



Days of Praise

June • July • August 2021

Days *of* Praise

Daily Bible Readings and Devotional Commentaries

June • July • August 2021

*“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:
but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”
(Isaiah 40:8)*

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Introduction to
DAYS OF PRAISE

“When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Mark 2:17)

Dear Christian friend,

We are honored that you are joining us throughout this summer quarter in these daily devotional thoughts about our great Creator and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where would we be without Jesus, who came to call a world full of sinners to repentance? Certainly we would be alienated from the eternal life and fellowship of our heavenly Father. Jesus also delivered us from the power of darkness and our worldly ways that may have led to many spoiled relationships. We can be thankful for every area of our life that has been enriched by the profound life-changing power of Jesus’ wise and perfect words, for “never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). I would urge anyone reading this booklet to come to Christ, and He will give you life.

It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will use each one of these short devotionals to help you fall deeper in love with the Lord Jesus and our good heavenly Father.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

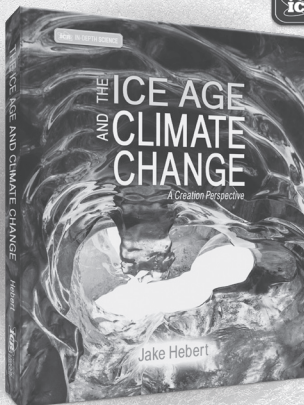
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IN-DEPTH SCIENCE



THE ICE AGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A Creation Perspective

Dr. Jake Hebert

Both secular and Christian voices urge us to heed the “all-but-unanimous scientific consensus” on climate change. But is that consensus based on solid science?

In *The Ice Age and Climate Change: A Creation Perspective*, ICR physicist Dr. Jake Hebert examines climate science and research and finds flawed theories, circular reasoning, and conclusions based on outdated data and uniformitarian preconceptions. He determines that Christians have good biblical and scientific reasons to reject climate change alarmism.

Visit **ICR.org/store** or call **800.628.7640**.

Tuesday, June 1

The Secret Things

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29)

This portion of Scripture follows a lengthy restatement of the covenant of God with His people, Israel. In this chapter, Moses reminded the people of the works that God had wrought on their behalf in their deliverance from Pharaoh, in His provision for them in the wilderness, and in His protection on the battlefield (vv. 2-8).

In this final address, he encouraged them to “keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do” (v. 9), and stated the various blessings that would be theirs if they would do so. Lastly, he described, in graphic and burning words, the results of breaking the covenant and incurring the judgment of God (vv. 18-27). “And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day” (v. 28).

In recognition of the limitations of humankind, Moses wrote in our text that there are certain things known only to God, which He has veiled—things that cannot be understood by the human mind—things that He simply chooses to keep to Himself. But he goes on to say that He has revealed certain things to us, and these things we must obey. Consequently, our text consists of a great principle of life: We must do what we know to do. We don’t know everything, but we must act responsibly and properly on what He has told us, leaving the “secret things” and their consequences to God. Elsewhere, He promises that even the secret things will “work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28) in His sovereign plan. We must obey, doing what we know to do, and leave the results with Him. JDM

Wednesday, June 2

The Beginning and the Ending

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things.” (Revelation 4:11)

Two essential truths are rationalized away in Christian circles. Biblical creation is ditched by those who intentionally ignore its truth. Many are intimidated by today’s modern science that is founded on evolutionary assumptions that jettison our Creator God into deep space. Likewise, eschatology (the study of prophecy) is the other foundational truth avoided by many because of its supposed inability to be easily comprehended. But we know that eschatology does matter and is beneficial in both understanding the gospel and the everyday sanctification of the believer.

As the apostle John writes, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Revelation 1:3). Promises of rich blessing flow from God’s throne when one reads, hears, and heeds these words. Like feasting on a juicy steak, the disciple is commanded to desperately feast on these revelatory words.

So, what is the practical benefit of these words? This world is not our home, so we should not have a tight grip on the stuff of this world. Consequently, we are easily consumed by consumable things. But God desires the believer to possess a worldview that is focused heavenward. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

Believers must be ready! Understanding our future deliverance from the cursed creation helps us release our grip on this temporal world. Scripture’s beginning and ending are indeed the bookends of God’s redemptive plan. CM

Thursday, June 3

The Secret of the Lord

“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.” (Psalm 25:14)

This is an amazing promise. The word for “secret” means the “inner counsel,” evidently of the triune God Himself.

But how can those who fear the Lord really know the secret counsels of the Godhead? The answer can only be by divine revelation to God’s prophets. Thus, the prophet Amos affirms: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but [unless] he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

When these ancient promises were given, however, much of God’s revelation, though already “settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89), was still not revealed to men. Then Christ came and promised His disciples, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...shall teach you all things” (John 14:26).

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). In addition to the 12 disciples, God then also called the apostle Paul, and through these men the Son would convey to those who fear Him all the rest of His revelation. “By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (...Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:3-5).

Finally, “the secret of the LORD” was completed in written form by John, the last of the apostles, with nothing else to be either added or deleted (Revelation 22:18-19), that “the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:7). All we shall ever need to know of God’s eternal counsels is now available to all who desire to know, in the Holy Scriptures. HMM

Marital Problems

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:17)

Marriage has always had a high place—a high calling. In the beginning, God’s stated purpose in marriage was to propagate children (Genesis 1:28) and to eliminate solitude (2:18). Such a state was deemed “very good” (1:31). But sin entered through Adam’s rebellion, and the universal Curse resulted. Out of this came a new marital relationship, one full of potential problems, for “he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (3:16). It is safe to say that the many excesses on both sides of a marriage that we see today are the legacy of sin.

Not only is marriage affected by the Curse, Satan himself delights in destroying marriage. Immediately after the Curse, we see that he introduced numerous practices that are detrimental to a proper marriage. The ungodly lineage of Cain began to practice polygamy (4:19). Later, Noah’s son, Ham, indulged in sexual thoughts and innuendoes (9:22). Even godly Abram participated in an extramarital affair that, even though not specifically condemned, was harmful to his marriage (16:1-3).

Soon after this, we read about all sorts of immorality, including homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah (19:1-10); fornication, rape, marriage to unbelievers (34:1-2); the practice of incest (35:22; 38:13-18); prostitution (38:24); and seduction (39:7-12).

What is the solution for this age-long attack on the family? We must heed the guidelines given in Scripture for a godly marriage. Passages such as those surrounding our text are well worth our study. JDM

Saturday, June 5

The Holy One of Israel

“So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.” (Ezekiel 39:7)

This wonderful name of God, “the Holy One of Israel,” was often used during the days of the later kings of Judah. It occurs three times in the book of Psalms (Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:18) and then no less than 27 times in Isaiah. The name then occurs three more times (Jeremiah 50:29; 51:5; Ezekiel 39:7), with the final one being our text above (where the preposition is translated “in”). This unusual pattern can be written sequentially as $3 + 3^3 + 3 = 33$, perhaps reflecting a divinely ordained design to suggest the Holy Trinity.

The strong emphasis on this particular name during the later period of Judah’s kingdom probably was because of the prevalent unholiness of the nation during those years, finally culminating in the captivity of Judah itself. God stressed again and again that He was the Holy One and that “ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44).

This theme is prominent in most of the 33 passages where this majestic name is used, but it is especially emphasized in its final occurrence, as recorded in our text. The context of this latter passage is the prophesied invasion of Israel by “Gog, the land of Magog” who will “come up against my people of Israel...in the latter days” (Ezekiel 38:2, 16). At that time, says the Lord, “there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;...and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 38:19, 23). Then at last, His people will never pollute His holy name any more and “the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward....for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 39:22, 29). HMM

The Whole Heart

“I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.” (Psalm 138:1)

When we sing or testify of our praise to God, it should not be perfunctory or repetitive rote praise. It should be sincere, wholehearted, personal praise. We should especially praise Him for revealing to us eternal truth, as written in His inspired Word. Further, we should not hesitate to praise our true God, even amidst all the false “gods” of this world. As verse 2 says, He has magnified His Word above all His name! The Holy Scriptures are our greatest physical possession of all the things in this world, for they alone will “not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). His Word is “for ever...settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

This phrase, “the whole heart,” occurs a number of times in the Bible, especially in the psalm of the Word, Psalm 119. Note the testimony of the psalmist in this great psalm.

1. “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart” (v. 2).
2. “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments” (v. 10).
3. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart” (v. 34).
4. “I entreated thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word” (v. 58).
5. “The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart” (v. 69).
6. “I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes” (v. 145).

Thus, we should “keep his testimonies” (v. 2), “keep thy law” (v. 34), “keep thy precepts” (v. 69), and “keep thy statutes” (v. 145) with our whole heart, for the good and sufficient reason that He is our Lord and has given us His eternal Word, magnified above all His name. HMM

Monday, June 7

Likeminded

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Philippians 2:2)

This emphatic command, along with the parallel terms, helps us understand the concept of “thinking” the same thing. “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” (Romans 12:16).

Such thinking also includes “having the same love.” There are two aspects of this love. First, the term itself (*agape*) would demand that all of Christ’s disciples “love one another: for love is of God” (1 John 4:7). This is often repeated to born-again believers so that our love for each other is so obvious that “by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” (John 13:35).

Godly love then produces “being of one accord.” This phrase is the translation of the Greek word *sumpsuchos*, which is a compound of the preposition most often translated “with” and the word for “soul.” Thus, the *agape* that we are to share results in a connection “with-soul” that binds the “likemindedness” in agreement with the mind and spirit of the Creator God.

We are finally commanded to be of “one mind”—slightly different from the “likeminded” opening charge of Philippians 2:2. The initial words are *auto phroneô*—“his thinking.” The last use is *en phroneô*—one (way of) thinking.

The entire context of the opening verses of Philippians 2 is to think like Jesus Christ thinks. “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). “Set your affection [*phroneô*] on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). This kind of “thinking” must have God’s love and soul embedded in the very core of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. HMM III

Israel's Confession of Faith

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

As stated in the law, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was to be recited by all Jews both morning and evening, for it contains God's basic plan for passing on the message of God from generation to generation.

The primary teaching is contained in verse 4. There is only one God, indivisible, although in three persons. His divine uniqueness precludes the worship of any other deity. The response to this message is that we should love that God with our entire being. Jesus Christ recognized this as the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12:30), teaching that obedience to it fulfilled one's duty to the entire law.

The message was so important that God even gave the mechanics for passing it on. In verse 6, we see that “these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.” Each person, particularly parents (v. 7), needed a heart commitment to God's commandments, statutes, and judgments (vv. 1-2).

Next, they had to commit themselves to raising up a godly heritage. “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (v. 7). This teaching was to be first of all oral teaching. They were also to dress in such a way that it reflected their commitment to the law of God (v. 8), and they were to place visual reminders of the law of God all around their homes so that the children were constantly reminded of the things of God (v. 9).

Christians need to discover the truth of this passage. We must not merely assume the godly teaching of our children but also actively cultivate it. At stake is not only the personal walk of our children but also the eternal message of God. JDM

Wednesday, June 9

The Joy of Reconciliation

“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”
(Romans 5:11)

The Greek word for “atonement” in this verse is *kátallage*, which everywhere else (some 10 times, either this word or its related forms) is translated “reconciliation” (or “reconciled” or “reconciling”). The connotation is that of full restoration to full fellowship after long enmity and alienation.

The Hebrew word for “atonement” (*kaphar*, “covering”) occurs some 80 times in the Old Testament, over half of them in Leviticus. It normally referred to the “covering” of one’s sins by the shed blood of an innocent (and blemish-free) animal sacrifice.

Although this could provide some comfort to the sinner, there was little to be joyful about, since the covering was only temporary and the sins were still there. When Christ came, however, He became “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26).

Consequently, “atonement” (in the sense of a temporary covering) is never mentioned at all in the New Testament. Instead, we have been fully “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). Thus, our text is really saying that we have real joy in God through Christ, “by whom we have now received the reconciliation!”

