really submit to the great I AM, it will make you happy!

If you conduct your marriage or any other aspect of your life according to the law of God, I **GUARANTEE IT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY!**

In the midst of a sore trial, you may feel a certain sadness. But if you keep the law, you will have an underlying HAPPINESS. Jesus Christ spoke these words *just before He was CRUCIFIED!* He knew He was about to be marred and savaged more than any man had been—and He was telling His disciples how to be HAPPY! What discipline and concentration He had. He warned them about rough times ahead, but far more importantly, He instructed them on how to be *happy*. That is rather amazing.

The I AM was happy. TO BE ABLE TO BE THAT WAY WHEN HE WAS JUST HOURS AWAY FROM BEING PHYSICALLY SHREDDED—THAT IS A DEEP HAPPINESS! How could a man just hours away from such an end truly be happy? He explained how.

“Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may *believe* that I AM ...” (verse 19). He had His mind on the crucifixion, but He also had His mind on what would happen to His disciples *beyond* that crucifixion. *I’m going through all this that you might BELIEVE*, He said. He wanted to build their faith—and OUR faith.

The great majestic I AM died for you and me. Now He wants some serious sacrificing from us.

Christ wants *us today* to really BELIEVE that the great I AM heads this Church! He wants us to be submissive to Him, because if we walk away, we will die in our sins. But if we FOLLOW HIM—know His truth and DO it—we will be HAPPY! Even in our trials, we will have an underlying happiness.

When I look at God’s people today, I can say *we are not as HAPPY as we ought to be*. We ought to become happier. All of us can grow in that. The great I AM tells you that if you submit to the Father the way He does, you will be happy!

“[O]ne star differeth from another star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:41). Some stars are greater and more luminous than others. God really wants us to have a lot of glory! He wants you to have the most “star glory” possible when you are born into the God Family.

But even today, we should shine with a certain glory. Our faces should *shine* with happiness!

Isaiah 3:9 describes how, because of Israel’s sins, “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them ...”

Look around, and you see many unhappy people in this world—people in the bonds of sin.

We in God's Church should radiate something entirely different!

I believe that, in a general way, we may be able to determine how much star quality and brightness we will have in the future by *how much our face shines today* in happiness and joy.

God wants to make you happy. He has *commanded* that you be happy! And He has instructed us in exactly how to achieve that: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Conducting your life God's way makes you HAPPY! And you'll never be happy any other way. Women will never be happy in marriage until they submit. Men will never be happy until they love their wives as Christ loved the Church. That is a guarantee.

BETRAYAL

At Christ's final Passover, the devil was right there. "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2).

Satan is always sitting right there trying to put thoughts in your mind. If you are sinning, if your marriage is upside down, he has an open conduit and can put damaging thoughts in your mind. That is what he did to Judas, and convinced him to betray the Son of the living God.

In the midst of the footwashing ceremony, "Jesus saith to [Peter], He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. ... I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (verses 10-11, 18).

There will always be someone who hates us and finds this message offensive. We will never get completely away from

that fact as long as human nature is around.

In this end time, we have seen people monstrously betray Jesus Christ on this scale; we were trying to disseminate the message of Christ, and they played the role of *antichrist*—taking us to court for doing so!

After their supper together, Christ and the disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane, where Judas had led a band of men to capture Him. Notice, Judas was right there with those thugs—a dangerous place for him to be (John 18:5).

Christ asked these men whom they were seeking, and they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” “Jesus saith unto them, I AM ...” (verse 5).

Notice: The word *he* was again added by translators. Christ spoke His name as the God of the Old Testament! He told them, *I AM. I AM the authority and the government of the Old Testament you’ve read about in your Bible. That’s me!*

And see what happened: “As soon then as he had said unto them, I AM ... they went backward, and fell to the ground!” (verse 6). These Jews staggered and FELL OVER!

THAT SAME BEING IS THE HEAD OF THIS CHURCH. That truth ought to *stagger us* at times!

You must know where you are. You won’t be motivated to give your life to God—even sacrifice it and die, if necessary—if you don’t know where the I AM is! You must prove that truth. Most of God’s people today refuse to do so.

The Jews knew that this God was a God of authority! They knew He ruled Israel, and they fell over backward! Sometimes this mighty God could get tough with the people of Israel, and it scared them—though not for long; they still wouldn’t submit to Him.

This is the same God who will rule in the World Tomorrow. We will be assisting Him, ruling with a rod of iron. If someone begins to depart from God’s law, we will not negotiate about it—we will put things right!

We must submit to the I AM today, or we won’t be prepared to be a part of His future government. Are we willing to have a humble, footwashing attitude today before the grandeur of the I AM?

EAT JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ—the I AM—understands and implements God's government perfectly. We can learn so much from His perfect example.

Christ said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). We need to let this mind be in us, so we too can live in perfect agreement with the I AM government.

Here is how Christ expressed this concept: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. ... As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (verses 51, 57).

These words are so profound! The I AM LIVED by the LIVING FATHER! And if we *eat Him*, we will act and live just as the I AM did—in perfect accord with His government. The I AM must be ALIVE IN US! So we too say, *I do NOTHING of myself—as the Father has taught me, so I do.*

As we submit in that way, the Father comes alive, and we know we're SONS OF GOD! What a wonderful blessing it is to bring the Father alive! Then we *know* we will be BORN into the Family of God and look like and be like the great God of the Bible! *Never* were the angels called begotten sons of God!

We must bring the Father ALIVE, because the whole FAMILY OF GOD CONCEPT REVOLVES AROUND THE FATHER! The world knows *nothing* about the Father; the Laodiceans know *little or nothing* about the Father. They refuse to *submit* to the Father as the I AM did.

"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (verse 58). Physical manna only brings death; eating the I AM brings eternal LIFE!

We must EAT this Word! And LIVE IT, and PRACTICE IT IN OUR MARRIAGES, and in our FAMILIES, and in our relations with OTHER PEOPLE in the Church and the world. EAT IT UP! As we do, the Father comes *alive* to us! Our marriages come ALIVE! Our

families come ALIVE! AND GOD’S NEW CIVILIZATION COMES ALIVE!
Soon we will be teaching these inspiring truths to all the world!
How beautiful and wonderful, and how blessed we are.

THIS IS LIFE!

Still, this is not an easy truth to accept. Many who heard Christ speak this truth couldn’t accept it (John 6:59-60). Many of His disciples turned away, just as they have today. They didn’t really want the truth of God.

“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?” (verse 61). Does this offend *you*?

Some of these things are hard. It’s hard to straighten out a marriage. When my wife and I first married, I can honestly tell you we had serious work to do. Trust me, you are not starting any further back than we did! We *had* to change in order to survive. But what a blessing it was as we worked through those difficulties, and changed, and submitted ourselves to the I AM government! With God’s help, we came to have a beautiful, harmonious marriage.

God calls the lowly of the world. Only the lowly have enough humility to listen to Him! Everyone else is too concerned about their own beauty or reputation or material interests. If we have the humility to submit to God, He can teach us how to make our marriages right and to straighten out our lives! The fruits of God’s way of life are incredibly wonderful.

Christ continued, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (verse 63). How true that is! God’s words are LIFE!

“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him” (verse 64). Those who don’t believe God can become pretty nasty and seek to betray Christ. Some people accuse us of being a cult. Many Laodicean groups advise people to attend with *any* group except ours. God says they are fighting Christ!

“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (verse 65). We wouldn't be here if not for our Father. He looked down, examined our lives, and individually selected each one of us. Jesus Christ didn't get to select you—THE FATHER did that. After perhaps years of analyzing and examining your behavior and your potential, the Father finally chose you to marry His SON! God is deeply involved in who will marry His BELOVED, ONLY BEGOTTEN SON!

Don't ever forget that beginning! Don't ever forget what was in the mind of your Father when He called you. There is no greater honor in the Bible, and never will be, than the honor we have to marry the Son of God! Don't let this opportunity slip away.

The amazing thing is how many people *have* let it slip. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (verse 66). *Many* just turned away from this. The same has happened today. It is almost routine.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” (verse 67). Jesus Christ saw many of His disciples turn away, but He didn't go chasing them. He turned to those who remained loyal, and asked Peter and all those men, “Will you also go away?”

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (verses 68-69). *There's only one hope; there's only one way!* Peter said. THIS IS LIFE! Everything else is just a chemical existence—it is nothing! But THIS IS LIFE—*eternal* life that will get you *beyond the grave!* This is what you were *born* for!

The most regretful people ever will be the people of God who *turned away* from this honor of all honors! For all eternity, the Bride of Christ will possess tremendous honor and splendor.

We are right on the threshold of the wonderful World Tomorrow! Those now begotten of God are about to be BORN as sons of God and become the Bride of Jesus Christ! You will work directly with Christ to usher in a new civilization! It

should have been here 6,000 years ago, but man thought he had a better idea—and today we see the results of that monstrous delusion.

The Word became the Son of God! He is the I AM! And we are to be born into the God Family! Our raiment will shine like the light and our faces like the sun! Always keep that transcendent potential in mind! What an honor it is. How privileged and blessed we are to have the opportunity to be the Bride of Jesus Christ, and to place the foundations of the Earth on course for the first time since man was created! What a world it will be, and what a beautiful future all mankind has!

We have it ALL! God has given us EVERYTHING! We are the most blessed people on this Earth A MILLION TIMES OVER! We know exactly why this Earth is so plagued with problems and how God is going to solve them. We know this planet is about to change and that we are about to take on God's shining glory because today we submitted to the I AM! That is a wonderful, wonderful calling.

This is revealed truth from the Bible that our Husband is giving us. He is working diligently to prepare us to MARRY HIM! And though we have much work yet to do, He still *already* considers us *His wife*—even today! He looks upon that marriage as being already consummated. How positive and filled with hope He is! Nothing can stop us from that future!

Chapter 5

‘Keep Them From the Evil One’

IT IS INTERESTING THAT JOHN DOESN'T DISCUSS THE ANGELS AND demons much. He is showing us a new kind of thinking—a thinking that is the polar opposite of Lucifer when he rebelled against God. I BELIEVE THAT CHRIST PREPARED JOHN TO FOCUS ON HIS FATHER AS NO OTHER BIBLICAL WRITER DID. John concentrates on the thinking of the Father and the Son.

The Apostle John is the only Gospel writer to include Jesus Christ's prayer the night before He was crucified. That prayer is recorded in John 17. John also discusses many of Christ's thoughts and deeds that the other Gospel writers did not. Peter was the leading apostle and John was the chief writer among the apostles.

Jesus Christ asked that God would protect His disciples—not only in that age, but every age—from the evil one (verse 15). He was quite concerned about the evil one. The King James Version just reads “the evil,” which makes it sound like a hazy, impersonal force. But Christ was referring to a *very specific being*—a being who has greatly damaged God's

end-time Church. God's people have witnessed that. We must know the fierce nature of the enemy we face.