Our fellowship with our heavenly Father has been fully restored by the wonderful gift of eternal salvation through the work of Christ, “who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). And as we rejoice in the Lord, we must remember, too, that He “hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation,” so that we are “ambassadors for Christ,” beseeching others also to “be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20). HMM

Esteem Others

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”
(Philippians 2:3)

In this verse, Paul challenged us to refrain from any “strife” or “vainglory”—words that seem a bit stern in the colloquial terms of our day.

Erietheia is the Greek word for “strife”—a contentious political maneuvering for greater power. “Vainglory” is similar. It comes from the Greek word *kenodoxia*, an empty pride or groundless glory. Both are rather unpleasant descriptions of the foolish and sinful human behavior that is seen all too often among God’s people: “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:26).

On the contrary, we are challenged to “esteem” the others in our fellowship as “better than” ourselves. The precise words in this instruction insist that we are to use deliberate and careful judgment in our evaluation of others in our relationships as being more “excellent” than what we have thought of ourselves.

Now, that goes against most of what we have been taught in our Western educational systems. *Self-esteem* is *de rigueur* in our schools, songs, movies, and television programs. In fact, “positive thinking” and “prosperity thinking” are very little more than self-esteem dressed up in religious terms.

In the biblical “body” analogy, we are told that “those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour...having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked” (1 Corinthians 12:23-24).

God thinks differently. We are told to think of each other like God thinks. HMM III

Friday, June 11

Here a Little, There a Little

*“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”
(Isaiah 28:10)*

The setting of this unusual passage is most sobering. Both the people and their priests in Israel’s northern kingdom (personified by “Ephraim”) were in gross rebellion and drunken disobedience to the Lord. They were even ridiculing God’s prophets who were trying to call them back, complaining that they were being treated like schoolchildren. In effect, they were saying: “Are you presuming to teach us as you would freshly weaned infants, going line by line, with rule after rule?”

Whereupon God replied that He would use people of another tongue to come in and teach them what they refused to learn from Him. These precepts He had been trying to teach them should have provided true rest and refreshment, but now learning these lessons would prove to be their undoing. What should have been a blessing to them would become their condemnation.

How desperately do modern Christians need to heed these same words! They profess to believe God’s Word, but they study it only superficially, compromise its doctrines, and disobey its instructions. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12). Most Christians of today, like the Corinthians of old, are still “babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1). Thus, it really is necessary for their teachers to bring the Word of God to them “precept upon precept, line upon line, little by little.” “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1). HMM

Saturday, June 12

Demonic Discouragement

“Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?” (Job 4:18-19)

This was the strange message delivered to Eliphaz, the first of the three friends who proved such “miserable comforters” to Job in his sufferings, by “a spirit” that “stood still,... an image...before mine eyes” (vv. 15-16). This “thing was secretly [literally ‘stealthily’] brought to me,” said Eliphaz (v. 12), and there is little doubt that its original source was Satan himself, in his efforts to discredit and destroy Job. The “spirit” who instructed Eliphaz was not sent from God, as he may have thought, but was one of those angelic servants who had been “charged with folly” when they followed Lucifer in his primeval rebellion.

Still smarting with wounded pride that God would make His angels mere “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) to Adam and his children, whose own bodies were mere “houses of clay,” built out of the dust of the earth, these demonic rebels hate human beings—especially those who love and serve God—with great passion. If Satan could not destroy Job by tempting him into moral wickedness or rebellion against an “unjust” God, perhaps he could lead him into discouragement, using his self-righteous “friends” to cause him to lose faith in God’s love and care.

But he failed! Job said: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” and “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 13:15; 19:25).

Such defeatism is one of Satan’s most effective weapons. When he strikes with it, we must, like Job, “resist steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:9), knowing “the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11). HMM

Sunday, June 13

The Proverbial Tongue

“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” (Proverbs 10:19)

The book of Proverbs has much wise counsel concerning the use of the tongue. It contains, for example, no less than 27 sober warnings against speaking lies! There are also at least eight condemnations of gossiping. For example: “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter” (11:13).

Then there are warnings against using the tongue to criticize, or to slander, or to hurt. A good example is in 12:18: “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health,” and also in 18:8: “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Too much talking is also dangerous, as our text for the day points out, for it often results in sin. In this connection, one of the most picturesque proverbs is the following: “A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike” (27:15). The virtues of silence are graphically pointed out in 17:27-28: “He that hath knowledge spareth his words:... Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”

Similarly, there are many promised blessings to those who speak carefully and graciously: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (25:11). “The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning” (16:21). “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life” (15:4). “The tongue of the just is as choice silver” (10:20). “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (15:1). “A word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (15:23).

May we, indeed, learn to make our speech like choice silver, apples of gold, and a tree of life! HMM

Others' Things

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Philippians 2:4)

Our responsibility is to think like the Lord Jesus, part of which requires “looking” (marking, identifying) matters beyond our own concerns.

Part of that responsibility is caution. “Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark* [same Greek word for ‘look’] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Another part is being aware of godly examples. “Brethren, be followers together of me, and *mark* them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Philippians 3:17).

Surely that responsibility also includes that “we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). And in cases of necessary discipline: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Also consider these:

- “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (1 Corinthians 10:24).
- “Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Corinthians 10:33).
- “But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9).

Finally, written by the same apostle who instructed the stronger Philippian church, there is this gentle summary statement recorded for the struggling Corinthian assembly: “Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed” (2 Corinthians 6:3). HMM III

Tuesday, June 15

Jesus Christ Is Lord

“And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:11)

Throughout the New Testament, we find there are three names in primary usage for the Son of God: Jesus, Christ, and Lord. The name Jesus, meaning “Jehovah is the Savior,” is His human name, linking Him with humanity whom He came to save. Christ, meaning “anointed,” is His Messianic name, linking Him with the prophecy that He came to fulfill. The New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew word *Jehovah* is the word “Lord,” linking Him with deity whom He came to represent and reveal, and to whom is due homage.

These three names have a chronological emphasis, for until His crucifixion He was known primarily as “Jesus,” but after His resurrection and ascension He was preeminent as “Christ.” When He returns, it will be as “Lord” to reign. To be sure, there is overlap, for He is simultaneously all three and has been throughout history. But the general pattern is clear.

The three names also indicate His threefold office and work. “Jesus” suggests His career as a prophet, teaching men the truth, while “Christ” suggests His priesthood, atoning for sin, and “Lord” His Kingship, ruling over men. Mankind’s relationship and responsibility to Him follow this same pattern: obedience to Him as prophet, faith in Him as priest, surrender to Him as King.

There is no effort on the part of the Scripture writers to separate these names into different individuals, for on many if not most occasions two or three of the names are combined, showing that these three names reference one and the same person. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). JDM

Wednesday, June 16

The Incarnation of Christ

“Christ Jesus...being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:5-7)

“Great is the mystery of godliness,” Paul exclaimed as he summarized the incarnation (1 Timothy 3:16). No mere words, even those inspired by God Himself, can completely express what transpired when “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). There are, however, a few clues in this marvelous Philippians passage.

The choice of the Greek word *morphê* to express what Jesus possessed prior to His becoming the God-man is important. This “form” of God is not the Greek word that one would choose to express the visible or outward shape—that word would be *schêma*. *Morphê* emphasizes the character, the being, that makes the being what it is.

Interestingly, *morphê* is also used to tell us that Jesus took on the “form” of a servant: “[He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7). Jesus “voided” the *morphê* that He rightfully possessed as God and “received” (passive) the *morphê* of a servant or slave (*doulos*). Then, “in the likeness [*homoiôma*, similitude] of men” He came to be [*ginomai*, to come into existence].”

We may never fully understand what transpired in the councils of Triune eternity. But this we can know and believe: Jesus *became* man *for* men, and He alone saved us from our sin and justly granted us eternal life. HMM III

Thursday, June 17

Reasonable Service

“I beseech you therefore...by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

For those who would know God’s will for their lives, these verses provide the definitive answer. The key is sacrifice, not conformity. It is paradoxical, but wonderfully true, that real living is dying—dying to the world and living unto Christ! This great theme is emphasized repeatedly throughout the New Testament (Galatians 2:20, etc.).

Whether paradoxical or not, the principle of sacrificial living for Christ is eminently reasonable service! “Reasonable” is the Greek *logikos*, from which we derive our word “logical.” “Service” is the Greek *latreian*, referring to service as a priest. We have been made “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). It is perfectly logical that we render such lifelong service to the great Friend who laid down His life for us in order to take away our sins and give us everlasting life with Him in the ages to come.

It is also logical that we should not conform our lives to the standards of this present evil world. Why should we imitate this world’s materialism or humanism, in dress or music or morals or anything else? We have far higher and more lasting standards, guided by the Word of God and by minds renewed in Christ.

Our minds once were “blinded” by “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), but now they can be guided by “the mind of the Lord” (Romans 11:34; 1 Corinthians 2:16). Here is the key to knowing that good and acceptable and perfect will of God! HMM

The Obedient Christ

*“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
(Philippians 2:8)*

The only begotten Son of God substituted Himself for all humanity to save them from the righteous judgment of a thrice-holy Creator.

Jesus found Himself “in fashion as a man,” which therefore made it possible for Him to humble Himself and to become obedient to the death that had been ordained for Him prior to the very foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20).

Perhaps it is too much to suggest that Jesus “woke up” when He “found” Himself in Mary’s womb, but it is certain that He “increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52) as He grew in “stature.” Basically, because He “became” human, He experienced the normal increase in awareness and experience that all of us do.

The difference was, obviously, that He “humbled” Himself, even though He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Christ’s sinless behavior could have easily “exalted” Him as His wisdom and miracles became known throughout Israel. Indeed, many tried to make Him king.

Isaiah prophetically records the mindset of the Lord many years before He actually entered Jerusalem: “I set my face like a flint” (Isaiah 50:7). Later, Jesus told His disciples, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50).

Finally, the obedience of our Lord Jesus, understood fully and deeply at Gethsemane, was fully accomplished, “even the death of the cross.” May our hearts never forget or tire of these great truths. HMM III

Saturday, June 19

The Greatest Name

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” (Philippians 2:9-10)

While the role of the Lord Jesus appears somewhat subdued in the Old Testament, it dominates the New Testament. The Hebrew equivalent of “Jesus” appears only 13 times as “saviour.” The Greek text explodes with over 960 verses either recording statements made by Jesus or proclaiming Him as Lord and King.

King David declared: “Blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory” (Psalm 72:19). And, of course, the great “name” passage in Isaiah 9:6 amplifies the many aspects of the “child” whose “name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

But Jesus prefers “Son of man.” That title is used 89 times, while “Son of God” is used 53 times. The majestic name of “Lord of lords, and King of kings” is used only three times in the New Testament, twice in the closing book (Revelation 17:14 and 19:16) and once in Paul’s moving benediction: “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Since the New Testament emphasizes the ultimate kingship of our Lord Jesus, we can understand that the dominant name cited nearly 250 times in the Old Testament (“LORD of hosts”) refers to the Ruler of heaven, the Lord Jesus (Malachi 3:17). HMM III

Sunday, June 20

The Peace of Thy Children

“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” (Isaiah 54:13)

This prophetic verse has its primary fulfillment still in the future. Nevertheless, it states a basic principle that is always valid and that is especially relevant on Father’s Day. The greatest honor that children can bestow on a father is a solid Christian character of their own, but that must first be his own gift to them. Before sons and daughters can experience real peace of soul, they must first be taught of the Lord themselves, and the heavenly Father has delegated this responsibility first of all to human fathers.

The classic example is Abraham, “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). God’s testimony concerning Abraham was this: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:19). This is the first reference in Scripture to the training of children, and it is significant that it stresses paternal instruction in the things of God. Furthermore, the instruction should be diligent and continual: “When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

The classic New Testament teaching on child training has the same message: “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Not wrath, but peace, as our text suggests. Great shall be the peace of our children when they know the Lord and keep His ways. Great, also, is the joy of a godly father when he can see the blessing of the Lord on his children and then on his grandchildren. “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers” (Proverbs 17:6). HMM

Monday, June 21

Jesus Christ Is Lord

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

Often this passage is thought of as an admission by all sentient beings of the deity of the Lord Jesus—and it certainly is that. There surely will come a point in time in which “every thing that hath breath” will praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6). Those of us who are the twice-born will do so with great joy. Those who have chosen to reject the gospel will also do so—but with overwhelming terror (Proverbs 1:27).

However, the foundational passage from which the New Testament quotes, and by which it twice applies the event, is found in Isaiah 45:22-23: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Our verse today applies the Isaiah passage to the great final judgment referred to in Revelation 20. Other insights in Revelation cite some of the songs we may sing and something of the ceremonies and pageantry associated with the celebration of Christ’s formal assumption of His role as King.

The first New Testament quotation of Isaiah 45:23 is in Romans 14:11-12. Here, Paul applies the judgment to an open report of our deeds: “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Surely this broader sight should strengthen our resolve to “please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4). HMM III

Immediate Results

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” (Romans 8:22)

Sometimes we don't get to see the results of our work or choices soon enough to suit us. But on one occasion, a man's choice and resulting action were given immediate attention, and the effects of that attention even now rule the universe.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

The result of Adam's deliberate sin—“Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14)—was immediate and total punishment upon Adam and Eve, and through them on all humanity (Genesis 3:14-19). “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). “For the creature [or ‘creation’] was made subject to vanity [that is, ‘futility’], not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope” (8:20).

This “bondage of corruption” (v. 21) placed upon the entire creation, now known to science as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, is known to all of us as the basic tendency of life. Everything is in the process of death and decay. This law will one day be removed; but until then, we, like the groaning, travailing creation of our text, “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (v. 23).

Although we recognize now that “the wages of sin is death,” we can be very thankful that the story doesn't end there, for “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). JDM

Wednesday, June 23

Not Many Wise Men

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” (1 Corinthians 1:26)

For the most part, the rich and famous of this world, the wise and powerful, have always looked down on the followers of Christ and the Scriptures. This seems increasingly true today, and many believers have been led to compromise as a result. Rather than being discouraged by the intellectual snobbery of educated and powerful unbelievers, however, we should rejoice in this further proof of the prophetic inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

This passage is, in fact, a remarkably fulfilled prophecy, true for almost 2,000 years. Christians have founded great universities to train people in God’s truth, only to see them taken over, one after another, by the ungodly leaders of this present world. Missionaries have carried the gospel to heathen lands, only to be superseded by wealth-seeking materialists who exploit and subvert their converts.

Paul did not say “not any,” of course, but “not many.” God always has raised up a few brilliant or powerful men (such as Paul himself) who have devoted their abilities and influence to the Lord and His Word, but these have always been the exception. There have been a few godly kings and generals, a few Christ-honoring artists and musicians of great talent, but they are far outnumbered by the others.

But we must remember that God said long ago that was the way it would be. “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). HMM

Thursday, June 24

Prayer of the Whole Heart

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”
(Jeremiah 29:12-13)

There are many promises and instances of answered prayer in the Bible. Unfortunately, many of us really don't seem to believe them and therefore don't experience the answers to our prayers. Halfhearted praying may sometimes secure partial answers, but God exhorts us to pray wholeheartedly. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

The principle is timeless and is stressed often in the Word. “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3). God's resources are unlimited, but our motives must be pure, and our prayers must be from the heart. “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6). “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

In addition to right motives and genuine faith, there must be deep sincerity as we pray from the heart. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” said Jesus (Luke 18:1), who Himself found it necessary to pray long and earnestly. “Rising up a great while before day, he...departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

The early church followed His teaching and example, and saw His blessing. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). “And they continued stedfastly...in prayers” (Acts 2:42). “We will give ourselves continually to prayer” (Acts 6:4). Consequently, “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7). God is honored when we search for Him and pray to Him with all our hearts. HMM

Friday, June 25

In the Midst

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.” (John 20:26)

Jesus, in His earthly life, was often “in the midst” of things. At the age of 12 He was found in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). Then, early in His adult ministry, His hometown enemies at Nazareth attempted to kill Him, “but he passing through the midst of them went his way” (Luke 4:30). Later, in Jerusalem, a group of Pharisees sought to stone Him, but He simply went “through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:59).

Finally, however, they were able to put Him to death, and as a bitter testimony of their hatred, they had Him crucified with two common criminals, “on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (John 19:18). Three days later, the tomb was emptied, and He would never again be in the midst of enemies. Instead, He met His disciples in the upper room.

There, “when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). Eight days later, with Thomas present, Jesus once again appeared in their midst and greeted them with reassuring words of peace.

Though now in heaven, His presence still speaks peace to us through His Holy Spirit, for He promised: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Even in the ages to come, He will be in our midst, for John says, describing that scene: “In the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain,” and then all creation will sing “unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:6, 13). HMM

The Meek of the Earth

“Seek ye the LORD all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger.” (Zephaniah 2:3)

This phrase, “the meek of the earth,” occurs three times in the Bible (see also Psalm 76:9, which promises their salvation; and Isaiah 11:4, which assures them justice). Our text promises deliverance from God’s wrath.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5), said Jesus, referring to the promise of Psalm 37:11: “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

There are many other similar promises: “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9). “He will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psalm 149:4), so we need to put on “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:4).

That meekness is not weakness is made clear from the first use of the word in the Bible. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Moses was strong and courageous, but also deeply humble and self-sacrificing; a man of prayer and trust in the Word of God, willing to defend it at all costs. The Lord Jesus defined meekness in terms of His own human character: “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

A meek spirit enables a Christian to maintain composure in the face of opposition, to accept adversity without complaint, promotion without arrogance, demotion without resentment. It produces a peace that no trouble can disturb and that no prosperity can puff up. Therefore, as our text commands: “Seek meekness!” HMM

Sunday, June 27

Working Out Salvation

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12)

This verse is sometimes used by those who would insist that our salvation requires “works” either to obtain or to maintain the “new birth.” Even a casual reading of the New Testament does not support that view (John 5:24; 6:37; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:24; etc.).

This passage, both in context and by specific word choices of the Holy Spirit, is focused on what we are to do with our salvation—obey and produce! The writer of the Hebrews letter spoke of “things that accompany salvation” (Hebrews 6:9). And even the Old Testament prophet Isaiah insisted that we should “draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3).

Two parables speak specifically to this work: the gift of the talents and the gift of the pounds. God illustrated His grace by the gift of “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) to His workers, as well as His expectation of their productivity for the profit of the Owner. Differing amounts were given to the servants based on their abilities, and judgment was based on their efficiency, or the percent of their return. In the gift of the pounds (Luke 19:13-27), God is the investor and His servants are all of us who receive (John 1:12) the gift of salvation. What we do with this gift is our responsibility. The same amount was given to each servant, without the mention of abilities. Judgment was then based on the servants’ effectiveness, or gain.

It is no wonder, then, that Paul exhorted us to “work out” the priceless salvation that has been given to us with “fear and trembling.” God is “working” in us, and He expects us to “will and to do his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). HMM III

Monday, June 28

Abiding Words

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7)

In order for the words of the Lord really to abide in us, it seems clear that we should commit as many of them to memory—not only in our minds but in our hearts—as we possibly can. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart,” the psalmist said, “that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

There are many promises of blessing to those who have God’s Word in their hearts. “For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips” (Proverbs 22:18). “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;...Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:1, 5).

Both the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter have noted the importance of Scripture memorization. Paul says: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

Peter’s exhortation is as follows: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets [i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures], and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour [i.e., the New Testament Scriptures]” (2 Peter 3:1-2). The words “be mindful” mean essentially “recall to mind.”

Since the Scriptures cannot be recalled to mind unless they’ve first been installed in the mind, and since they cannot abide in our hearts unless we first hide them in our hearts, it is surely pleasing and honoring to God that we learn “by heart” as much of His Word as we can. HMM

Tuesday, June 29

Doing God's Pleasure

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

In this passage with an unusual play on words, we are told to give our salvation a “workout.” The Greek word is *katergazomai*, an interesting compound word that means to “perform.” When we are told that God is working in us, the Greek word is *energeō*, which is the “energy” to do work.

Paul puts it this way: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh [*energeō*] in us” (Ephesians 3:20). This “energizing” is an internal and spiritual resource, demonstrated most poignantly by “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working [*energeō*] of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:19-20). Since the energy to produce comes from the same Creator who saved us by grace, He has every right to expect us to “will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Peter taught us that God provided “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). The Thessalonican church was told that “the word of God...effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). And of course, “all scripture...is profitable....That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Our objective, having been supernaturally supplied by the One who saved us, is to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:10-11). HMM III

Wednesday, June 30

Behavior Checklist

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:14-15)

The Holy Spirit makes sure that we do not take lightly the obligation to live godly lives. This “list” contains both warnings and promises.

Everything is to be done without “murmurings” and “disputings.” Both words are very interesting synonyms of heart attitudes that produce ungodly behavior. The Greek word translated “murmur” is *goggusmos*, and it is almost an onomatopoeia (sounds like what it actually is)—a secret debate, muttering to oneself. The “dispute” (Greek *dialogismos*) suggests a logical debate with oneself.

We are commanded to excise that kind of behavior from ourselves so that we may well be blameless and harmless as the “sons of God,” living “without rebuke.” These words are powerful in their description of God’s expectations for us.

The blameless condition is first an eternal promise that comes with salvation: “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God” (1 Thessalonians 3:13). That condition “works out” in this life as a faultless reputation that is harmless. Paul uses the term this way: “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Romans 16:19).

Finally, if we eliminate “murmuring and disputings” from our inner thoughts and actively seek to be “blameless and harmless” with our external behavior, we will be “without rebuke” in the middle of this sadly sinful world. “Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14). HMM III

Thursday, July 1

The Reverend God

“He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.” (Psalm 111:9)

It is most interesting that the adjective “reverend” is used only this once in the entire King James Bible. And there it applies to God, not to any man!

However, the Hebrew word so translated in this verse (*yâre’*) occurs therein frequently, usually being translated (some 30 times) as “terrible.” The first time it is applied to God was by Moses. “Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible” (Deuteronomy 7:21). Note also Moses’ testimony in Deuteronomy 10:17: “For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.”

For those who would deny or oppose Him, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). But God is also uniquely a God of love. He is a merciful and forgiving God; He is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10) and of many other wonderful attributes.

“He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth” (God is thus omnipresent). “He fashioneth their hearts alike” (He is omnipotent). “He considereth all their works” (He is omniscient) (Psalm 33:14-15).

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). If a person *truly believes* the first verse of the Bible, he should be able to believe all other verses in the Bible, no matter what men or devils can say to the contrary. Our God, who has also become our Redeemer and Savior, is “eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God” (1 Timothy 1:17).

He is indeed a God of many attributes. HMM

Friday, July 2

No Complaints

“And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.” (Numbers 11:1)

The Lord is not pleased when we complain about our circumstances, no matter how grievous they may seem to us. Our example is Christ, always. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

The children of Israel complained once too much. Forgetting all of God’s blessings in miraculously freeing them from slavery and providing all their needs, they repeatedly complained about their lot, one thing after another. “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted....Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10:5-6, 10).

God may not deal with a complaining Christian as severely as He did with His chosen people, Israel, but we can be sure He is displeased when we, who have received the blessing of eternal salvation by His gracious gift through Christ, forget His benefits and complain about His testing. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings,” He has commanded (Philippians 2:14)—that is, without complaining and arguing about our treatment.

We can be confident that He is allowing these difficulties for some good purpose in preparing us for our service for Him in eternity. We should not forget what happened to the complainers in ancient Israel. “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:11). HMM

Saturday, July 3

Lights in the World

“The sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:15)

The Hebrew and Greek terms for “sons of God” are essentially the same, but the Old Testament always uses the phrase in reference to angels, whereas the New Testament always references the twice-born saints of God.

Our text for this day emphasizes the precise reason that our Lord Jesus prayed: “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world....They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16). We who share this marvelous relationship bear both the “love the Father hath bestowed upon us” and the unique rejection that “the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1).