Satan stirred *religious* translators to water down this verse taken from one of Christ's most heartfelt prayers, which He uttered THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS CRUCIFIXION!

No wonder the whole world is deceived! (Revelation 12:9). They don't believe Christ, therefore THEY DON'T KNOW THE EVIL SPIRIT BEING CALLED SATAN THE DEVIL.

This world worships the most evil being in the universe and thinks it is worshiping God! Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We know that Satan the devil is very capable of getting inside God's Church. He has done that in this end time—destroying the Work and turning 95 percent of the members away from God. Why was he able to do that? How could Satan have such a monstrously high success rate within God's own Church?

Christ was keenly aware of the devil on the last night of His life on this Earth. We also need Christ's vigilance concerning Satan. GOD'S PEOPLE MUST THINK VERY SERIOUSLY ABOUT THIS ETERNAL LIFE-AND-DEATH SUBJECT!

A COMPLETE CHANGE

The Prophet Ezekiel gives us some critical background information about this evil spirit being. God, through Ezekiel, said this to Satan: "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14).

Lucifer was one of the most splendid angels that God created—one of three archangels listed in the Bible. He was created to do a mighty work. This very impressive being was right there with God and the *Logos*—a cherub covering the throne of God. He could learn how God thought—he could watch how God operated. God trained him for a significant job on Earth, and later in the universe. God wanted to use him in a magnificent way.

Lucifer means “light bringer.” He had a lot of the light of God to bring to this Earth. But he became the prince of darkness! Now, Satan is the ugliest, most unhappy, miserable being in the universe. He is totally opposite of God.

That is a shocking and horrifying nightmare! Something went dreadfully wrong. **NOTHING LIKE THAT HAD EVER HAPPENED IN THE UNIVERSE BEFORE.**

What happened? When you see something like that, there is always a giant lesson to learn from it.

OBSESSED WITH HIS OWN BRIGHTNESS

God continues: “Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created [God created him perfect], till iniquity [lawlessness] was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:15). Translators always seem to want to soften the word *lawlessness* by calling it *iniquity*.

Lucifer reached a point where he simply would **NO LONGER KEEP THE LAW OF GOD**, which is the love of God.

LUCIFER STOPPED LOVING GOD. That is where lawlessness leads. If you are breaking God’s law, that is the end result. Satan began traveling down the wrong path, and he didn’t stop—he just kept going.

Here we see how *the evil one* thinks. He is totally lawless. Anybody who keeps God’s law becomes his primary enemy. Satan is lawless, which means he hates the government of God that teaches and implements God’s law.

“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire” (verse 16). Here is God’s response to this violent being.

“**THINE HEART WAS LIFTED UP BECAUSE OF THY BEAUTY**, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee” (verse 17).

Lucifer had beauty and brightness. He became vain and proud about that, and it corrupted his wisdom! Because of

that vanity, he became a massive failure. He became absorbed in his own brightness and beauty—which *God Himself* made!

Lucifer was like a speck in all of God's creation, but he selfishly focused on himself. In his own eyes, he became more important than God and all His creation.

Can we become that vain about beauty? Or about *things*? Can vanity corrupt our wisdom? Certainly. Oftentimes, human beings become self-absorbed—wrapped up in our own beauty or looks or things.

God had a plan for this being—but instead of thinking about that VAST UNIVERSE and ALL ETERNITY, Lucifer began to think about *his own beauty*! He became OBSESSED with his own form and shape, which God Himself made and created! This was an amazing development!

Even though Lucifer was brilliant, you have to say he became terribly shallow—spiritually.

Yes, he was a mind-dazzling creation—YET HE WAS NOTHING LIKE THE LOGOS OR GOD! He didn't have Revelation 1 brilliance and brightness! His beauty didn't approach God's own beauty. Still, he grew self-obsessed!

Have you witnessed that happen to human beings? I have even seen members of God's own Church, who possess the Holy Spirit, orient their minds so much on themselves—or their *things* or *some kind of beauty* they like—that IT HAS TAKEN THEM AWAY FROM THE GOD WHO CREATED THEM!

GOD CREATED US ALL—and yes, He did create us with a certain beauty and brightness. But it is madness to get our minds focused on THAT, rather than the FAR MORE beautiful, far more dazzlingly bright, Creator God and His plan!

BEAUTY IS VAIN

God says in Proverbs 31:30 that beauty is vain. I don't think most people who are beautiful believe that.

A young man may set his sights on a very physically beautiful woman. What is that beauty going to accomplish? God wants us to passionately give our lives to His Work the way Jesus Christ did. Will that woman's beauty help that young

man in the Work? I know of no way it would help the Work. It hasn't done anything for us here at headquarters that I know of.

God is trying to teach us that there is a **DEEPER KIND OF BEAUTY** you had better make your priority, or you will get in serious trouble.

How many times have we seen *spiritual beauty* overlooked in human beings?

Even in God's Church, this is a danger, because we can follow the world's example, where beauty is almost **EVERYTHING!** Yet God says it is **NOTHING**, if you look at it spiritually.

Lucifer had tremendous beauty, and he got his mind on *that*, of all things. That is stunning to me.

Obviously, a man who is going to get married wants a woman who appeals to him—but you had better beware of the danger there. If your heart is in God's Work—if you are giving your whole life to God and this Work as Christ did—you must be extremely careful.

Haven't we all seen a few outstanding gals—who possessed truly dazzling spiritual beauty—overlooked because maybe they didn't have the physical beauty that some other women have? The same can be true the other way, too—men being overlooked for purely *physical* reasons.

We don't want to get our minds on that! That is the way Satan thought. This great created being actually got his mind on *his own beauty!* That took precedence over everything, and it fouled up his mind. He began to corrupt his wisdom and grow obsessed with *himself!*

Lucifer introduced a new kind of thinking in the universe that had never been there before. How ugly he became, **LOSING SIGHT OF THE REAL BEAUTY THAT GOD WAS CREATING IN HIM.** That became the worst disaster ever—that is, before mankind was created.

Lucifer hated God's law. He rebelled and became lawless. Now, that spirit and way of life fills this Earth. Mankind follows its lawless god! And that thinking is destroying God's Earth as it did much of the universe. It will also destroy your eternal life.

Does Satan have excitement in his life? If he were physical, I'm sure he would have already killed himself. He is miserable and full of hate—the polar opposite of how God thinks.

The irony is, Lucifer was the light bringer, and had the opportunity to bring light to the whole world, and God wanted to give him *everything*. He had the unparalleled honor to be a covering cherub over the throne of God, watching God do everything. And he must have done such a good job that God sent him to rule Earth with a third of the angels to bring light—with the potential to fill the whole *universe* with light and godly beauty. Had he succeeded on Earth, Lucifer would have undoubtedly ruled over all the universe under God.

Instead, he became obsessed with himself. He lost sight of that mind-staggering vision and became obsessed by his own beauty!

TO GOD, THAT IS LAWLESSNESS OF THE WORST KIND!

What a universe-rattling failure.

This is real. It's not a Hollywood movie. It happened. Now Satan is out there, and he HATES everything about the God Family.

God's own Laodicean people are facing a catastrophe of even greater magnitude. However, 50 percent of them will die forever! How could they turn away from God the Father so easily if they really loved Him? How could they rebel against the one who has given them everything? What's wrong with their thinking? Well—God says they are "rich, and increased with goods" (Revelation 3:17). THEY ARE INTO BEAUTY—PHYSICAL BEAUTY. They have exalted their own *physical desires*.

The tragedy is, Jesus Christ was transforming them into THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BRIDE THERE EVER WILL BE THROUGHOUT ALL ETERNITY! There will be only one Bride of Christ to rule the universe with Him forever! The fact that they chose their own kind of physical beauty is INSULTING, LAWLESS, OBSCENE! But we have seen it happen.

The Apostle John shows us how to think like God and avoid Lucifer's crushing disaster.

THE OPPOSITE OF LUCIFER

Consider again the Gospel of John. The Apostle John describes the *Logos* as being so much brighter than Lucifer ever was—so much more beautiful in form and shape. And yet, when He became a man, what did Jesus Christ focus on? GOD THE FATHER! In verse after verse after verse, Christ said, *This truth originated with my Father—my Father is greater than I—I do nothing but what I see my Father do.*

Except for the Father, Christ possessed unparalleled beauty and unmatched brightness. But Jesus Christ NEVER thought about Himself to the extent that it was unlawful. Study that in John's Gospel—it is one of the most exciting studies you will ever have! What love and what humility God in the flesh demonstrated when He was on Earth.

That was the same love and humility He possessed as the *Logos* for eternity! *Why couldn't Lucifer have learned from that majestic example?*

In his Gospel, John virtually SKIPS OVER what happened with the angels! That is a stern warning to us. Satan and one third of the angels are to be plunged into the blackness of darkness forever. GOD SAW THEN ONLY HE COULD BE TRUSTED TO RULE THE UNIVERSE. SO JOHN FOCUSES ON HOW GOD IS RECREATING HIMSELF IN MAN.

One of the most striking aspects of John's Gospel is how the Almighty *Logos* kept *exalting His Father*. What an obedient Son He was and is.

Lucifer failed utterly because he *exalted himself*—not his Creator.

John's Gospel is probably the most wonderful book in the Bible to illustrate how Christ focused on His Father. Christ always directed us to His Father—never to Himself.

His purpose for coming to Earth was to declare His Father (John 1:18). The good news, or gospel, is about how we can be born into the Father's Family!

Satan is still the god of this world. He has sold his self-oriented line of reasoning to the world—and that is exactly the way the world thinks. John was doing everything he could to

discourage people from thinking that way.

Certainly beauty in people is a wonderful thing. I'm not against beauty. God created it. But it is still vain. It is of no real value to God; if it were, I suppose He would have made all of us extremely beautiful and handsome physically.

Let's not forget that we are all made in the likeness of God. But that's only the beginning. God is now creating His own mind and character in His firstfruits. In the resurrection we shall be born into God's Family with unparalleled beauty that lasts forever!

That is where our focus must be. That is what should excite us mightily. We are going to have the magnificent beauty of that God pictured in Ezekiel chapter 1 and Revelation chapter 1—forever!

We must think about this more deeply—maybe far more deeply than what we have in the past.

LET'S NOT FALL IN LOVE WITH THE CREATION—LET'S FALL IN LOVE WITH THE CREATOR!

What is He like? What is God like, who can create human beings and angels, who can design and manufacture the magnificent universe? Think about GOD! Because THAT IS WHAT WE CAN BECOME—if we can get our minds off ourselves, our own beauty or something physical that dazzles us, and get our minds on the CREATOR!

It MAKES SENSE to fixate on God—to be dazzled by God. But it isn't logical to a selfish mind.