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and we who are His disciples are “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). We, unlike the angels, are to remain in this unfair and distorted world as lights. Consider this! We are the light that the Lord Jesus left in this world to represent Him and His message after He returned to heaven (John 9:5).

That is why the Scriptures refer to us as saints (holy ones) and disciples (followers); even the pejorative “Christians” (Acts 11:26) identify us as representing the King! We must therefore shine with the truth (John 3:19) and shed the “light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4), attempting to “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

Finally, we are surely commanded to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7). Our light should never be covered in a “bushel” (Matthew 5:15) but set on a “hill” for all to see (Matthew 5:14). HMM III

Sunday, July 4

When the Boughs Break

“When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor.” (Isaiah 27:11)

Like a mighty tree towering over the forest, God raises up a mighty nation from time to time, with a great leader, to accomplish some purpose in the divine plan. He “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

But when that nation and its leaders become proud, and its people become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, it becomes like a tree whose branches wither and whose core becomes riddled with insect-caused decay. Finally, the boughs break, the kingdom will fall, and down will come that nation, its leaders and all!

That happened even to God’s chosen nation, Israel, though only for a time, since God’s promises cannot fail. One after another, the mighty nations that God used to chastise His wayward people—Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Rome, etc.—have in turn been judged for their own rebellion against the God who “made them” and “formed them.” God has warned that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17).

Is that about to happen to our beloved USA as well? The signs of self-seeking power and pride among our leaders and moral decay and spiritual rebellion among our people are widespread and growing worse. Our prayer should be that of the ancient prophet. “O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,...in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2). “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (Psalm 85:6). HMM

Monday, July 5

The Word of Life

“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” (Philippians 2:16)

The Bible is always the best commentary on itself—especially when the word or phrase is not frequent. In this case, “the word of life” is only used twice and might be interpreted in various ways without this qualifier: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1).

In the context of Philippians 2, the emphasis is obviously on the person and work of our Lord Jesus. We who bear His name are His “sons” and are charged with the responsibility of being “lights” (Philippians 2:15) to a world that is steeped in darkness. The light that we shine is the word of life—and that is, according to the Scriptures, the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the word of life must certainly involve who Christ is (Creator, Lord, incarnate Word, King) as well as the “glorious gospel” of salvation by grace (2 Corinthians 4:4). Charged with the responsibility of “holding forth the word of life,” we are to be “the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). Thus, we should be well-versed in the written Word, since Jesus specifically said: “Search the scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

Ultimately, of course, our “light” comes from “the Light.” Since we have been delivered “from the power of darkness” (Colossians 1:13) by our Lord’s substitutionary atonement, we who “were sometimes darkness” are now “light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). HMM III

Tuesday, July 6

Mockers—Ancient and Modern

“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” (Nehemiah 4:1)

The art of mocking God and His people has changed little through the ages. The pagan enemies that surrounded the Jews as they were trying to rebuild Jerusalem 400 years before Christ tried various means to defeat them—essentially the same devices used by God’s enemies today.

They tried political and sociological means, after their efforts at infiltration failed, but these also failed (see Ezra 5:6, 17; 6:6-7; 9:1; 10:11-12). Then, when Nehemiah actually began work on the city’s wall, they tried discouragement by ridicule (Nehemiah 2:19; 4:1-3), by threat of violence (4:7-8), and by attempted treachery (6:2).

Likewise, the enemies of God’s Word and God’s plan today are trying all these devices in a modern format. They use political means (such as the ACLU), compromising infiltration (liberal teachers in once-sound Christian schools), and even persecution (as in communist countries).

The strategy of “mocking” is often especially effective against Christians in education, science, or other professional fields. Such people place a high premium on peer recognition and thus are sensitive to snide remarks about the Bible. Thus, when, in the words of 2 Peter 3:4, latter-day scoffers come saying: “Where is the promise of his coming?...all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (which is essentially a denial of God and creation), there is great pressure to tacitly agree with the scoffers, and many Christians will seek some compromise.

But Nehemiah did not compromise, and neither should we. The Bible says that those who ridicule God’s Word are “willingly ignorant” (2 Peter 3:5), and there is no need to pander to willful ignorance of God’s invulnerable truth. HMM

Wednesday, July 7

The Eternal God

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” (Psalm 90:2)

This verse was written by Moses as the children of Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land. Perhaps the most basic of all the attributes of God is that He “inhabiteth eternity” (Isaiah 57:15). He is “from everlasting to everlasting,” the God who ever was and ever shall be.

Creatures of time cannot really comprehend the idea of past eternity. “But who made God?” children ask. “Nobody made God,” we answer. “He always was.” The alternative would be to believe in the eternity of “space” and “matter,” but these in themselves are utterly incapable of producing our complex universe. God, however, is an adequate First Cause to explain all the effects of our infinite, intricate cosmos.

There are many other Scriptures assuring us that God has always been. “Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting” (Psalm 93:2). He is “the everlasting God, the LORD” (Isaiah 40:28). And this truth applies to God the Son as well as to God the Father. The Lord Jesus could say, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13).

We find it somewhat easier to contemplate the fact that God will live forever. Still, certain foolish men have imagined that God is dead, but “the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king” (Jeremiah 10:10).

The most glorious fact of all is that this *living* God did also become man, in the person of Christ Jesus, and *He* did die. But He soon defeated death and now can say, “I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18). And now, since “we believe that Jesus died and rose again,...so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 17). HMM

Thursday, July 8

Submission

*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”
(Ephesians 5:21)*

Normally in today’s world we are told to strive for the top. Desire to be “Number 1” overshadows the biblical injunction of submission. But when we are truly in a right relationship with God, we will be submitting to one another. Christ taught that servanthood was of much greater value in the eyes of God than mastery.

We all know too many examples of churches that have been split by conflicts arising from selfishness among the believers or an unwillingness to serve. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1). A Spirit-filled Christian (Ephesians 5:18) desires to submit and serve rather than to assert and rule.

The same thought is reflected throughout Scripture: “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). “Obey them [i.e., spiritual leaders] that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls” (Hebrews 13:17). We must also submit to “every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13).

The word “submit” is a translation of two Greek words meaning “to line up under.” It usually reflects a military hierarchy, “to rank lower than.” Our goal, therefore, should be to place others above ourselves and to be in submission to and in service of them.

This attitude, of course, was the attitude that Christ exhibited as He left heaven to come and serve, and die, who “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). JDM

Friday, July 9

A Mind to Work

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”
(Nehemiah 4:6)

The ambitious project of rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall, with all its gates and other structures, was completed in less than two months (Nehemiah 6:15), for all “the people had a mind to work.” This was in spite of the danger from the external enemies who wanted to delay the work if they could.

The third chapter of Nehemiah has a remarkable list of the workmen on the wall. Men of all walks of life participated, each with an assigned portion of the work as organized by Nehemiah. The first verse of the chapter tells of the work done by Eliashib, the high priest, and all the other priests; the last verse lists the contribution of the goldsmiths and the merchants. There were the Nethinims (v. 26), apothecaries (v. 8), rulers (i.e., “mayors,” vv. 9, 12, 14-16), and various others. At least one man even had his daughters working (v. 12). Only the nobles of the Tekoites “put not their necks to the work of their LORD” (v. 5).

This would be a good model for any doctrinally sound, Bible-believing church, school, or other Christian ministry. It’s a lesson we would do well to learn. The mission and its goal are surely more important than the special desires or interests of any individual or group. At the same time, enforced cooperation will only breed resentment and inefficiency. The people themselves must be led to understand it as not just a job to do, but as a divine calling they themselves must have “a mind to the work.” Otherwise they should probably be encouraged to work elsewhere.

The early Christians served “daily with one accord...and singleness of heart,...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:46-47). That’s the way it should be. HMM

Saturday, July 10

How Does God Hear?

“Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.” (2 Chronicles 6:21)

No less than eight times in Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple does he beseech God to “hear from heaven” (see 2 Chronicles 6:21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33, 35, 39). But the obvious question is just how can God hear our prayers, especially those uttered only in silence?

The answer is in both God’s omniscience and His omnipresence. Although God is indeed on His heavenly throne, He is also right here! “O LORD,” David prayed, “thou hast searched me, and known me....thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalm 139:1-2). He can, and does, hear our prayers. “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?” (Psalm 94:9).

In a manner of speaking, He hears the prayers of redeemed children today even more directly than in David’s day, for we who trust in Christ have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. “God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them” (2 Corinthians 6:16). “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12).

God can indeed hear our prayers. But there are times when He refuses to hear! “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God...that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Yes, but if we ask anything according to His will (and this implies first living according to His will), “he heareth us: and... we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15). HMM

Sunday, July 11

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear.” (Psalm 46:1-2)

Martin Luther’s journal entries inform us of his continual battle against evil forces and that Psalm 46 was a great comfort to him. As he meditated on the words of our text, the thrust of a mighty song was born that openly declared victory in the great battle: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

*A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

The battle to be fought is “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Satan, along with his henchmen, is an ancient foe, “a roaring lion,” as it were, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). But there is no need for alarm, “the LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:11). He “is our refuge and strength” (today’s text), a bulwark never failing. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Only God could accomplish this victory, for Satan is “the prince of this world” (John 14:30), “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). No man on Earth is his equal.

But how did the Son of God gain the victory? By taking on Himself “flesh and blood” and dying a substitutionary death, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). JDM

The Right Man on Our Side

*“Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”
(Luke 22:31-32)*

Satan wanted Peter to fall, and fall he would (v. 34), but Christ had prayed for him that victory would come. The second verse of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” reflects our vulnerability on our own and our invincibility on His side.

*Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He,
Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.*

After revealing many thrilling blessings, Paul asks: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). Furthermore, neither “principalities, nor powers” nor any thing else in all creation is “able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). With Him, Satan cannot win the battle for our minds or destinies. But on our own, we cannot win.

The term *Sabaoth* is the Hebrew word for “hosts,” in particular the “host of heaven.” The term *Yahweh Sabaoth* or “Lord Sabaoth” occurs some 300 times in the Old Testament and constitutes a most majestic name for God. “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called” (Isaiah 54:5). This is none other than “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). Creator (Colossians 1:16), Sustainer (v. 17), Redeemer (v. 20)—He must win the battle. JDM

Tuesday, July 13

His Doom Is Sure

“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.” (John 8:44)

The third verse of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” focuses on Satan’s end. God has willed triumph through His truth.

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear; for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim—We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*

When Satan was cast from heaven, fully a third of the angels fell with him (Revelation 12:4), such that a “legion” of them could inhabit one individual (Mark 5:9). But God has other plans for His children. He desires “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18). He desires us to “resist the devil” (James 4:7) and not “give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27).

He also has plans for Satan, including “everlasting chains under darkness” (Jude 1:6), and “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). Just one word and Satan will be “cast into the lake of fire and...tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). Jesus, anticipating His execution, spoke of it triumphantly. This had been His Father’s will all along. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:31-32), and now the battle is His. JDM

His Kingdom Is Forever

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

The final verse of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” describes our tools and comportment while in the battle, and the final victory.

*That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Thro' Him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.*

As the King's soldiers, we have God-given abilities and possessions, most notably the indwelling God's Spirit and empowering gifts. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:4). We should “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28) and focus on Him, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (even goods and kindred [Luke 9:60-62] if need be). “We should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13).

As of yet the battle continues. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21), “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). JDM

Thursday, July 15

Almighty God

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” (Genesis 17:1)

This is the first of 48 occurrences of the designation of God by the term “Almighty” in the Old Testament. There are also nine times in the New Testament where God is called “Almighty,” plus once where He is called “omnipotent.” The last time it occurs is very near the end of the Bible, telling us that there is no special temple in the holy city, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:22).

Thus, in the first and last books of the Bible, and often in between, we are reminded that our God is an omnipotent God. As Jeremiah prayed; “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17).

Sarah “laughed” when God said that she would bear a son in her old age, but God responded: “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14). Many years later, the angel told the Virgin Mary that she would have a son, and she said: “How shall this be?” (Luke 1:34.) The angel replied: “With God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Some things God cannot do, of course, for “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13) and He “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), so whatever He does is right and whatever He says is true. We may not always understand just why He does or says something, but in eternity we shall learn that He was indeed able to do what He says. He is omnipotent!

God did create the cosmos in all its macroscopic complexity and all the living kinds with their microscopic complexity. “I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). HMM

Friday, July 16

Whom Shall I Fear?

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

Think back to your youngest childhood days. Do you remember being afraid of the dark? Were you scared when your parents turned off the nightlight?

Flash forward to more logical adult fears—thieves, natural disasters, negative bank account balances, unemployment, public speaking, shark attacks, political turmoil, and death. While some of those fears may seem far-fetched, there are other fears you might encounter that will truly drive you to your knees in prayer.

How would you respond to life-threatening persecution? What if your children recant their faith and abandon everything you’ve taught them from Scripture? Could you handle the loss of loved ones and all of your possessions?

The Bible is filled with examples of faithful believers who suffered (Hebrews 11:36-38). Many of the sorrow-filled Psalms were written by King David. But he wasn’t the only subject of fear, suffering, and trauma. Perhaps you are reminded of Job. He was a godly man. Yet the Lord allowed Satan to torment him, removing nearly every good thing from his life (Job 1:12; 2:6). How could he respond in faith to the One who protected his soul?

In today’s text, David draws our hearts to what Spurgeon calls “a threefold cord which could not be broken.” The Lord is our light, salvation, and strength. And then he asks two rhetorical questions: “Whom shall I fear?...Of whom shall I be afraid?”

With the Lord on your side, you need not fear anyone or anything. His love for you is sure and steadfast. Nothing in the entire universe—darkness, disaster, demons, or the devil—can separate you from His love (Romans 8:38-39). MH

Saturday, July 17

Partakers of the Promise

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”
(Ephesians 3:6)

There are many Christians who regard themselves as almost exclusively New Testament believers, arguing that the Old Testament was for the Jews under the dispensation of law and thus not applicable to Christians today.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While the old animal sacrifices, temple rituals, and Levitical priesthoods have indeed been superseded by Christ’s “one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Hebrews 10:12), there are many “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) of the Old Testament that can be properly and joyfully appropriated by Christians. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,” wrote Paul (2 Timothy 3:16), speaking particularly of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In the context of our verse for the day, Paul is stressing that his own new revelations, given in connection with the Christian gospel, actually involved bringing Jew and Gentile together as one body in Christ. The “dispensation of the grace of God...by revelation he made known unto me,” he wrote, but in previous ages, it had not been “made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:2-5).

And what was it that had not been made known? The hidden mystery was simply “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs” with the Jews, and therefore “partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6).

Thus, Gentile believers can now share in all the gracious promises of God in the Old Testament (e.g., Psalm 23; Isaiah 26:3; etc.), except those directly dealing with the future of Israel as a nation, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:14). HMM

Why Parables?

“And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” (Mark 4:33-34)

There is confusion concerning the parables of Jesus Christ. Was Jesus advocating an alternative form of teaching by using parables? Typically, parables were not the primary method used to impart truth. Look at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Our Lord presented truth clearly in 105 verses and concluded with a parable made up of only five verses.

So, what are biblical parables? A simple definition of a parable comes from the Greek word *parabolē*. The meaning of this word is “throwing” (*bolē*) “alongside” (*para*), as in the words comparison, illustration, and analogy. With parables there is a connection between spiritual truth and common practice. The lawyer in Luke 10:29 asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?” Our Lord answered him by packaging a salvific truth in a parable, using a fictitious gracious Samaritan who lived out in practice what the law demanded. Jesus called out this lawyer’s superficial self-righteousness by calling him to repentance and concluded the story by saying, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37).

While parables explain spiritual truths to the followers of our Lord, they also have the purpose of disguising truth to those hardened hearers who oppose Christ. Understanding parables takes careful detective work. As one pastor warns, “It takes care, hard work, and the Holy Spirit’s guidance to help get it right.”

We must always remember that parables reveal precious nuggets of spiritual truth to believing followers and disguise truth to those antagonistic to the faith. On which side of the equation do you stand? CM

Monday, July 19

When the Foundations Are Destroyed

*“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”
(Psalm 11:3)*

The word here for “foundations” is not the usual word for, say, a building foundation. Used rarely, a better translation of this word would be “purpose,” or “basis.” The fear expressed is not that the foundations of our faith might be undermined but that we might lose our sense of purpose.

In the context of the psalm, David was in danger of becoming demoralized by the pressures of wicked desires and evil ambitions all around him, and Christians surely have the same problem today. Why should we try to maintain high standards of doctrinal integrity and moral purity when the people around us—even most Christians—seem to be occupied mostly with materialistic ambition and pursuit of pleasure? If we allow the devil to undermine the very purposes God has for our lives, wandering away from His will in favor of some temporal interest, then why even continue with a pretense of Christian living?

David’s solution was simply to remind himself that “the LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men” (v. 4). He may allow the righteous to be tried for a season, but we must not forget that “the righteous LORD loveth righteousness” (v. 7) and that “the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth” (v. 5).

When we are tempted to wonder whether it is really worth all the effort, and when our very foundation and purpose for living seems to be crumbling, we should remember that our God is Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of all—that He still is on His throne, and that we who belong to Him have been “predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11). HMM

Tuesday, July 20

The Delightful Law

*“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”
(Romans 7:22)*

To many people, the law of God is harsh and cruel, consisting of an unreasonable list of “thou shalt nots.” But Scripture teaches that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). The “old man”—that is, the natural man—“is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22), and therefore it is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).

No natural man could ever truthfully say, “I delight in the law of God,” and in our modern world it is even probable that most people have broken at least most of God’s Ten Commandments and often delight in doing so. But the “old man” becomes a “new man” when he accepts Christ as his Savior, for “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made [the] curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Thus, the “inward man” can thenceforth “delight in the law of God,” as our text says. Not to earn salvation (which we could never do) but because we love to live for Him who died for us.

God’s law (and we can understand this now to include even the entire Word of God) indeed becomes our delight. We can say with the psalmist, “Thy law is my delight” (Psalm 119:77). Every one redeemed of the Lord should now find that “his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

The old covenant said, in effect, we must keep the law to live. But now, “this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (Hebrews 10:16). No longer are the commandments written “in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3), and we delight in them. HMM

Wednesday, July 21

Our Natural and Spiritual Bodies

“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Corinthians 15:43-44)

In this portion of this great chapter on the resurrection—first that of Christ, then the future resurrection of the redeemed—death and resurrection are compared to seed-sowing and harvest. When a seed is planted in the ground, it is as though it had died and is buried. For a long time after its “death,” the seed cannot be seen, but finally it rises again as a beautiful flowering plant, or sheaf of grain, or even a lovely tree.

Jesus made this same analogy. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24; note also Mark 4:26-29). Our human bodies, because of sin and the Curse, eventually die and are buried; but one day (like the planted seed) they will appear again, but now immortal and glorified, far greater than they were before—that is, of course, if their real inhabitants (their eternal created spirits) have been born again through faith in their already-resurrected Savior.

Our new spiritual bodies rising from the grave will be real physical bodies (like that of Jesus after He was raised) but will no longer be under bondage to gravitational and electromagnetic forces as at present, but only to spiritual forces of which we have as yet very little knowledge.

We do know, however, that our spiritual bodies will be “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Although “it doth not yet appear what we shall be....when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). Then in our glorious, powerful, spiritual bodies, we as “his servants shall serve him” in love and joy forever (Revelation 22:3). HMM

Thursday, July 22

Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:20)

The doctrine of verbal inspiration implies that not only are the words of Scripture inspired, but the very order in which they appear is also inspired. Study by commentators and translators have rightly noted that a change in the order of the words would at times change the meaning or emphasis of a passage. This phenomenon is often seen in the order in which the various names of Christ appear. By noting this order, one may sometimes gain new insight into a passage.

While the name Jesus, alone, normally appears in the gospels and the book of Acts, the compound name Jesus Christ appears on occasion. Interestingly, the same compound name is used exclusively by the disciples John and Peter in their letters, and by James and Jude, the brothers of our Lord. Of course, these men knew Him first by His human name, Jesus, and only fully comprehended the fact that He was the Christ (meaning “the Anointed,” or “the Messiah”) after His resurrection and ascension.

Paul, on the other hand, first encountered Christ in all His glory on the road to Damascus. Perhaps, as a consequence, he frequently reversed the order, speaking of Christ Jesus, although he used both orders many times.

The reason for this choice of order perhaps can best be illustrated in Philippians 2:5-11. In verse 5, Paul described the Anointed One, who first emptied Himself of certain aspects of His deity to take on human form. Therefore, Paul used the name Christ Jesus. In verse 11, however, the order is reversed. In this case, as in our text, the movement is from humanity to glory. In one, the glory of the risen Savior is emphasized; in the other, the glory that we shall share with Him. This glory is assured us through His victory. JDM

Friday, July 23

Our Advocate in Heaven

“Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.” (Job 16:19)

It is significant that here, in what is probably the oldest book in the Bible, two vitally important New Testament truths are anticipated. Job somehow knew that he (and, by implication, every other person as well) has a “record” in heaven. This is the only occurrence of this word (*sahed*) in the Bible, but it basically means that our works, good or bad, have been recorded by God in heaven concerning how we have used or abused our stewardship here on Earth.

And the record inevitably testifies against us, “for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). At God’s throne of judgment, when “the dead [are] judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works,” then “whosoever [is] not found written in the book of life [is] cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:12, 15).

But how can we know that our names will be in God’s book of life in that day? Thankfully, even Job knew, in his long-ago time, that “my witness is in heaven.” Here the word (Hebrew *ed*) speaks of a formal personal witness who can testify on our behalf, one who “might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!” (Job 16:21).

Job somehow knew that such a witness was there, for he could also say, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). In the light of the New Testament record, we know that this Redeemer and Witness is none other than the Lord Jesus. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). That is, He is the “sacrifice” for our sins and thus can redeem us from sin’s penalty and thereby serve as our defense witness in heaven. Our record of sin and guilt has been washed clean with the precious blood of Christ. HMM

The God of My Salvation

“Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” (Psalm 25:3-5)

Have you encountered persecution in your neighborhood, workplace, or even within your own family? How can you find comfort and relief?

In today’s text, David was discouraged by nameless enemies. Yet his discouragement was met by confident trust and consistent theology. The Lord is completely trustworthy. He cares for His people, and this fact is confirmed throughout the Psalms.

Waiting on the Lord is not a passive afterthought (Psalm 27:14; 37:7; Luke 12:35-40). No, this is an active pursuit. Biblical hope is more like a tense expectation. David knew the Lord would deliver him—if not on Earth, then certainly unto his heavenly future (2 Timothy 4:18). Consider implementing David’s pattern in your own life.

- Adoration: Praise the Lord for His sovereignty, holiness, and omnipotence.
- Humility: Daily seek God’s Word with faithfulness, humility, and the desire to obey.
- Worship: Honor and thank the Lord for His gift of salvation from temporary trials and for all eternity.
- Patience: Wait on the Lord to deliver and provide. He alone is worthy of our trust and hope.

Will you choose to adore, humbly pursue, worship, and patiently trust the God of your salvation? MH

Sunday, July 25

Come Thou Fount

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Revelation 21:6)

Promises of God’s fountain of blessings fill Scripture. They beckon our prayers for fulfillment, not only in heaven but even now. Christ assured us that “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The precious hymn “Come Thou Fount” reminds us of our position of blessing in Christ. The first verse says:

*Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.*

God acts toward believers in grace and mercy, not deserved justice, eliciting praise from the recipients. His “fount” assures us that He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

We look forward to singing and praising our Lord with the angelic “flaming tongues” above for all eternity. “The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever...saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:10-11), and “I heard the voice of many angels...saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:11-12).

Even so, come Thou Fount. JDM

Monday, July 26

His Precious Blood

“But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them....Then Samuel took a stone...and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” (1 Samuel 7:10-12)

The Philistines had stolen the Ark of the Covenant, given to Israel by God. In a battle to take it back, the Lord miraculously intervened, routed the Philistines, and retrieved the Ark. Samuel, the spiritual leader of Israel, ordered the people to erect a lasting “stone of remembrance” called Ebenezer to commemorate God’s deliverance of them from their enemies, a scene reflected in the hymn “Come Thou Fount.”