It's *lawless* to focus on beauty the way Lucifer did. We must anchor our minds in GOD'S LAW. The FIRST COMMANDMENT is, *You shall have no other gods before the true God!*

We are to become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect—in mind and character (Matthew 5:48). THAT IS UNPARALLELED AND UNSURPASSED BY ANY OTHER KIND OF BEAUTY.

Think about it: Is beauty in this world more a blessing than a curse? I don't think so. I would say *beauty is more of a curse*. Look where it leads the men and women who have it! Look at the kinds of lifestyles it leads them into. It can be very dangerous.

If you're a man who is committed to and whose passion

is God's Work, as it was with Jesus Christ, and you marry a woman who is only partially committed to God's Work, what will happen in your marriage? You will obviously have difficulties, conflicts and serious problems. And I submit to you that you will have some serious regrets.

There are examples of beautiful women in the Bible who were truly committed to God. There are also examples of beautiful women who weren't so committed, and husbands who had real problems with them. If you're a young man and you want a physically beautiful woman, you had better be careful in choosing her.

Nothing is better than a good marriage, and nothing is worse than a bad marriage.

Let's make sure we put God first and let God direct us to that beautiful woman or handsome guy. Let Him do the directing, and then the marriage will be right and good and beautiful and productive.

We must keep our minds focused on the Creator. The Apostle John tells us how to do that.

THINK LIKE GOD

As much as any writer in the Bible, John really analyzed God's mind. He was in love with the way God thinks.

LIKE JOHN, WE SHOULD ALL SEEK TO GROW IN THE MIND OF GOD.

John's focus on God's mind helped him recognize just how much Jesus Christ focused on God the Father.

"[T]he only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *he hath declared him,*" John wrote (John 1:18). Christ truly DECLARED THE FATHER—and that's what you and I must do! IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY! We want to be in the Family of God! The Father is the Head and always will be. Christ knew that more deeply than any being ever will, and He is *totally* committed to this Family that His Father is bringing into being. No example in the Bible comes close to exalting the Father as Christ does.

John is the only biblical writer to even mention the *Logos*. Only John gave us the *Logos* perspective and the *Logos*

thinking. The Word was the Spokesman for the God Family even before He became God's Son. When He came to this Earth, He was speaking for the Family, but He was not the Head and He wanted everybody to know that! So He kept pounding the lesson home.

But if you look at Christianity today, you see all of the focus on Jesus Christ! THAT OFFENDS CHRIST! Those religious people DON'T KNOW CHRIST if they teach it that way! Christ didn't teach it that way at all!

THERE IS NOTHING MORE EXCITING THAN THE THINKING OF GOD. IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BRING EXCITEMENT INTO YOUR LIFE, STUDY GOD'S THINKING, AND EMULATE GOD'S THINKING!

THE FATHER IS GREATER

“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you [through the Spirit]. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for *my Father is greater than I*” (John 14:28).

Look how Christ continually exalts the Father above Himself—unlike false Christianity today. Christians in this world don't follow Christ. That is why they don't understand God's Word.

Christ exalted the Father every step of the way. If only Lucifer had thought that way! If only the Laodiceans would be humble like that! If only they would listen to their Father as Christ listened! Human beings are just *worms* (Psalm 22:6) made of dust (Genesis 3:19). Why won't the Laodiceans just *listen* to their Father, who only wants to bring them into His Family and let them marry His Son? How could mankind be SO IGNORANT AND REBELLIOUS that they would let their calling slip away so easily? The Laodiceans have lost the Family message. They don't even know who they are! All because they don't honor the Father.

“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD COMETH, AND HATH NOTHING IN ME” (John 14:30).

Again Christ reminds us that we must overcome Satan as He did if we are to be His Bride, sharing our Husband's

throne (Revelation 3:21). With God's Holy Spirit, we can overcome the devil and qualify for the most prestigious calling ever given to any group of people.

The prince of this world has nothing in common with God. God and Satan are polar opposites. Satan has *nothing* good in him—nothing of God. He was a beautiful creation and a light bringer at one time, with a tremendous future ahead of him. But he went dreadfully wrong and became the arch-rebel of all time.

What is so exciting about the self? Why can't we overcome the pull toward the self?

Well, WE CAN if we are comforted by the Holy Spirit and have the peace of God come into our lives. "Peace I leave with you," Christ said (John 14:27). No matter how serious your trials are, that is an *absolute promise* to God's people. All the material *things* the Laodiceans have are *worthless* without that peace of God. Life isn't even worth living if you lose the purpose God has for your life.

"But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (verse 31). Was Christ trying to put down His Father, or direct attention to Himself? That is an absurd question.

Besides God the Father and Jesus Christ, NOTHING WILL EVER BE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN CHRIST'S BRIDE! God is making His Bride beautiful! We have the opportunity to be part of that! He is building the most gloriously beautiful character in us. Physical beauty and things have *nothing* to do with it.

WE WILL BE THE BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR ALL ETERNITY. I wonder if that truth still grips us and shakes us and fills us with the kind of zeal that Jesus Christ has!

Who are WE to be given an opportunity like this? There will never be another opportunity like it.

God calls the lowly of the world for a reason: because the rest of the world is so caught up in the physical. God chooses lowly people in order to confound the wise and the beautiful of this world.

But still—we can get wrapped up in ourselves. All we are is just *a little speck of dirt on this Earth* in the vast universe. Yet

we can become enamored by this little speck of mud. When we get excited about ourselves, WE FORGET ALL ABOUT THE VAST UNIVERSE AND THE FAMILY OF GOD AND EVERYTHING OF VALUE.

John does a marvelous job of helping us get our minds on the Creator so we don't end up like the god of this world. HE PROVIDES THE SOLUTION TO LUCIFER'S REBELLION! HE GETS US INTO THE THINKING OF GOD HIMSELF.

THE BRIDE'S GREATEST BEAUTY IS THAT SHE THINKS LIKE HER HUSBAND. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

Chapter 6

Living Water

JOHAN 4 RECORDS SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS THAT CONTAIN A mind-stretching lesson.

The Jews were terribly prejudiced against the Samaritan people—even calling them *dogs*. They viewed the area they were from as a wretched ghetto. Nevertheless, Christ traveled there. While His disciples were off in the city buying meat, He went to Jacob’s well and there met a woman of Samaria.

Jesus *dared* to ask this woman for a drink of water from the well. If His disciples had been there, surely they would have tried to stop Him. So how did John know about this, in writing his Gospel? He probably learned about it later, maybe during one of those evenings when he was lying on Christ’s bosom, and Christ was teaching him and correcting him. This event really does have some strong correction for John and the disciples—and for all of us if we fail to reflect the WORLD-ENCOMPASSING LOVE that Christ demonstrated here.

The woman was taken aback that Christ would talk to her, since the Jews were so contemptuous of Samaritans. She said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for *the Jews have no dealings with the*

Samaritans” (John 4:9). What despicable self-righteousness! What a horrifying *misunderstanding* of God’s holy and righteous Word.

Jesus Christ took this opportunity to begin teaching this woman—a human being who was made in the likeness of God.

Christ answered her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and *he would have given thee LIVING WATER*” (verse 10).

This was the Word—God in the flesh—talking to her, and telling her that He would give her *LIVING WATER*.

The Jews treated the Samaritans like they were a plague. Christ, on the other hand, went straight into this ghetto area and began to deal with this Gentile woman. Why? Because *JESUS CHRIST CAME TO DIE FOR THE WORLD! That’s what this is all about!*

Christ didn’t die for a particular race or ethnic group. *HE CAME TO DIE FOR THE WORLD!* And to *ANYONE* who repents, comes to Him and asks to drink, *HE WILL GIVE LIVING WATER! TO ANYONE AND EVERYONE!*

JESUS CHRIST CAREFULLY PLANNED THIS EPISODE AT JACOB’S WELL TO TEACH THE WORLD THIS LESSON. It is a lesson that every person must learn before he or she can enter God’s Family. Water is a type of the Holy Spirit, and it *GIVES LIFE*. In a dry desolate place without water, you have no life. That’s the way this world is: There is no real *LIFE*, because there is no *LIVING WATER*. People don’t know what life is. This woman didn’t know. Our temporary, chemical existence isn’t really life.

But *what water that living water is—and what LIFE it brings!* This water leads to everlasting life—endless glory. What a lesson at the well!

ASK THE BIG QUESTIONS

This Samaritan woman asked for water from Christ. When she did so, He revealed that He knew a great deal about her and her very sordid past. She responded, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet” (John 4:19).

This woman must have been very sobered by Christ's statements. He knew all of her sins. He knows about ours. But no matter how dark our history, when we repent God removes those sins from us as far as east is from west! He no longer remembers them, and He doesn't want us to think about them either.

Now Christ really had this woman's attention. She must have been quite a humble, lowly woman, to accept what He had to say to her. He really began to teach her. (If only the "religious" Pharisees and Sadducees had been so teachable!)

"Ye worship ye know not what," Christ said (verse 22). Telling people that today could get you killed! In fact, it *did* eventually get Christ killed. But this woman accepted it. "[W]e know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews," Christ continued. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers shall worship the Father* in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (verses 22-23).

Again Christ pointed to His Father as the Head of the God Family—unlike Christians in this world.

We must worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. We obey in the letter of the law, but we also take it to the spiritual level. With God's Spirit, we can worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

We not only don't murder, we now know it is a sin to *hate* our brother. We not only don't commit adultery, we don't *lust* for another person *in our minds*.

The Father is looking for people who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth! Christ was giving this woman some strong spiritual meat.

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I THAT SPEAK UNTO THEE AM HE" (verses 25-26). This woman had heard all the prophecies about the coming Messiah—and here He was standing right before her! This moved her deeply.

But then the disciples came along, and they were apparently upset at what was going on, though they didn't say

anything. John records, “[Y]et no man said, What seekest thou? Or, Why talkest thou with her?” (verse 27).

John wrote this—these were *not* the words of Christ. John knew what he and the other disciples were thinking.

There is tremendous depth in this verse. Today, we always need to be trying to understand *what* Christ is doing and *why*. The Bride needs to understand her Husband’s mind.

They were obviously confused—and, truthfully, **THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ASKING THESE BIG QUESTIONS!** Christ wasn’t speaking with this Samaritan woman in vain. He had a lot to teach the disciples about what He was doing, and they had a lot to learn!

I’m sure that later Christ told John and the rest of them how their attitude was wrong. *There is something important you don’t understand!* He surely told them. *I’m not here on Earth in vain. This is very important, and you all must learn it: You are here learning to teach the WHOLE WORLD!*

We *all* have to learn to think about and ask the big questions: *What is Christ doing? Why would God give me this trial? Why must I go through this? Why does God command tithes and offerings?* We may never know *all* the reasons, but at times God can reveal quite a lot of them to you. But we are hard-headed, and there is a lot we don’t get because of that. We all have carnal nature, and we must continually ask God to bring His Spirit into our lives and show us where we are wrong. We all need to open ourselves up to God’s correction and humble ourselves before the Father the way our Savior does. If He can do it, surely we can do it. There has never been humility on this Earth like Christ had—not even *close!* And He was the Word—God made flesh! The disciples had to learn that, and we do too.