*Here I raise my Ebenezer,
hither by thy help I come;
And I hope by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
interposed His precious blood.*

The great “Hall of Fame” of faith in Hebrews 11 extols many biblical heroes for their great works of faith and then mentions those who would overcome after Bible times, persevering through deadly trials. Some survived, some were killed, some wandered to find their dwelling place, but all needed rescue through the shed blood of God’s own Son. For you “know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19), “which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:6). Please come quickly, Thou Fount. JDM

Tuesday, July 27

A Debtor to Grace

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” (Romans 7:18)

All too often we find ourselves as frustrated as the apostle Paul in that we often know to do the right thing, to abstain from a particular sin, but we quickly fall right back into that sin. We must daily recognize our sinful habits and determine in our hearts, with strength from the Holy Spirit, to withstand the sin, to overcome temptation. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:25). The writer of “Come Thou Fount” had the same frustration.

*O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.*

Scripture tells us we are secure in Christ, never to be separated. Christ informed His disciples that “my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:27-29). We are safe in Christ's hand surrounded by the Father's hand. And then the transaction is sealed by “the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

Take courage. We are secure in Him. JDM

Wednesday, July 28

Stunted Growth in Carnal Christians

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

The apostle Paul here makes a clear distinction between “spiritual” Christians, controlled and led by the Holy Spirit, and “carnal” Christians, still controlled by the desires of the flesh. A carnal Christian is a baby Christian. Baby Christians are a cause of great rejoicing when they are newborn believers, just like baby people. But if they remain babies indefinitely, they become an annoyance to hear and a tragedy to behold.

Each born-again believer needs urgently to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). That spiritual growth comes only through study of the Word, accompanied by belief and obedience. First there must be “the sincere [or ‘logical’] milk of the word” (1 Peter 2:2), but that is good only for the first stages of growth. “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13-14). Scripture encourages us to grow to maturity and then to continue growing.

Carnal Christians are not necessarily pseudo-Christians, although they should examine themselves to determine whether their profession of faith in Christ is genuine (2 Corinthians 13:5), but they should not be content to remain spiritual babes. Every Christian should be able to say with the prophet Jeremiah: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16). HMM

Thursday, July 29

From Prayer to Praise

“Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.” (Psalm 28:6-7)

The story of David facing fears of surrounding enemies and impending death seems to be on repeat in the Psalms. But before we allow it to become redundant, consider your own life. How often do you face trials that strain your heart with fear, worry, and doubt? Perhaps David’s life isn’t too far from your own, just with fewer spears and battle cries.

In today’s psalm, David spends the first portion crying out to the Lord for help. But for our encouragement and edification, pay special attention to the close of this installment of Scripture. David goes from heart-wrenching prayer to heartfelt praise!

Consider practicing praise throughout your daily prayer pattern. Here are several reasons why you should bless the Lord.

- He hears your prayers (Psalm 66:17-20; Matthew 21:22; 1 John 5:14-15).
- He is your strength (Exodus 15:2; Isaiah 40:29; Philippians 4:13).
- He is your shield (Psalm 18:2; 33:20; Proverbs 30:5).
- He is trustworthy (Psalm 9:10; 56:3; Proverbs 3:5-6; Jeremiah 17:7).
- He is your helper (Psalm 54:4; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:6).
- He gives you reason to rejoice (Isaiah 61:10; Romans 15:13; Philippians 4:4).
- He is worthy of praise and worship (2 Samuel 22:4; Psalm 96:4; Revelation 4:11).

Join your heart today with the psalmist. Rejoice greatly and sing praises to the Lord! MH

The Voice of the Lord

“The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.”
(Psalm 29:3-4)

When did you last consider the majesty of God and the power of His voice? From creation to consummation, Scripture proclaims the power of God’s voice. His Word begins with His speaking everything into existence (Genesis 1), and He completes His Word with eternal declarations (Revelation 21:5-8).

Today’s psalm draws our eyes to God’s power over the natural world. Think about mighty, rolling ocean waves and booming thunder during the fiercest storm. Many would describe them as powerful. While that is a good description for our finite minds to comprehend, as believers we ultimately don’t ascribe power to nature itself (e.g., Mother Nature or natural selection). We choose to give praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, who created and sustains each element of creation (Colossian 1:16-17).

Spurgeon expounded, “The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called ‘the voice of God,’ since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God’s speech to Adam’s sons.”

The book of Job also portrays God’s powerful voice. “After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.” (Job 37:4-5) “Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” (Job 40:9).

The voice of the Lord is unique. His voice alone can create and control. Let us use our words to praise His name and proclaim His wondrous deeds! MH

Saturday, July 31

The Good Confession

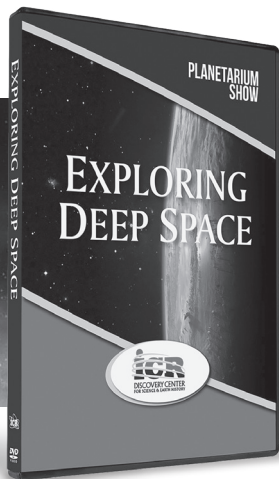
“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.” (1 Timothy 6:13)

Young Timothy also had “professed a good profession [same word as ‘confession’] before many witnesses” (v. 12), evidently of similar substance and quality to that in the witness of Christ before Pilate. When the Jews urged Pilate to condemn Jesus to death, their charge was that “he made himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). Pilate gave Jesus opportunity to deny this charge and save His life, “but Jesus gave him no answer” (v. 9). Both by His silence, when a denial of the charge could have saved Him, and by His open testimony before Pilate that He was, in fact, a King from heaven itself—indeed “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15)—it becomes clear that our own “good confession” must be a confession of our faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God, our Savior and Lord, especially when that confession is made openly before hostile witnesses.

Jesus said: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Paul said, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9); and John said, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

Despite the great blessings awaiting all who make a courageous and good confession of saving faith in Christ, most people will refuse until it is too late. There is a time coming, however, when “every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).
HMM

EXPLORING DEEP SPACE



The ICR Discovery Center for Science & Earth History's new planetarium show, *Exploring Deep Space*, takes you through our solar system and beyond to learn what blue stars, spiral galaxies, and mysterious black holes reveal about our awesome Creator, who knows and cares for each one of us. Along the way, you'll discover compelling evidence for a young universe that fits the Genesis account of creation. Now you can view this show in your own home!

Visit **ICR.org/store** or call **800.628.7640**.

Sunday, August 1

Scripture Says/God Says

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Among the many evidences for verbal inspiration, both within and without Scripture, is the frequent interchange of God recognized as the author of a particular passage with the human author who actually penned it. This can be true only if the very words recorded by the various authors are “God breathed” (the meaning of “inspiration”).

For example, the early Christians exclaimed, “Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?” (Acts 4:24-25), thereby recognizing that God spoke through David, who wrote God’s words in Psalm 2:1-2.

Likewise, Paul, in his masterful dissertation on God’s sovereignty, claimed “the scripture saith unto Pharaoh” (Romans 9:17) that which God Himself had spoken unto Moses (Exodus 9:13). In other words, what Scripture says, God says.

Even Christ Jesus, who Himself had written with His finger “honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12) on tables of stone, personally ascribed the authorship of the passage to Moses (Mark 7:10). Evidently to Christ, there was no difference. That which Moses had written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and in this case what he had copied from the stone tablet, was fully the Word of God.

We can be sure that what Scripture says, God says. “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). We can trust our lives on Earth, our view of history, and our eternal destiny to what is written on the pages of Scripture. JDM

Monday, August 2

I Am

“And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:62)

After His arrest, “the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none” (Mark 14:55). Then they got their sought-after witness from Jesus Himself when the high priest asked Him: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (v. 61), and it only took two words from Him. “I Am!”

As a matter of fact, this was not the first time He had thus identified Himself as the self-existent, eternal God. On an earlier occasion in Jerusalem, He had told the Pharisees: “I am the light of the world,” and then, “I am from above...I am not of this world...If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:12, 23-24; the “he” in verse 24 is not in the Greek original).

He made this especially clear a few minutes later when He asserted: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). But when He finally made this wonderfully truthful claim in the presence of the council, “they all condemned him to be guilty of death” (Mark 14:64). He had committed the capital crime of blasphemy in their opinion, by claiming to be God.

“I am” is, in fact, the very name of God. When Moses, at the burning bush, was called by God to deliver the Israelites from slavery, God said His name was “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). The name *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*), the most frequently used name of the Lord in the Old Testament, is essentially this name.

One can count at least 196 “I am” claims of God in Christ (“I am the way, the truth, and the life,” for example—John 14:6) in the Bible. Truly, our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal, self-existent God, “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13). HMM

Tuesday, August 3

The Infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God

*“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
(Colossians 2:3)*

One of the most amazing of the divine attributes is God’s omniscience. He not only understands all the complexities of relativistic science and higher mathematics, He ordained them in the first place! The same applies to every other discipline of study and activity.

And He knows all about each of us! “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalm 139:1-2).

As far as human knowledge is concerned, it is vital to know that “the fear of the LORD” is the very foundation of “knowledge” and of “wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). All the greatest scientists of the past acknowledged that they were seeking merely to “think God’s thoughts after Him.”

How foolish it is to ignore or to oppose God! There are only four places in the Bible that speak of God laughing (Psalm 2:4; 37:13; 59:8; Proverbs 1:26), and each of them describes His response to such folly.

Instead, we should marvel at all the wonders of His creation and providence. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33).

Our text verse above (Colossians 2:3) is actually referring explicitly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten and eternal Son of God. It is He who has given us access to the Creator God and therefore access to the divine knowledge and understanding. Part of the still-effective dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26, 28) is to learn what we can about God’s creation, always remembering that Jesus insisted that—no matter what unbelievers say—“the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). HMM

Wednesday, August 4

The Lord God of Heaven

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” (Ezra 1:2)

It is noteworthy that the words of this verse are almost the same as in the last verse of 2 Chronicles. This is an indication that Ezra the scribe (who wrote the book of Ezra) was also the compiler and editor of the two books of Chronicles.

Even more noteworthy is the fact that the great emperor Cyrus seemed to acknowledge that the God of Israel was not just a tribal god, as many have claimed, but the Lord God of heaven—that is, *Jehovah Elohim*—recognizing Him as both Creator and Redeemer of the world. The Persians were largely followers of Zoroaster, but his religious system did bear some resemblance to the true monotheism of Israel.

But Cyrus had been called, and even named, by God, long before he was born (Isaiah 44:28–45:6). When he conquered Babylon, the prophet Daniel was there (Daniel 6:28). The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Daniel even became prime minister under Cyrus and was able to read Isaiah’s remarkable prophecy to him, thus influencing him to send the Jews back to Jerusalem.

There have also been other Gentile rulers who acknowledged God, even before Christ came. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, once hating God, finally was forced to confess that He was “the most High” and “King of heaven” (Daniel 4:34, 37). Another was the Queen of Sheba, who recognized “the LORD thy God” (again *Jehovah Elohim*, 1 Kings 10:9). Then there was the king of Nineveh and Assyria, who believed in God at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:6-10). In fact, in the ages to come “the kings of the earth” will all “bring their glory and honour” to the Lord in the holy city (Revelation 21:24). HMM

Thursday, August 5

Practicing What We Preach

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

Christ’s life matched His teachings, and so must ours. Consider, for example, Christ’s teaching that we should “pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). This is matched by His prayer for His tormentors while on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Elsewhere, He taught that our circle of influence should be greater than those of like thinking (Matthew 5:47), a fact that caused His detractors great consternation (Luke 15:2). He taught that our prayers should not be done so that “they may be seen of men” (Matthew 6:5). And the gospels record several times where He went “into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35; see also Mark 6:46). Christ placed great value on children, as we see in Matthew 18:6, and later He welcomed them (Matthew 19:14). He taught Peter to forgive “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22) and later forgave Peter for his continued denials (Mark 16:7).

Christ advocated paying taxes (Mark 12:17) and later enabled Peter to pay tribute for both of them (Matthew 17:27). He taught that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15), and He Himself had “not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). Likewise, He placed great store in aiding the poor (Luke 14:13), both in teaching and in practice (Matthew 14:13-21). Perhaps His teaching “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44) is best illustrated by His tender prayer for those who would soon take His life as He hung on the cross for the very ones responsible for His death (today’s text), all the while dying for them.

May God grant us the strength to follow not only our own teachings, but His teachings as well. JDM

Friday, August 6

Treasures of the Snow

“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?” (Job 38:22)

It is interesting that this book, the oldest in the Bible, contains more references to snow, ice, and frost than any other book of the Bible. This is despite the fact that Job’s homeland was in what is now essentially a desert region. Possibly the effects of the post-Flood Ice Age were still strong in Job’s day.

In any case, the beautiful phrase “treasures of the snow” is both appropriate and prophetic. Its crystal structure, though mostly in the form of delicate six-pointed “stars,” is endlessly varied and always intricately symmetrical and incredibly beautiful.

The snow is a treasure in other ways as well. The winter’s snowpack in the mountains is often called “white gold” because of its indispensable water storage capacity, released in the melting season each spring to provide life to teeming cities and irrigation in the desert for needed food supplies. The snow also aids in maintaining the planet’s chemical cycles by returning various elements in the nuclei of its flakes back from the ocean to the lands from which they were leached and transported by rivers to the oceans. When the snowpack becomes a glacier, it can greatly assist in the breakup of rocks to form fertile soils.

In the Scriptures, its pure white color is often used to symbolize the cleansing of a sinful heart that trusts the Lord. “Wash me,” said David, “and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” the Lord promises those who come to Him for salvation (Isaiah 1:18).

As the snow comes down from heaven, so comes the Word of God to ask the soul as in today’s text: “Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?” (Job 38:22). HMM

Saturday, August 7

He Knows Our Hearts

“Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men).” (2 Chronicles 6:30)

Eight times in Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, he beseeches God to “hear from heaven” (vv. 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33, 35, 39) when His people confess their sins and pray for deliverance. It is marvelous that God, whose “dwelling place” is in heaven (vv. 21, 30, 33, 39) can actually hear the prayers of people here on Earth, but we remember that He is omnipresent through His Holy Spirit.

Even more marvelous, if possible, is the fact that He can hear prayers uttered only in our hearts. But He is also omniscient and thus knows the very thoughts of our hearts.

Then, as we read of Jesus’ wrath at the desecration of the temple by those who would commercialize their religion there, it was said that He “needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (John 2:25). This is direct confirmation that Jesus is God, for only God knows the thoughts of our hearts.

It is a wonderful day when we realize that God knows our hearts. It can be frightening, of course, if our hearts are not right with God, but it can also be of great comfort and exhilaration—it all depends on the thoughts and motivations of our hearts. As David wrote long ago: “Thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalm 139:2).

We need, therefore, to guard our thought life just as much as our social life, “for he knoweth the secrets of the heart” (Psalm 44:21). May God help us to be “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). It is a good thing if our thoughts please Him. HMM

Sunday, August 8

Rejoice in the Lord

*“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”
(Philippians 4:4)*

The Christian has a compelling duty to rejoice. Paul stresses the Christian need to rejoice by using the tense in the Greek that specifies a continuing and habitual action. This instruction follows his mention of otherwise faithful believers in the church who were unfortunately pursuing disharmony and dissension. Believers are reminded to restore broken relationships, follow after harmony, and rejoice.

Perhaps the best reason to rejoice is that all our names are written in the “book of life” (v. 3). This precious book was mentioned from old times as “a book of remembrance...written before him for them that feared the LORD” (Malachi 3:16). Christ mentioned this book as a cause to “rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Our rejoicing will continue throughout eternity, for only “they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27) will be permitted into the Lamb’s presence. Our love for the brethren and our hope for eternity are reasons to rejoice, indeed.

Paul told the Philippian church they were among the reasons for his joy. “I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace” (Philippians 1:7). Those who had a heart for the things of God were important to him. Therefore, “fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (2:2). “For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me” (2:18).

Their joy of fellowship was rooted in the love and service of Christ, as well as His sufferings, “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (3:10). So, rejoice! JDM

Monday, August 9

Loving God's Word

*"Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."
(Psalm 119:140)*

When asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus cited Deuteronomy 6:5: "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." One who loves God must surely also love His Word. God has given the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary means to know God.

Those who love God's pure Word respond to it in obedience and faith. James instructed believers, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

One who loves the Lord and His Word should realize that whenever the Bible says something that a reader may find unsettling, it is because humans fail to understand the infinite wisdom of God. The Lord explained this through the prophet Isaiah: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

One foundational point at which people often fail to trust God's Word concerns the timing of creation. The first example of faith given in Hebrews 11 is "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (v. 3). One who truly believes that "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Exodus 20:11) must also accept the chronological information the Bible provides. These data indicate that Abraham lived about 2,000 years after creation (Genesis 5 and 11), making the earth around 6,000 years old, not billions of years as secular scientists claim. Christians should be known for taking God at His Word and living in obedience to it. WP

Tuesday, August 10

The Hand of the Lord

“This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.” (Ezra 7:6)

Neither Ezra, who was a scribe, nor Nehemiah, who was apparently a butler, had been prepared by either study or experience to supervise a great construction project, rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem and the wall of the city, both of which had been destroyed many years before by the armies of Babylon. Yet God called them to these ministries and led them and protected them as they carried them out.

They were both careful, then, to give God the credit for what they had accomplished. No less than six times in Ezra and twice in Nehemiah they reminded their readers that God’s hand had been upon them as they supervised the work (see Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18-22, 31; Nehemiah 2:8, 18).

There had been many difficulties and much opposition, but as Paul would later say: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

We also need to be careful to give God the credit for anything He enables us to accomplish in His service. Even such a great and useful Christian as the apostle Paul had to say: “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

We remember, however, that the hand of the Lord can be a chastening hand as well as a guiding and providing hand. When a certain false prophet tried “to pervert the right ways of the Lord,” Paul said: “The hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind” (Acts 13:10-11). And so it was. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). HMM

Wednesday, August 11

God Loves the Wicked

“And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.” (Jonah 4:2)

Jonah understood that God loves wicked people. Indeed, our text verse tells us that this was the very reason he ran away from God! Jonah wanted God to destroy the sinful people of Nineveh and feared that God might forgive them if they repented. Ironically, Jonah acted wickedly by disobeying God’s command to preach to the inhabitants because of his lack of compassion for wicked people (Jonah 1:1-3).

Even after Jonah was swallowed by the “great fish” (1:17) and agreed to preach in Nineveh, he still had no love for the city’s cruel inhabitants. As a prophet, Jonah undoubtedly wished to see God’s sinful people of Israel repent and be spared from God’s judgment, but he did not want God’s mercy extended to their enemies. He was furious when God forgave these repentant sinners (4:1). Jonah apparently failed to realize that he needed God’s mercy as much as the people of Nineveh. Praise God that He “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The world is full of wicked people who hate God and His people. God created these sinners in His image (Genesis 1:27). Even though they reject Him and His commands, Jesus loves them and wants them to come to Him for salvation. May every Christian be loving enough to tell people the truth: that they have sinned against their holy Creator and incurred His righteous wrath, “but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). WP

Thursday, August 12

God Our Savior

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.” (Titus 3:4)

Six times in the pastoral epistles Paul refers to God (evidently meaning the Father) as our Savior (1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). Usually, however, he and the other New Testament writers identify Jesus Christ as our Savior. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, for example). In the same fashion, Paul relates that his commission to preach the gospel came from “God our Saviour” (Titus 1:3), while elsewhere he says his commission came “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12).

Is this a contradiction? No! In fact, references to God as our Savior should not surprise us, for it is found in numerous places in the Old Testament. (See, for example, Psalm 106:21.) Furthermore, our understanding of the Trinity insists that all three persons of the Godhead are One in God. Of course, Christ made many references to the fact that He was not acting on His own but came to do “the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). Paul himself seemed to be comfortable with this seeming overlap, for in one sentence he wrote, “God our Saviour;...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 1:3-4). Such usages further confirm also that Jesus is God.

While Christ was the primary instrument of salvation as the perfect sacrifice for sin, God the Father is the source of all human salvation, and the application of the title Savior to Him is proper. Indeed, we derive great comfort as we see the role of all three Persons of the Godhead involved in our salvation.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). JDM

Friday, August 13

The Righteous Judge

“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” (Psalm 145:17)

When Abraham was interceding with God to spare Sodom if even 10 “righteous” people were there, he asked: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). The Hebrew word (*mishpat*) refers to a formal judgment about right and wrong and is more commonly translated “judgment.”

Indeed, the divine Judge will do right and give right judgments in all things, for He “is righteous in all his ways” and “canst not look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13).

Ever since Adam disobeyed the Word of God, however, all his descendants have been unrighteous in their ways. God’s righteous judgment has been that “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Thus, a truly righteous Judge would not only have to consign Sodom to destructive “brimstone and fire from the LORD” (Genesis 19:24) but every one of us as well “into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15) forever.

But God, being not only the righteous Judge but also “a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19), had a plan whereby He could “declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past” and both “be just, and the justifier” of those who had been lost sinners (Romans 3:25-26). “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (8:3). Those who believe on the Son of God as their substitute and Savior are now “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:24).

So, Christ has been “made unto us...righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Furthermore, our loving Savior has now Himself become our righteous Judge, for “the Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). HMM

Saturday, August 14

Questioning God

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Romans 9:20)

Whenever one begins a question with “why,” he should realize that the answer must necessarily be theological, not scientific. Science can deal with the questions of “what” and “how,” sometimes even with “where” and “when,” but never with “why”! The “why” questions have to do with motives and purposes, even when dealing with natural phenomena. (“Why does the earth rotate on its axis?” “Why do we have mosquitoes?”) Even though we can partially explain such things by secondary causes, we finally encounter a “first cause,” and then the “why?” can be answered only by God.

The wise thing to do is simply to believe that He has good reasons for everything, whether we can discern them now or not. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). God the Creator “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11), and it is our high privilege simply to trust Him, not to question Him.

On the other hand, He often asks us: “Why?” “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Jesus asked His disciples when they thought they were in great peril (Matthew 8:26). “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” (John 8:46), He would say to those who question His Word.

Then, to those who doubt His deity, the apostle Paul, speaking in His name, asks: “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). As the popular chorus goes: “God specializes in things thought impossible!” Our God is omniscient and knows what’s best; He is omnipotent, so He can do it. He is all-loving and will surely do what’s best for those who trust Him. HMM

Sunday, August 15

Bewitched

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Galatians 3:1)

The Greek word for “bewitched” is used only this once in the New Testament and does not necessarily refer to witchcraft as such. The connotation is “fascinated” or “deceived.” Unlike most of his other epistles, the book of Galatians includes no commendations from Paul, nor even any prayer requests. Paul evidently was very disappointed in this church and its ministry.

He had clearly preached the gospel to them, setting forth “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2) among them, and they had apparently believed and started out well. They seemed to understand the great doctrines of salvation by grace and of liberty in Christ, and it was hard for Paul to understand how they had been so quickly led astray.

If anything, this is even a greater problem today than in Paul’s day. Professing Christians are being “tossed to and fro... with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14)—not only with legalism (as in Galatia) but also with evolutionism, hedonism, emotionalism, materialism, and many other unscriptural heresies. Many who profess to be Christians have, like the Galatians, been “bewitched” by clever persuasion and peer pressure into such deceptions.

They may consider themselves especially enlightened in some way, or intellectual, or just up-to-date, but Paul would call them “foolish” just as he did the Galatians. In Christ alone—our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord—are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). As Paul concluded his letter to the Galatians: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). HMM

Monday, August 16

Fearing God for Nothing?

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1:9)

Satan’s challenge brings up an important question: Why should a person serve God? His question suggests that Job had no real love for God; his righteous behavior was motivated purely by a desire to receive material blessings.