WE ARE SUPPOSED TO THINK LIKE CHRIST! That means we need to begin to ask the big questions: *What is Christ doing? What does this mean?* He does **NOTHING** in vain!

This example is taught *only* in the Gospel of John. That is because John’s purpose was to help us understand the mind of Christ.

We are to let His mind be in us (Philippians 2:5). That means we must constantly be seeking how He thinks and

WHY. Then we can think more deeply the way He does.

John carries this lesson on in the following verses.

CHRIST'S MEAT—GOD'S WORK

After the episode at the well, the disciples tried to get Christ to eat something. He responded, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32).

This confused the disciples. They were so concerned about Him *eating*. Jesus Christ told them something here that we *all* need to learn deeply.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verse 34). *That's my food*, Christ said. *My way of life is just to do the Work of God with all of the passion I possess. That is all I'm here for! That is my main delight—to finish the Work the Father has given me to do!*

THIS IS THE KEY TO HAVING PASSION AND HIGH SPIRITS! THE WORK OF GOD HAS A BUILT-IN VISION OF JOY! It always keeps us looking beyond the difficulties of the present and seeing where this is all leading! What difference does it make to miss a meal? Christ wasn't even thinking about physical food. His mind was on why He—the Word—was made flesh.

IF YOU GET YOUR HEART INTO GOD'S WORK AND GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU HAVE, IT WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE EXUBERANCE AND JOY GOD HAS TO GIVE US ON EARTH!

Of course there will be trials. The very fact that you're doing the Work will bring trials. Jesus Christ knew that in a short while, He would be savagely beaten, crucified and killed! There had to be a strong nagging pull toward self-pity. Yet here He was missing meals to serve a Samaritan woman! That made no sense to the Jews, but it made a lot of sense to Jesus Christ, because He saw how it all fit in with His wonderful, beautiful master plan! He was energized and in high spirits by doing God's Work.

Whenever Mr. Armstrong spoke about a project that would help the Work, he conveyed tremendous excitement about it. He was thrilled because his heart was in the Work. That was his

life. Every time something good happened, he rejoiced in that—and he had a lot to get excited about. Of course, he had some heartaches too; some things went wrong. That’s the way it is if you love—you can get hurt. BUT YOU KNOW HOW TO REALLY LIVE.

Every member in the Philadelphia Church of God can be energized that way. Whatever you are able to contribute, do so. If you can only pray and fast, just do it. THIS IS THE WORK OF GOD! We are part of the Work of the Word, who came to Earth to declare His Father!

Jesus Christ just wanted to finish His Father’s Work. That was His great passion. We ought to think as He does. “Let this mind be in you.” WE HAVE ONE SPLENDID GOAL: TO FINISH GOD’S WORK. THAT IS WHY WE WERE CALLED TODAY!

Christ continued: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (verse 35). The same is *oh, so true* today! The work is there—it is READY FOR MORE GROWTH! The fields are already white to harvest! We *must not* fail to harvest the crop. Times are urgent! Prospective members and co-workers and Laodiceans are waiting to hear this message, and then for ministers to help them while there is time! People we don’t even know about urgently need to hear what God is saying! If you are like Christ and you miss some meals to do the Work of God, that’s not bad! Christ had enough passion and excitement that He didn’t mind those kinds of inconveniences. His mind was teeming with the vision of God! He was thinking about the World Tomorrow, not the world today. If you are really doing the Work, YOU HAVE VISION!

As we have heard so many times, we are not here to save ourselves—but to SAVE THE WORLD! You don’t attend Church services just to socialize and maybe pick up a nice idea or two. You are here to learn to teach the world! We are preparing to educate the world in a different way of life! Christ is preparing an office for you according to how well you are going to do as a teacher, and how hard you have worked to prepare for that! If you miss a meal in order to secure a greater office in God’s Kingdom, that is wonderful!

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

After Christ's conversation with her, that Samaritan woman went out and told a lot of people. Samaritans came running after Christ and begged Him to stay there and teach them!

This is extraordinary! Here was THE MESSIAH, spending time in this undesirable area, responding to the enthusiasm of these underprivileged people. They were excited about the truth of God, so He stayed. He stayed with those poor and persecuted people for *two days*, doing everything He could to help them. THE MESSIAH gave His time to those "DOGS."

That whole area was filled with excitement and joy. And they only received a tiny fraction of what Christ gives us today.

In truth, NO PEOPLE ARE DOGS. God DETESTS the prejudice, hatred, evil and ugliness in this world! *Jesus Christ DIED FOR THE WORLD!* He died to save *EVERY SINGLE HUMAN BEING ON EARTH!*

That magnificent truth gives inspiring potential to each one of us—if we want it.

These Samaritans were so excited about the truth that Christ was willing to miss meals and alter His schedule in order to stay with them and teach them. Surely people would have asked, what *possible* interest could Christ have in that ghetto? But He was clearly excited about it.

THIS GIVES US A SMALL TASTE OF WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO DO FOR THE WHOLE WORLD!

Jesus Christ and God the Father are passionate about this. They are working slavishly to bring this Family about—they are going to give EVERY INDIVIDUAL ON EARTH an opportunity to be in that Family! When Christ experienced *just a taste* of that future among these Samaritans, He really came to life! And it should do the same for us!

Christ set this example for us to follow. How much more each one of us can do if we deeply look to His example!

Notice what the Samaritans said: "And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that *this is indeed the Christ, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD*" (verse 42).

Men cannot save the world—they only destroy it. *Only* God can save the world! This is *why* the Word was made flesh. Christ did not come just to save Jews. He stayed two days with the Gentiles to drive that lesson home. He is the Savior of THE WORLD! And He is incredibly excited about that! Are you?

These Samaritans were talking to the Son of the living God. That same Christ is the Head of this Church. Are we stirred and rejoicing as these Samaritans were?

WHEN YOU SEE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THE WORK, DO YOU ACT LIKE JESUS CHRIST? DO YOU ACT THE WAY THE HEAD OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD ACTS? IF WE ARE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST, WE ACT LIKE OUR HUSBAND! THAT IS WHAT HE IS TELLING US TO DO.

Of all the Gospel writers, only John brings this incident out. This is the subject he focused on. Jesus Christ came from God the Father TO SAVE THE WORLD.

Do you realize deeply with every cell in your brain that THIS IS WHY YOU ARE HERE? God's Church is a teachers' college—training people to help teach and save the world!

In the end, I suspect that none of these Samaritans were part of the 120 disciples who remained at the time of Christ's death. I suppose they went as far as Christ could take them at that time.

In our work, we take people as far as we can. In many cases, it won't work out until the Tribulation, or the World Tomorrow, or the second resurrection. God has the big overview. If they respond vigorously to that opportunity today, even if they don't become converted, He will probably give them some kind of a leadership role, even as physical beings, in the World Tomorrow. God is doing all He can to try to bring this world to its senses. Our real harvest is in the Great Tribulation. That is when the great multitude of people will turn to God—because they received our message and knew where God was working.

We don't have much time left to do this Work. As God views it, we have only minutes left, and then the moment will be gone! If you have an opportunity to do the Work, SEIZE IT! DON'T MISS THE MOMENT!

HOW MANY MEALS HAVE WE MISSED IN DOING GOD'S WORK? We are called now to help Christ save the world. WE MUST BE WILLING TO GIVE UP OUR OWN HOPES AND DREAMS, SO WE CAN FULFILL GOD'S DREAMS!

THE COMFORTER

Christ also said this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

Christ went to the Father and left us down here, and said we would do greater works than He did. Certainly that is the case in this end time, with the technology we have. We have greater means to reach around the world—through television, satellite, publications and mail distribution, and the Internet. That enables us to do greater works than Christ could do! Despite our small numbers, Christ continues to bless our work with significant growth.

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and *he shall give you another Comforter*, that he [God the Father] may abide with you for ever" (verses 14-16).

Remember, John was the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 20:2; 21:7, 20). He spent time leaning on Christ's bosom (John 13:23). At that time, John didn't have the Holy Spirit *in* him, but it was with him. And he was certainly comforted by Christ's presence. Christ was very comforting to His disciples.

Here Christ told them that, though He would be going away, the Father would supply them *another* Comforter so their heart would not have to be troubled. God the Father Himself would abide with them!

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," Christ continued (John 14:18). John is the *only* Gospel writer who related this conversation, because it ties in so perfectly with the central message of his Gospel.

By the time he wrote this, John had had God's Spirit for a number of years, and he really knew what it was to be

comforted by Christ! He had been *personally comforted* by this *other Comforter*.

God is no respecter of persons. I am absolutely convinced that John was saying, *I was called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and I leaned on Christ's bosom. But with this other Comforter, every single one of you can figuratively lie on Christ's bosom, and have that close relationship with Him! He is right there with you, and that's why your heart need not be troubled.* Now the Holy Spirit is available to each one of us so you and I can become *the one whom Jesus loves!*

John was given this special revelation to show us how we can enter into Christ's bosom and be comforted by the Holy Spirit.

We face tribulation in this world. As we fight to enter God's Family, we must be *comforted* to continue the struggle.

The subject is the Holy Spirit. God is teaching us spiritually. God's Spirit truly is a *Comforter!* That word could be translated *Consoler* or *Encourager*. When you're having a problem, **JUST GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES AND PRAY AND PRAY UNTIL YOU STIR UP GOD'S SPIRIT AND ARE CONSOLED!** That is the *only* way to truly be consoled.

John is looking at this spiritually. To lean on Jesus's bosom physically is not the ultimate lesson. To have God's Spirit *within* us is **TRUE COMFORT!** Jesus Christ knows how to look after His wife! He is a loving Husband and knows how to comfort. He comforts and encourages her because He loves her. *John gave us a physical picture of what our Husband does spiritually.* Every human being can have that kind of a relationship with Jesus Christ. You can lie on Christ's bosom spiritually—as John did physically. The physical was only a *type* of what happens to each one of us spiritually. Christ loved John in a special way to show how He loves and comforts each one of us spiritually—with the Holy Spirit.

YOU ARE THE ONE WHOM JESUS LOVES!

If anybody has ever illustrated His love, Jesus Christ has. And now He is coming to each one of us—like He came to Peter—and asking: *Do you really love me? Then do the Father's Work.* That is what He did when He was on this Earth. This was His passion and delight.

That's the kind of *agape* love that comes into our lives with God's Holy Spirit. Then we can become encouragers like Christ is.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (verses 21, 23). What a change that makes in our lives when the Father and the Son come to make their abode with us!

We show our love to the Father by keeping His commandments. And the Father loves us in the most supreme, fatherly way when we obey His law. He and the Son come and live in us. We are then the Kingdom, or Family, of God in embryo.

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, [it] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (verses 25-26). The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to remembrance what you have been taught. **WE NO LONGER LOOK TO MEN!**

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (verse 27). Christ repeats this point to strongly emphasize it: *Don't let your heart be troubled! Don't be afraid! You have a Comforter. I am right there with you!* Christ is right there! But we have to *know* that, and we have to *use that power*. If we don't deeply understand what Christ was explaining here, many problems in this world will deeply trouble us.

Christ repeats the words of John 14:1 with a new and stronger force! Is your heart troubled? Are you afraid? God's Holy Spirit will conquer those fears.

Christ is there to console you—to comfort and encourage you—to give you real peace. He's not just *saying* that. This is real. He offers *real peace* in the midst of times when you would normally be afraid. Don't let your heart be troubled.

Chapter 7

Build the Faith of Jesus Christ

WHEN GOD REVEALED SOME DEEPER TRUTH TO ME ABOUT John 11, I realized how much more I needed to grow in faith. John is teaching us about a resurrection-from-the-dead-*now* faith. It is somewhat similar to Paul's example of faith when he was left for dead in a heap of stones and probably resurrected by God to continue the Work.

This is the kind of faith that brings miraculous healings and many other miracles into our lives.

Here John gives us a dramatic insight into how powerful Christ's faith was. Perhaps he had about 30 years to think about and analyze this Lazarus example before he wrote it in the Bible. So he probably understood Christ's faith better than most of the apostles and prophets.

The good news is, we can and *must* have the very same faith that Christ had.

The Apostle Paul LIVED by the faith of Jesus Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). He is talking about possessing the very same faith Jesus Christ has, and that He had while on

this Earth. Paul said, *I have the same faith—the faith of Christ. I LIVE by that.*

With that in mind, look at the story of Lazarus, recorded in John 11. This chapter is about the faith of Christ. It teaches us a magnificent lesson in faith.

When Lazarus became sick, his two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent for Jesus. When Jesus received the news, He said, *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby”* (verse 4). Imagine hearing Christ respond to them this way.

Christ often said and did things that people did not understand. This agitated many people.

A DANGEROUS WORK

Jesus Christ set a tremendous example of doing God's Work in the midst of danger. His disciples marveled over this, but Christ was actually teaching them to follow His example. This is a lesson we urgently need to learn in this end time.

Two days after receiving the news about Lazarus's illness, Christ told His disciples that they needed to go back to Judaea to do some work there. They responded, *“Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?”* (John 11:8). They had encountered trouble there and actually feared for Christ's life if they were to return.

Jesus Christ did not decide where to go and where not to go based on how dangerous it was. He acted according to the work that needed to be done.

We too can face obstacles and troubles in doing God's Work. Sometimes we simply have to walk into harm's way because something must be done, and God wants us to do it. It takes courage and faith to do that. It is not easy.

It wasn't easy for Christ: The Jews in Judaea had previously tried to stone Him! Jesus's disciples were convinced they would attempt it again. But CHRIST SACRIFICED IN ANY WAY THE FATHER REQUIRED IN ORDER TO FINISH THE WORK. *This is my Father's Work*, He said. *My great passion is to finish it, and to do it exactly as He instructed.* He was so determined to follow

through with His Father's instructions that *nothing*—not physical danger or anything else—could ever stop Him!

“Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (verses 9-10).

Christ is saying that we only have so much daylight—only a short span of time to complete this Work. Night is approaching quickly, when we will be unable to do this phase of the Work anymore. So we must be urgent! Even if it requires traveling somewhere that could get us stoned, or that will plunge us into fiery persecutions, WE MUST GET THE JOB DONE!

God is trying to build faith in us, and that is not easy. In order to achieve that, He has no choice but to put us through challenges and difficulties. It is our responsibility to keep the bigger picture in mind and to say, *This is for God's glory—I must do it*. This is why we are here.

God has given us a wondrous calling. We will never be able to fulfill it unless we are developing the faith to follow Him wherever He leads us, even into danger. This is what Jesus Christ did, and it is an important lesson He taught His disciples. You can be sure it will become more relevant to us as we approach the end of this age.

TROUBLE BELIEVING GOD

Christ then told His disciples about Lazarus: “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11). The disciples didn't understand—they thought Christ literally meant Lazarus was sleeping and that he would be fine. But Christ was telling them that by this point, Lazarus had died. “Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep” (verses 12-13).

As Christ viewed it, Lazarus was just taking a nap, and He was going to wake him up. Several places in Scripture

refer to death as “sleep” (e.g., Daniel 12:2; Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15). When you understand the truth about the resurrections, you realize that death is only a sleep from which you will awaken!

A few years ago, my wife died in the faith. In a very short span of time she will be resurrected into eternal glory. How can we describe her condition today as death?

No one else would have looked at Lazarus's state as mere sleep. But Christ didn't think like the people around Him. This was *the Word made flesh, the Son of God!* Yet people talked to Him and treated Him like any other man. They didn't understand Him.

If we are going to let Christ live in us and have the faith of Christ, we must learn to view death as He does. We must strive to view everything as He does.

“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, *to the intent ye may believe*; nevertheless let us go unto him” (John 11:14-15).

This whole affair was for their benefit, so they would learn to live by Christ's faith. He was trying to teach them how little of that faith they had. He is also trying to teach us the same lesson. Christ is trying to teach all of His disciples, in any age, to believe God.

Each one of us can have this mind-staggering faith in us. But we all must grow mightily to have the faith of Christ. CHRIST WAS A LIVING EXAMPLE OF HOW POWERFUL OUR FAITH CAN AND MUST BE. Christ's Bride *must* build the same faith her Husband has. And what a faith it is!

Do you have a resurrection-from-the-dead-now faith? Do you believe Christ could and would resurrect you from the dead today, if there was a need to do so? Christ teaches all of us how much more powerful our faith can be.

We must be growing in this all-powerful faith of Christ—the same faith He had when He walked the Earth.

This kind of faith revolutionizes our lives.

Christ was trying to accomplish something vital: *He wanted His disciples to BELIEVE*. He really was God in the flesh! He really could just speak to a man in the grave and say, *Rise*

up and walk! and have that man come right up out of the grave! That is incredible.

Do you BELIEVE Jesus Christ? The problem man has had throughout the ages is just BELIEVING GOD! We must have faith and build faith in our lives, so that like the Apostle Paul we come to the point where we LIVE by the very FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST. It becomes a way of life every hour of the day.

THE FAITH TO BE HEALED

By the time Jesus and His disciples had arrived, Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. Martha and Mary were stricken with grief, and many friends had come to comfort them. It is always good to have people there to comfort us when such trials strike. But we also must be able to see *beyond the grave*. The real comfort in such situations is knowing the *truth of God* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

When Martha came to greet Jesus, she said, *Christ, if you had just been here, you could have healed him and he wouldn't have died* (John 11:21). Of course, viewed from God's perspective, there is little difference between God saving someone's life from a sickness and reclaiming someone from death through resurrection. After all, this is God, the Creator of all mankind!

God promises in James 5:14-15 that if the ministry anoints someone and prays "the prayer of faith," then "THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP." When someone rises from the sickbed after being anointed, that is a *type* of the resurrection! God can raise a man from the sickbed—and He can just as easily raise him from the grave!

How strong is your faith in that truth?

WE NEED THE VERY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST WHETHER WE ARE TO BE HEALED IN THIS LIFE OR RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD. And of course, some people will not receive their physical healing until the resurrection. But many people are healed in this life—because they believe!

Martha was looking at the situation from a purely physical perspective: *Oh, if ONLY you could have been here before he DIED!*

Here she was speaking to the Son of God, who created *all life* and *all the universe!* Is it too difficult for Him to RESURRECT SOMEONE FROM THE DEAD?

GOD RESURRECTS!

In August of 1977, Herbert W. Armstrong died. A nurse entered the room to check on him and found him motionless, his face ashen white. She checked his pulse, and there was none.

She called for help and people immediately began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and heart massage on him. Suddenly, Mr. Armstrong took a breath. After a couple more minutes, he was breathing on his own.

In a sense, Mr. Armstrong was both healed and resurrected in that incident. Again, one is a type of the other, and the same faith is required for both.

“Shortly after they’d told me what had happened,” Mr. Armstrong later wrote, “I felt that if my work in God’s hands were finished and God didn’t have any further use for me in His Work, that I would rather have remained dead. Because if they hadn’t intervened I would have been buried in two or three days” (*Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Volume 2).

Mr. Armstrong was tired and worn out. But he returned with real drive, and HE SAID HE ACCOMPLISHED MORE IN THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS THAN IN ALL OF HIS LIFE BEFORE THAT POINT! God performed a real resurrection-from-the-dead miracle in the life of that man!

I remember, however, Mr. Armstrong’s son Garner Ted visiting a church area that I was in and saying during his sermon, “My father says he stopped breathing,” implying he was skeptical of his own father’s claim.

Apparently, this man didn’t believe that the great Creator God could allow someone to stop breathing and then start him back up again! But is that really so difficult for God? The fruits of the son’s life proved that he didn’t BELIEVE God!

How strong is your faith that God can start a man

breathing again? Or that He can bring a man up from the grave, as He did Lazarus?

If we have difficulty believing that, as Mr. Armstrong's son did, we really need to examine our faith. In the end, this issue is going to decide *which resurrection we come up in!* We will all come up in a resurrection, but the big question is, which one? Once a person is converted, he will either come up in the first resurrection as part of the Bride of Christ (Revelation 20:6), or in the resurrection that leads to the second death (verses 13-15).

Mr. Armstrong said near the end of his life that he didn't think his son was ever converted. Even if he wasn't, that doesn't absolutely mean he will come up in the second resurrection (when God raises people from the grave who will get to really know God for the first time). Christ condemned some of the Jews in His day, though they didn't possess the Holy Spirit, because they *knew so much!* (e.g., Matthew 23:29-33; Luke 13:26-28). They knew that Christ was from God, but because of their rebellious attitudes, they just couldn't bring themselves to *believe Him*. Once someone understands beyond a certain point, eternal life is at stake. Only God knows what that point is.

Mr. Armstrong's death and resurrection was a Lazarus situation, on a small scale. That *increased* my faith! I never saw any reason to doubt Mr. Armstrong's description of that event. None of the people involved ever disagreed with his statement—as far as I know. Many of our Church members could point to a situation or two in their lives where, if not for God's intervention, they wouldn't be here. That shouldn't pose a stumbling block for anyone.

God resurrects! And sometimes He resurrects today. I have absolutely *no doubt* God resurrected Mr. Armstrong. That man was in his mid-80s, and doing the Work at that age was so difficult he would rather have just died. But God must have figured it was good for him to have to do so much at that age, so he would learn to rely on God more! There is great value to the trials we have to endure as we learn to trust God during our times of greatest weakness.

BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION

Martha said to Christ, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee” (John 11:21-22).

She reasoned that if Christ had been there and prayed for her brother, he would have lived—but since that didn’t happen, it was too late for even Christ to do anything.

Jesus responded, *Your brother shall rise again.*

Then Martha answered back, “I know that he shall rise again *in the resurrection AT THE LAST DAY*” (verse 24). She knew about the second resurrection, pictured by the Last Great Day, and that she would see Lazarus again. She *believed* it. But then again, Satan knows that doctrine too; he is aware of God’s plan in the resurrections. That alone doesn’t require the kind of faith we need to be saved.

The fact is, Martha’s faith was far from what it should have been. She wasn’t viewing the situation at all the way Christ was.

Jesus Christ, in one sense, *simply didn’t recognize any difference between healing—or resurrecting someone then and there—and bringing someone up in a resurrection at a later time.* If we have the faith of Christ, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE!

Please read that paragraph again!

This is the kind of faith we *must* be building. Christ is the resurrection yesterday, today and tomorrow! Christ resurrects—period.

This is the kind of faith we need to be healed or resurrected.

Those who are called and faithful to Christ today will be in the first resurrection at His Second Coming. So our understanding of the Lazarus example is supremely important. Time is extremely short.

Christ was *upset* with these people’s lack of faith. At times, He is upset with us for that reason. We are still prone to leave God out of the picture and to trust in this world’s solutions to our health trials, for example. We must have *Christ’s very faith* IN US!

Seriously consider what God is trying to achieve in YOUR LIFE. He's deeply concerned about YOU, and He wants you to *really* learn to TRUST HIM—whether it be to heal or to help you face any other problem. With God, there is NOTHING we cannot do! The biggest flaw we can have is to *trust ourselves*.

IF WE TRULY, DEEP DOWN, BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTIONS, WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL HEAL US RIGHT NOW! There is always the possibility He won't—He may let us die. But we are still going to be healed in the resurrection. It really doesn't matter, as long as we are doing God's will.

The healing promise includes the resurrection because many people will be healed in the resurrection. Healing and resurrection are one package. If we believe in being healed—now or later—we must also believe in the resurrection.

If we refuse to believe, we will be resurrected into the lake of fire (the third resurrection).

How could this subject be more serious?

From time to time, reread Mr. Armstrong's outstanding booklet *The Plain Truth About Healing*. We need this review in order to keep building our faith. And we need to accept the trials God allows in our lives as opportunities to build faith. All things work together for our good when we love God (Romans 8:28).

The problem is, if we don't get these words in our mind and begin to apply them, then that puts Jesus Christ into a difficult situation. How can He then reach us? If He can't reach us with *words* and with examples like Mr. Armstrong's resurrection in 1977, how can He reach us? He is going to have to do it through the most severe suffering.

Do you know why the Laodiceans are going to have to suffer so much in the Tribulation? Because they *will not* live by the faith of Jesus Christ. At this time, they refuse to BELIEVE! And there is no excuse for their unbelief! They give God no choice. In order to reach them, He must rebuke and chasten them, as He says He does with every son whom He loves (Revelation 3:19).

But if we are building faith today, we can AVOID the worst of that suffering.

The way the Laodiceans reason is just how Martha reasoned: They may believe in the resurrection, but they put that day far down the road. *I believe in the resurrection, but that's so far away; I don't believe God could bring Mr. Armstrong back to life, though. Or, I don't really think God could heal me right now.*

But again, IT'S ALL THE SAME FAITH—the faith to be healed, or resurrected, or anything else!

Lazarus is one of the best examples in the Bible to teach us how to build faith.

We need Christ's faith in us to be healed. We need this life-changing faith in our lives now!

Martha believed in the Last Great Day—but so what? Satan also believes in that resurrection. That belief doesn't count for much. Look at how Christ responded to her.

‘I AM THE RESURRECTION’!

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, *I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE: he that believeth in me, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE*” (John 11:24-25).

What a BOLD STATEMENT! This man standing right there before her said, “*I AM THE RESURRECTION!*” *I am the one who will resurrect ALL PEOPLE. Are you telling me I can't bring somebody up out of the grave NOW?*

The Christ who resurrected Lazarus was the Word—the Being God the Father used to create everything! And whether it's today or tomorrow or any other day, *Jesus Christ is the resurrection!*

Many of our loved ones in God's Church, including my wife, have died—but they REALLY ARE going to LIVE AGAIN! God is going to RAISE THEM RIGHT UP OUT OF THEIR GRAVES!

Without faith, we can panic over the death of loved ones—even those who are a part of the very elect. When one of God's saints remains faithful to the end, he has CONQUERED DEATH! That is the greatest victory of all. Of course we grieve to not have that individual in our lives for the moment—but LOOK AT THE VICTORY!

Christ continued, “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*. BELIEVEST THOU THIS?” (verse 26). Christ asks the same question of *you*. Do you believe this? Do I? Whoever lives and believes Christ SHALL NEVER DIE! This is a heavy and wonderful truth. Do you *truly* BELIEVE THAT? Do you believe God?

You may sleep a short time, but you’ll never die.

Do you really believe that your face is going to shine like the sun forever? That is why you were *born* as a human being! That is why EVERYBODY IN THIS WORLD was born!

We are called into God’s Church today to become the Bride of Jesus Christ! That’s why you were called now! If we understood that in its fullest sense, we would faint—it is that awesome! DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT TRUTH?

Do you believe this? Christ asked—and He asks this of us today. Surely we *all* need to build more faith in that magnificent truth. The people Christ was speaking to didn’t believe Him. Ninety-five percent of God’s people today don’t really believe Him. We need to make sure that we *do*.

Love God! Believe what He says! THE HEALING PROMISE INCLUDES THE RESURRECTION. Believing in the resurrection is not enough. You must have the faith to get you there. Our faith must be VIVIDLY ALIVE! JESUS CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THIS CHURCH, IS THE RESURRECTION!

We know that God heals, but too often we don’t feel personally secure! Or we reason, *God can heal me, but not now*.

Why should it seem strange that the Head of this Church, who is the resurrection, would cause Mr. Armstrong’s heart to start beating again? Is Jesus Christ *really* the Head of this Church, or isn’t He? If He is, resuscitating a man whose heart has stopped is NOTHING! Christ is going to resurrect people by the BILLIONS!

Yet how easy it is for us to say, *Well, I understand that—but that’s far in the future. That doesn’t happen today*.

Christ and our Father are alive. We must have *living faith*. Our faith must be dynamically alive as Christ’s faith was.

Notice how the Head of our Church felt about the pathetic faith of those in His day.

JESUS WEPT

Martha went and retrieved her sister Mary, who rushed out to see Jesus. When she got to Him, she fell down at His feet and said the same thing Martha had said before: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32).

These two sisters, and all the Jews around them, were sorely weeping, *overcome* with grief over Lazarus! What did Christ think about that? “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, *he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled*” (verse 33).

Christ had delivered four very powerful and direct statements: “This sickness is *not unto death*, but for the glory of God”; “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that *I may awake him out of sleep*”; and finally, “Thy brother *shall rise again*”; and, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet *shall he live*: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*.” Still, these people were inconsolable—paralyzed by faithless grief!

And so, CHRIST GROANED IN HIS SPIRIT AND WAS TROUBLED—BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITHLESSNESS. Christ was intensely agonized because of their weak faith—to the point of *groaning*! It *troubled* Him terribly.

DO WE SOMETIMES TROUBLE JESUS CHRIST? DOES HE SOMETIMES GROAN OVER *OUR* FAITHLESSNESS? God must have groaned mightily over the last era of His Church when it rebelled. But how about *you* personally?

God will *not* give us our wonderful future inheritance unless we **REALLY BELIEVE**—unless we have the very faith of Jesus Christ in us!

If we truly believe that we will be in the first resurrection, we also must believe that God will heal us—right now!

Verse 35 reads, famously, “Jesus wept.” Surrounded by people who were weeping, Christ wept. But He was weeping over something far different from what they were: HE WEPT BECAUSE THEY DIDN’T BELIEVE—and *they should have*! Though these people had heard Him speak and saw Him perform miracles, they remained shamefully impoverished of faith.

When the Jews saw Christ's tears, they misinterpreted them, thinking He was crying for the same reason *they* were crying. "Behold how he loved him!" they said (verse 36).

"And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should *not* have died?" (verse 37). That is pathetic! They reasoned that Christ could have kept him from dying, but could not resurrect him before their eyes. They were talking about JESUS CHRIST—the WORD MADE FLESH—the one by whom God FRAMED THE UNIVERSE! Here a man had died, and suddenly they began to doubt Christ's credentials.

But Christ *wanted* Lazarus to die—in order to demonstrate just how powerful God is and to teach these people to BELIEVE.

During the 2004 Feast of Tabernacles, I flew from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, to San Diego, California. I was to speak on the seventh and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The eighth day was the Last Great Day—picturing the second resurrection of the billions who have never known God.

During my flight to San Diego on Alaska Airlines, God began to pour a deeper understanding of the Apostle John's Gospel into my mind—especially about the resurrection of Lazarus.

Why would God do such a thing, especially during my flight? I believe there is a most inspiring reason why the deeper revelation came. As Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Our only hope is in the resurrection. We must be thinking and studying about God resurrecting us. However, we cannot attain that goal unless we build the faith of Christ and exercise it today.

So during these feasts, God wants our minds on being resurrected. He helps in every way He can so we will build the faith needed to be resurrected. We will have lost everything forever if we are not resurrected into God's Family.

We can't fail if we let Christ lead us! But it takes our best effort. IF WE WASTE THIS MAJESTIC OPPORTUNITY, WE LEAVE CHRIST WEEPING!

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU WEPT OVER ANYBODY'S LACK OF FAITH, INCLUDING YOUR OWN?

God gave us deeper understanding of Lazarus that we might *believe*. That we might believe a Lazarus could be resurrected today!

We have no future if we fail to exercise the faith of Christ today!

‘I KNOW YOU HAVE HEARD ME’

So Christ, still groaning within Himself, went to the grave and commanded the stone be removed. When people balked at this, Christ said, “Did I not say to you that *if you would believe* you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40, New King James Version).

If Jesus Christ says *anything* in His Word, WE JUST HAVE TO BELIEVE IT. IT'S TRUE! *The Scripture cannot be broken!*

The people removed the stone as Christ commanded, and then He prayed: “Father, I thank thee that *thou hast heard me*. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, *that they may believe* that thou hast sent me.” Then He called out, “LAZARUS, COME FORTH” (verses 41-43).

What faith! Christ thanked the Father who sent Him to this Earth, BEFORE He resurrected Lazarus!

That is the faith we need. We need to reach the point where we can walk up to any situation where we need faith and say with confidence, “Thank you, Father, for hearing me!”—and then ACT IN FAITH! Our faith is not perfect, but we need to know that God *always* hears us if we're praying in faith.

That is what this chapter in John's Gospel is about. WE CANNOT MAKE IT UNLESS WE GET AWAY FROM HUMAN FAITH AND BEGIN TO HAVE THE VERY FAITH CHRIST HAD! We must be working and building that kind of faith. We all need to examine our faith. The stakes are high, and most of God's people have not passed the test.

We must know the Father, His family plan and our part in it—as Christ did. We must look to our Father and Christ for

the gift of faith.

Our Father has to be vividly real to us as He was to Christ. We must build this Father-son relationship. YOU HAVE TO KNOW THE FATHER EXTREMELY WELL TO THANK HIM EVEN BEFORE HE ANSWERS YOUR PRAYER! You speak to God as you would a friend sitting next to you. That means you deeply understand your Bible and you pray until you *know* the Spirit is stirred and the faith is flowing from God.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD—THE SAME CHRIST WHO RESURRECTED LAZARUS AND CREATED EVERYTHING. He is the *living* Head. He is the resurrection—today and tomorrow.

CHRIST TOLD THE JEWS THAT THOUGH THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD ETERNAL LIFE, THEY DID *NOT*. That was a strong warning for them and for all of us!

People by the billions think they have eternal life today—but they do not. Even 95 percent of God's own Church members think they have eternal life—but they are wrong. God says they are dying spiritually (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

We should and *must* know if we have eternal life. Nothing is even close to being so important. You can't afford to assume or gamble when it concerns your eternal life.

We have to go far beyond human faith.

“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, *believed on him*” (John 11:44-45).

What a phenomenal example! I don't know why the other Gospel writers didn't include it. Perhaps none of them really understood it at the time as they should have—and the more John thought about it, and the more Christ worked on his mind as he grew to be an old man, the more he realized, *We didn't really understand what Christ was talking about! He was trying to show us the kind of faith we need if we're going to survive the trials ahead. It is conceivable we could even have to die for God.* John certainly had many years to contemplate this example before he wrote his Gospel.

How wonderful that God would reveal deeper truth to us about this example! God wants so much to teach us about the faith that we need and how we must believe Him! He gives revelation because He loves His people, and He wants us to build faith so we can become sons in His Family. The Father *yearns* for a family! Otherwise, He never would have sent Jesus Christ down here to be butchered and killed.

If the Father would give His only begotten Son to die for our sins, you know He is serious about having a family. He laid everything on the line, taking a chance of losing the Word forever! Isn't it logical that He would then require something of us? If He is that serious about having a family, we must become that serious about entering that Family.

We desperately need the faith of Jesus Christ. That faith enabled Christ to endure His trials to the death. It was *by faith* that He conquered. And we can have that very faith in us by the Holy Spirit.

With the faith of Christ, you will bring God the Father into the picture. You will **KNOW** the Father is building a family, and that you are a son—and that He *always hears you!*

There is awesome power in our lives when we have the faith of Christ. **WE CAN DO ALL THINGS** through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

When Christ was being crucified, many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in detail. Look at the account in John 19.

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, *that the scripture might be fulfilled*, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth” (verses 28-29). You can find that event prophesied in Psalm 69:21.

“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, **THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE**”—God wants to use these examples to *build strong faith within us!* “For these things

were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:34-36). You can read about this in Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20.

“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced” (John 19:37). That prophecy is found in Zechariah 12:10. All these details about Christ’s unparalleled suffering were prophesied in the Old Testament. Many of the Jews knew about those prophecies but still did *not* believe.

Many prophecies are being fulfilled today also. Do you believe? God is going to leave us without excuse.

Some people today are overly absorbed in archaeology, as if an artifact like a piece of broken pottery builds strong faith. It goes much deeper than that. JESUS CHRIST DIDN’T ENDURE TORTURE AND DEATH BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN BROKEN POTTERY! THE APOSTLES DIDN’T SUFFER MARTYRDOM BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH IN PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS!

We are talking about THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST! Christ is alive. He and the Father answer our prayers. There is nothing wrong with archaeology, but we cannot let that form the foundation of our faith.

What about answered prayer? What about revelation from God that makes your Bible come alive? What about fulfilled prophecies? These are some of the things that will build the faith we need in order to sacrifice and endure to the end! GOD IS ALIVE! The Father and Son are ALIVE!

John and the other apostles wrote about what they had seen with their own eyes. Today their writings are canonized in the Bible. They lived and worked with the God who became flesh. They didn’t sacrifice their lives because they believed in nice little religious clichés.

First we must prove the Bible is God’s Word, and then we must *believe God!*

CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

After Jesus Christ was crucified, an event of mountain-sized magnitude occurred. We must never, ever forget it or grow calloused toward it!

Read the account in John 20, beginning in verse 11. Mary was weeping because Christ's body was gone from the sepulcher. She turned around and actually *saw Jesus Christ standing there*—ALIVE, right in front of her—but she didn't recognize Him (verse 14).

Jesus Christ had just been RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD! But she didn't know it was Him.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master" (verses 15-16). She finally recognized who it was.

Now listen to this: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, *I ascend unto my Father*, and YOUR FATHER; and to my *God*, and YOUR GOD" (verse 17).

HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION—AND NOT ONLY HIS OWN! CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED, AND THAT OPENED UP THE RESURRECTION TO ALL MANKIND! CHRIST'S FATHER BECAME EVERYBODY'S FATHER! CHRIST'S GOD BECAME EVERYBODY'S GOD! *Everything* is now open to us in the Family of God! What a transcendent potential! That news ought to shake the universe!

Here is the *only* true God. All the other gods are false!

Think about it: Jesus Christ endured all of the trials and torture, and the most excruciating execution any man has ever faced, so that at the end He could introduce all of us to "my Father, and YOUR Father." *You all have the potential to be sons of God!* He said. *It is all opened up to you because of what my Father and I have done! At last, the door is open to all mankind!* What a price had to be paid in order to open that door.

Even though Christ went through all that trouble, you won't find even a hint of Him thinking about failure in the whole Bible. I don't believe Christ for one moment *ever* considered failing. AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU. NEVER CONSIDER FAILING! We have access to all the power a person could ever need!

Christ sacrificed, and now we must sacrifice. We have a universe-size calling, and we were born to fulfill a majestic purpose! *Never forget that.*

A LESSON IN FAITH

When Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, Thomas was not there (John 20:24). I believe he was absent for a reason; Christ wanted to teach a lesson through him—a lesson about healing, about the resurrection and about real faith.

“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (verse 25). That was quite a negative attitude. He was with Christ during His entire ministry. Perhaps we all deal with that attitude sometimes. But Christ has an answer.

Eight days later, Thomas was with the other disciples, and Christ appeared to them again. He came right up to Thomas and addressed him personally. I’m sure that made Thomas a bit uneasy, especially since his faith was so frail. “Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. DO NOT BE UNBELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING’” (verse 27, NKJV). He said to Thomas, *STICK YOUR FINGERS INTO THESE HOLES IN MY HANDS, AND YOUR HAND INTO MY SIDE WHERE I WAS SPEARED TO DEATH, AND BELIEVE!*

Do you believe the holes were in Christ’s hands? And a huge hole was in His side? Do you believe?

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (verse 28).

Thomas ought to have had more faith than that. Sometimes, we should have more than we have, and I include myself. *We need more faith.* Will you need Christ standing before you so you can stick your hand into His side before you believe? That kind of faith will get us nowhere!

Here is how Christ responded, and He is talking to you: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED” (verse 29).

This was somewhat of a rebuke for Thomas. Christ said, *Thomas, people will come who believe in me, and believe that I was on this Earth and suffered a savage beating and made a bloody sacrifice—and they were not there! They’re going to BELIEVE, and they will be BLESSED for it!* Those people who really believe that Christ came and died for our sins and then rose right back out of that grave TRULY ARE BLESSED!

Christ wanted Thomas and all the disciples to see that He really was the Word made flesh, and that He had descended from heaven in order to die for the sins of mankind.

Now, Christ wants us to believe. He wants us to become like the Apostle Paul—LIVING by the very faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Christ wants to FILL US with the faith that will get us healed, the faith that will get us resurrected! He wants us to overflow with the faith to know that when we see our loved ones who died in the faith, their faces will RADIATE LIKE THE SUN AT ITS FULL STRENGTH, AND THEY WILL SHINE AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FIRMAMENT AND AS THE STARS FOR EVER AND EVER!

That is the faith God wants to give each one of us. Faith is a gift from God. God wants to give you the faith of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 8

A Lesson in Love

ONE COMMENTARY CALLS THE LAST CHAPTER OF JOHN, THE 21st chapter, an *appendix* to the Gospel. Chapter 20 provides a strong conclusion about faith, so, this commentary reasons, chapter 21 is tacked on and really shouldn't conclude the book.

The authors of that commentary are presumptuous and wrong. Chapter 21 is the *perfect* conclusion. If you understand it, you can see why the world would miss the point. People don't understand anything about the love of God! At one time, Peter didn't understand it either, so God had to straighten him out. Only John's account includes this incident.

John 21 begins by describing a scene after Christ had been crucified and resurrected, when His time on Earth was just about over. The Word had been made flesh, persecuted, brutally beaten and killed. He had risked losing His eternal life. This was the greatest act of love ever by the Father and the Son. Yet it appears Peter was discouraged and just wanted to fish. Other disciples joined him at sea, but they weren't catching any fish. Christ appeared to them, on the shore, though they didn't recognize Him at first. When He

instructed them to cast their net on the other side of the ship, suddenly they began catching *all kinds* of fish! This miracle caused John to recognize who they were talking to. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord” (verse 7). At once, recognizing that this was the resurrected Word, Peter became so emotional that he dove into the sea.

Notice the exchange that followed.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs” (verse 15). Christ had carried out the ultimate act of love, and now He wanted to discuss the disciples’ love. Remember, the Bride must think like her Husband. This is a deep lesson in God’s love.

I believe Jesus Christ called him “Simon” because he was acting like Simon. He wasn’t acting like the PETER that Jesus Christ wanted him to be—the stone—the physical leader of the disciples and of the Church!

“Peter,” He asked, “do you love me more than all these?”

Remember what Peter had said not long before: “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matthew 26:33). In other words, *These other guys may reject you, but I won’t*. Christ then prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times that very night. When the prophecy proved true, Peter *wept bitterly!* There is no indication in Scripture that he was even present at Christ’s crucifixion. Peter was a very depressed man. He didn’t live up to his own expectations of himself; he didn’t do what he knew God wanted him to do.

But Jesus Christ wasn’t finished with him. And of course, those men didn’t have God’s Holy Spirit in them at that time.

Nevertheless, Christ’s question made Peter feel uneasy. *Peter, DO YOU LOVE ME? Do you AGAPE me—have the LOVE OF GOD for me?*

In the end, Judas didn’t love Christ. Lucifer didn’t. The Laodiceans do not love Christ today. But there is a love that will endure. To withstand crises, we must have this *agape*

love—a love that is not in human beings. We must love Jesus Christ through everything in order to enter the Family of God, and that means *keeping the law of God* (1 John 5:3). That is what Christ was talking to Peter about.

Like many millions in this world, Peter thought he loved God—but he did *not*.

Jesus Christ had just set a marvelous example of law-keeping and love for the disciples. They witnessed that, and they knew something was terribly wrong with themselves. They could contrast what their Savior had just done with the fact that they had all run away when trouble came.

So John concluded his Gospel with this lesson. He is the only Gospel writer who did this. The world doesn't recognize this, because it doesn't have that love. Lacking this love, most people betray Christ when pressure comes. They don't know anything about the sacrificial love of God. They don't understand that you and I could lay down our lives for a friend, or for our mate, or for God simply because we have something in us called *agape*—the love of God.

PETER LACKED THE LOVE OF GOD, AND CHRIST WAS SHOWING THAT TO HIM. He wants us to learn this lesson too. If we love Christ, we remain loyal to Him—even if we have to die!

CHRIST'S TWO-PART COMMISSION

At the end of John 21:15, Christ told Peter, "Feed my lambs."

I have never understood this verse before: When Christ talks about *lambs*, He is discussing people who are not yet sheep. They have that potential, but have not yet been converted. He is referring to prospective members, co-workers and others God sends His message to.

In other words, Christ instructed Peter to GET HIS MESSAGE OUT TO THE WORLD! This is God's number-one commission for His Church.

The word *lambs* also helps us see how deeply God loves the people of this world—in spite of their rebellion. They were created to become members of God's Family, but first they must be converted and become God's sheep. God's plan

is to save the world—not just those of us called today! Those billions of people in this world are potential sheep in God's flock. Christ died for *the world* (John 3:16).

Can you sacrifice your life for the world as Christ did? Are you that committed to doing and finishing God's Work, as Christ was? (John 4:34). Are you that dedicated to getting God's message to the world?

IS GOD'S LOVE IN YOU?

Then there was something else Christ wanted Peter to do. "He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my sheep*" (John 21:16).

Sheep refers to the *second part* of the Church's two-fold commission—feeding the Spirit-begotten members of the Church. They must be fed to grow and be born into God's Family.

Jesus Christ was talking about the Work of God.

FULFILLING THIS TWO-FOLD COMMISSION REQUIRES THE LOVE OF GOD!

The only way we will fulfill the Great Commission of going to the world is if WE LOVE THE WORLD. Christ told Peter, *If you don't have this love in you, you're not going to love the world by getting out there and doing everything possible to feed those people! I want you to love them, and help them understand God's purpose.* God's Church is a witness to the world in that way. Even if unconverted people understand only a part of God's purpose today, that's a start.

We are also responsible for distributing God's message to His Laodicean people. That requires tremendous *love!* My late wife referred to *Malachi's Message* as "a book of love," because it was a warning to God's precious Family. It really is a book of love! God rebukes and even scourges people He loves (Hebrews 12:6). We send this message to the Family because we love them, and we want to see them make it into the eternal Family of God! They have turned from God, but He hasn't stopped loving them.

If you love people, you help distribute God's message to

them—whether they are lambs or sheep. You are active in doing the Work and getting the message out. All of our pieces of literature are books of God's *agape* love. That is what we are all about!

This is a work of love. We must have God's love in us, or we won't help give this message to the world and to God's people. That is what Christ was trying to get across to His disciples in the final chapter of the book of John, just before He returned to God the Father—after He finished the Father's Work.

Peter learned the lesson and was martyred because of doing God's Work, as Christ was. Would *you* be a martyr for God's Work?

THE GLORY OF STARS

“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). That is going to happen.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleewp, but WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED” (verses 50-51).

RIGHT NOW, THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE TRUTH ARE ONLY *SLEEPING* FOR A LITTLE WHILE—IT ISN'T EVEN DEATH! IT'S THE *OPPOSITE*, AS A MATTER OF FACT. ETERNAL LIFE AWAITS THEM!

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (verse 52). What a wonderful, beautiful change that will be.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye *know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (verses 55, 57-58).

None of your efforts in advancing the Work of God are in vain. Paul tells us to **ABOUND** in that Work! We are going to be rewarded beyond our imagination! That reward is worth all the trials and tests and difficulties many times over!

1 John 3:1-3 say that when Christ appears, we are going to **BE LIKE HIM**. And if we have that hope in us—and **ONLY** if we have that hope in us—we will *purify* ourselves. If we see the Family of God and the marriage, that causes us to do **WHAT-EVER WE HAVE TO** in order to be pure and righteous and good the way God is.

Here is a verse you will want to remember: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one star differeth from another star in glory*” (1 Corinthians 15:41).

Look up in the sky at night and you can see that the stars differ from one another in glory. God is saying that the same is true of us spiritually. In the Kingdom of God, we are going to be rewarded according to what we do. We will be given brilliance, the brightness of the firmament—**AND WE WILL SHINE LIKE THE STARS—ACCORDING TO OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ACCORDING TO HOW MANY PEOPLE WE HELPED TURN TO GOD** (Daniel 12:3). That is how we gain our spirit brilliance. *The more we do that, the more brilliance we will have.* That’s what the Bible teaches. God is right now building that resplendent temple, and creating our offices in it! He is preparing our wonderful future—and He is going to reward us according to what we have done.

Is it worth that effort?

OH, IS IT EVER WORTH IT! IS IT EVER WORTH IT!

OFFICES IN GOD’S HOUSE

Jesus Christ said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many [offices]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-2).

JESUS CHRIST IS TELLING US THE WAY TO KEEP OUR HEARTS FROM BEING TROUBLED. That doesn’t mean we won’t ever have

negative, depressing thoughts—we have to battle there. But these verses give us the ultimate way to keep ourselves untroubled, and that is by putting our focus on the “Father’s house.”

Where is the FATHER’S HOUSE? In the Millennium, it will be the temple in Jerusalem. But Christ was talking about a time beyond the Millennium, because the office we hold in the Millennium will carry over into eternity! Revelation 3:12 says we will “go no more out” of that temple. We will work from the Father’s house forever!

The temples that men of God have built have been patterned after the heavenly temple. Ezra 8:29 talks about “the chambers of the house of the LORD.” Jeremiah 35:2 talks about chambers, or offices, in that house. Jeremiah 36:10 talks about “the chamber of Gemariah,” which shows that he had a certain rank and an office in God’s house equal to that rank. 1 Kings 6:5 refers to those chambers in Solomon’s temple—offices all around the temple.

The Father’s house is being built in heaven. It will be brought to Earth with new Jerusalem after there is no more flesh on Earth. That will be a time when there are only spirit beings, after the Last Great Day.

The new Jerusalem will be filled with REAL OFFICES! We will live and work in that beautiful, fabulous, magnificent house forever with our Father and our Husband!

Christ said He would go and “prepare a place for you”—YOU, INDIVIDUALLY! (John 14:3). You need to take this *personally*! God will ensure we each have a place—an appropriate office. GOD’S HOUSE IS BEING BUILT AROUND THE PERSONNEL JESUS CHRIST HAS! The place each of us occupies will depend on WHAT WE DO. We will be REWARDED ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS AND WHAT WE HAVE DONE TO HELP GOD’S WORK. It really is that practical. Think about this carefully as you help God’s Work.

Revelation 21:1-4 describe that future temple: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her

husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them [on this Earth], and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

This is the kind of office God is preparing for us *now* as we work! He has been preparing offices for all of the first-fruits throughout the ages. YOUR OFFICE WILL MATCH YOUR OVERCOMING AND CONQUERING, and God holds you accountable according to what talents you have. That is a very fair deal.

As 1 Corinthians 15:41 says, THE STARS DIFFER IN GLORY. So will our future glory differ according to our works. Our glory will match how much our heart was in God's Work.

Your eternal glory is far more important than anything in this world. Don't get caught up in physical beauty or things. The beauty you want to devote your passion to is this ETERNAL BEAUTY! This is what Jesus Christ wrapped His mind in. It was *everything* to Him!

Christ also said in John 14:3, "... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He will receive *you*—each one of you.

The whole creation plan was reorganized after Lucifer rebelled. The entire universe plan then focused on the creation of man! God's sons are now on center stage.

THE WHOLE CREATION—EVERYTHING YOU SEE—WILL BE REORGANIZED AROUND GOD'S HOUSE! It will extend out into the universe. Never again will we witness the depravity we see on Earth today. Earth will be headquarters for all eternity.

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY EVER IS TO TURN YOUR BACK ON THIS FUTURE!

Christ is talking about THE FATHER'S HOUSE. YOU ARE A POTENTIAL SON, AND GOD HAS GIVEN YOU THE *RIGHT* TO BE BORN INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD AND RESIDE RIGHT THERE IN YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE!

We must keep this focus the way the *Logos* had it. The Word was made flesh, and throughout His time on Earth

He continually pointed to the Father, and how the Father was opening up His Family to humankind. This is a message about the Family of God! This is a message about your Father! We have to get beyond Jesus Christ in that sense and realize we are sons of God! And we're going to be in our Father's house for eternity.

To be called in this age is the most dazzling, wonderful opportunity a human being could ever have! If people who have known the Father fail to recognize that, that is a horrible tragedy.

Jesus Christ is trying to hammer this truth into our minds so we will never lose it! He is trying to build His love into us so we will root out our vanity and rebellion, devote ourselves to His Work, and **STAY WITH HIM TO THE END!**

Our offices in God's house are more real than the rooms in our physical houses. A weather disaster could destroy your physical house—but your office in God's house can never be destroyed if you remain loyal to God.

THANK GOD EVERY DAY FOR BEING A SON OF GOD AND THE BRIDE OF CHRIST! There is absolutely nothing to compare with that.

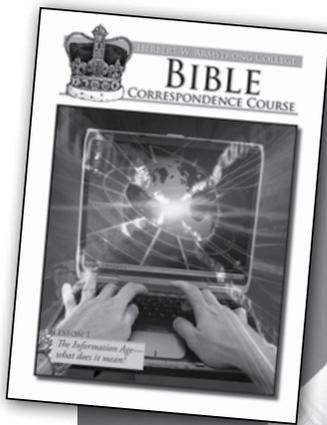
You Can UNDERSTAND the Bible!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, the Bible was written for our day—this generation! No book is as up to date as the Bible. It explains the causes of present world conditions—it reveals what's ahead in the next few years. In its pages are the *solutions* to every problem we face in life—from personal and family relationships to national economics and foreign policy.

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