Job’s friend Eliphaz apparently had precisely the outlook on life that Satan wrongly accused Job of. Eliphaz believed God took no pleasure in human righteousness. He believed a person should serve God purely out of self-interest, a desire that God would reward him with material prosperity (Job 22:2-3, 23-30). God has created the world such that wrongful behavior normally leads to unpleasant consequences while upright behavior normally brings good results (Proverbs 12:21). However, Eliphaz was fundamentally wrong; God did take pleasure in Job’s righteousness (Job 1:8; 42:7).

Death and suffering are results of sin (Romans 5:12). The first people God created rebelled against Him and brought death and suffering into the world (Genesis 3). However, suffering is not necessarily occasioned by a specific sin in the life of the sufferer, as Eliphaz and his two friends seemed to believe.

A person who truly loves God will serve Him in good times and bad times. In this sin-cursed world, sometimes wicked people prosper and righteous people suffer, but Job recognized that perfect justice awaits the day when the Creator returns to Earth (Job 19:25-27). This is probably the reason Job maintained his faith even when God allowed Satan to take everything—including his children and his health.

Job often spoke rashly from his pain (Job 6:1-5; 7:11). Yet his declaration of faith in God is a wonderful example for all believers: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). WP

Tuesday, August 17

Long Enough

“And the LORD spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.” (Deuteronomy 2:2-3)

This was the second time God rebuked Israel for staying too long in one place. Here they were camped adjacent to the region controlled by the descendants of Esau and thus kinsmen of the Israelites, but God told them to go on north toward Canaan.

Long before, they had wanted to stay too long at Mount Sinai (same as Horeb) where God had given the law to Moses. Finally, “the LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:...Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers” (Deuteronomy 1:6, 8).

It is possible for a Christian to become too satisfied with his level of attainment, when the Lord may well have something more for him to do. Possibly, like Israel at Sinai, we may be content to stay in a situation where we have seen God work in the past. Or, like Israel at Edom’s Mount Seir, we want to stay in what we think may be friendly surroundings, rather than venture into overtly enemy territory. Perhaps we have stayed long enough at a certain stage in our Christian growth or service, and God wants us to go further.

Paul wanted to continue preaching near his home in Asia, but God said for him to go on into Europe (Acts 16:6-10). Peter asked Jesus what John was going to do, but Jesus said, “What is that to thee? follow thou me” (John 21:22).

God may, indeed, want us to continue all of our lives right where He has placed us now, as far as location and position are concerned, but He does want us to go on further with Him. The last words written by Peter are profoundly important. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). HMM

The Spiritual Senses

“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Psalm 34:8)

Frequently, Scripture uses our five physical senses in a figurative way to help us comprehend our interaction with the heavenly realm of God’s presence and power.

We can “see,” for example, with spiritual eyes. Paul prayed thus for the believer: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18).

Similarly, we are privileged to hear the voice of the Lord with spiritual ears. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). “A stranger will they not follow,...for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:5).

The sense of touch is the sense of feeling, and God can both touch and be touched. We read, for example, of “a band of men, whose hearts God had touched” (1 Samuel 10:26). Of Jesus Christ, it is said that He is not a remote deity “which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). Even people who never knew Him can perhaps “feel after him, and find him” (Acts 17:27) if they truly desire His great salvation.

We can even become “unto God a sweet savour of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15). To the world, the faithful Christian life and testimony can either be “the savour of death unto death” to those who refuse it, or “the savour of life unto life” (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Finally, we are exhorted actually to taste the Lord and see that He is good! His Word will be, according to our needs, either “sincere milk” (1 Peter 2:2), “strong meat” (Hebrews 5:14), or “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:10). HMM

Thursday, August 19

Jeremiah and Inspiration

“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” (Jeremiah 20:9)

Contained within the books of the Old Testament are nearly three thousand claims to its precise trustworthiness. Over and over again, the various authors claim to be communicating the very words of God.

A number of such claims were recorded by Jeremiah in his book. As we see in our text, Jeremiah was somewhat discouraged with the lack of response to his ministry. But, just as he decided to refrain from passing on God’s Word to the people, he felt an inner burning, recognizing that these words were much too important to ignore. These words had come from God Himself!

On other occasions, he heard the words of God directly and was commanded to pass them on with precision. “Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD’s house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not [literally ‘to shave,’ or ‘to lessen in effect’] a word” (Jeremiah 26:2). This straightforward teaching of verbal inspiration is applied to the written accounts, as well: “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (Jeremiah 30:1-2).

This book, which throughout contains such strong condemnation of falsehood, and which was written over a period of more than two thousand years by numerous authors, yet without any contradiction between these writers, surely is the Word of the eternal, holy God. It is the information our Creator knows we need. JDM

Friday, August 20

The Lord Jehovah

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2)

The English name usually written LORD in English Bibles stems from the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, the meaning of which cannot be fully put into words. Although scholars differ (some even claiming there is no real meaning to the word at all), the consensus is that it seems to be a compound of the three tenses of the Hebrew verb “to be,” implying the ever-living nature of God to which Christ was referring when He said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). Note also the similar implications in God’s announcement of Himself to Moses: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14).

On 49 special occasions (seven times seven), the name *Jehovah* is contracted to *Jah*. Many consider this to be an abbreviation of *Jehovah*, but no satisfactory explanation as to why it is so used has been offered. Perhaps a better suggestion is that this name is the present tense of the verb “to be,” and therefore the name *Jah* emphasizes the present activity of the Lord. In nearly all occurrences, the passages are strengthened by noting the present work of God. The first usage of the term *Jah* is found in Miriam’s Song upon deliverance from Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea. “The LORD [*Jah*] is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation” (Exodus 15:2).

On several occasions, such as in our text, we see that the two names are combined, celebrating both the present and future deliveries of *Jah Jehovah*. “Trust ye in the LORD [*Jehovah*] for ever: for in the LORD [*Jah*] JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (Isaiah 26:4). JDM

Saturday, August 21

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

From very ancient times it has been the custom to confirm and guarantee an agreed-on purchase by sealing the contract with a seal that could only be broken by the buyer when he was ready to take possession of his purchase.

The marvelous transaction seen by John at God’s throne in heaven was in reference to this practice. There, only the Lamb is found worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll on which is recorded the title to the whole creation. “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the [scroll], and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). The purchase price had been paid on Calvary, and the resurrected Lamb had come to claim His possession.

And we are part of that possession! The price has been paid for our redemption from sin’s bondage, but we have not yet entered on the inheritance which our great Redeemer has promised us. In the meantime, our individual title deed, as it were, has been sealed by none other than the Holy Spirit. He is not only the seal, but also the “earnest”—that is, the down payment, the earnest money—who guarantees the total “redemption of the purchased possession.”

His personal presence in our lives is our assurance that the full promise will be fulfilled, and we are urged to “grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). He “hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:22). HMM

Sunday, August 22

The Face of Jesus Christ

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

The light that shines in the soul of a lost sinner when he first comes to know Jesus Christ can only be compared to the light that Christ called forth on Day One of the creation week. We met this God of glory spiritually when we first beheld in our hearts the face of Jesus Christ.

But the face of Jesus Christ was not always deemed so glorious. We read of a time when ungodly men “did...spit in his face” (Matthew 26:67), then took a blindfold “to cover his face” (Mark 14:65), and finally with a rain of terrible blows “struck him on the face” (Luke 22:64). Once His “countenance [was] as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars” (Song of Solomon 5:15), but when they finished their assault, “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14).

“The face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12), however, and the time is coming very soon when all those who have turned their faces from Him will call “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:16). When finally they will have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in all its consuming strength, not even the world itself could stand, “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away” (Revelation 20:11).

For those who have looked on Him in faith, however, this will not be a time of judgment but blessing, for “they shall see his face” (Revelation 22:4). The face of Jesus Christ, fierce as devouring fire to those He must judge, is glorious in beauty and love to those who believe. HMM

Monday, August 23

Offering Willingly

“Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.”
(1 Chronicles 29:9)

As the people brought gifts for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, it is mentioned no less than six times in this chapter that their offerings were willing offerings (once in verses 6 and 14, twice each in verses 9 and 17). In fact, they were not only willing but also joyful in their giving.

Joyful giving is not the usual response to a fundraising effort for a religious cause. The great proliferation of causes today—not only for churches but for multi-church or para-church projects, usually associated with high-pressure solicitations by professional money-raisers—has developed a growing cynicism in Christians toward all such appeals.

That is not the way it should be, “for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). The churches of Macedonia, though going through “a great trial of affliction” and in “deep poverty,” nevertheless “abounded unto the riches of their liberality,” and they did so in “the abundance of their joy” (2 Corinthians 8:2). What made the difference was that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

No doubt another vital factor leading to the joyful offerings of the people for the building of the temple was the example set by David’s great personal joyful generosity, followed by that of all the other leaders of Israel (1 Chronicles 29:3-8). This encouraged the people also to give “with perfect heart” (today’s verse). They had evidently, like the Philippians of Macedonia, also first given themselves to the Lord. David had led them by example, not coercion, reminding himself and his people as he prayed a prayer of thanksgiving that “all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). HMM

Our Rock of Salvation

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Here in the song of Moses, which God instructed him to write for the children of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land (note Deuteronomy 31:19), is the first of at least 40 references in the Bible to God as the Rock. There are four others just in this song. In verse 15, He is the “Rock of [Israel’s] salvation.” In verse 18, He is “the Rock that begat thee.” See also verses 30 and 31.

Note some of the other wonderful metaphors picturing God as our great foundation stone. He is “my strong rock” in Psalm 31:2 and “the rock that is higher than I” in Psalm 61:2. In Psalm 62:7, He is “the rock of my strength” and “the rock of my refuge” in Psalm 94:22. Isaiah calls Him “a great rock in a weary land” and “the rock whence ye are hewn” (Isaiah 32:2; 51:1).

During the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites were supplied continually with water from the rock, and the apostle Paul tells us “that spiritual Rock that followed them...was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). And, of course, Christ told His disciples that Peter’s confession of Himself as the “Son of the living God” was the Rock upon which He would build His church (Matthew 16:16, 18).

But to unbelievers He is “the stone which the builders rejected” (Matthew 21:42), “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word” (1 Peter 2:8). “Therefore,” said Jesus, “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24-25). HMM

Wednesday, August 25

Preaching the Resurrection

“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:33)

There are multitudes today who believe that Christ’s resurrection was a “spiritual” resurrection, insisting that the idea of a dead body returning to life after three days in the grave is completely unscientific and impossible.

This was not what the apostles preached with great grace and great power, however. They would hardly have been excited about any kind of spiritual resurrection, since everyone—both Jews and the pagan Gentiles—believed in life after death. If that was their message, no one would have doubted, and no one would have cared. Even when the disciples saw the resurrected Christ, they first “supposed that they had seen a spirit” (Luke 24:37). Christ even had to urge them to “handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39).

When the disciples finally became convinced of His bodily resurrection, they were quickly transformed into courageous evangelists, willing even to die in support of their glorious message of salvation. The resurrection was, indeed, contrary to scientific law and all human experience, and this very fact proved to them that their Lord was Himself the divine lawgiver and author of all human experience. All other founders and leaders of human religions, ancient or modern, are themselves subject to death, but He alone has triumphed over death. Only the Creator of life can conquer death, and the resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is Creator as well as Savior.

Therefore, when we today, like the apostles of old, proclaim the resurrection of Christ, we know that His name is above every name, and this enables us also to witness with great power, in great grace. HMM

Thursday, August 26

Our Rock: The Creator

“Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.” (Deuteronomy 32:18)

Just before his death, Moses predicted the coming apostasy of Israel in a prophetic “history” of Israel. Not only did his prophecy come true for the nation of Israel, but the same could be said for much of Western Christianity today.

Moses recounted the fact that Israel had been blessed greatly of the Lord, but instead of drawing closer to Him, they grew “fat, and...Forsook God which made [them], and lightly esteemed the Rock of [their] salvation” (Deuteronomy 32:15). The use of the term “rock” refers to the rock that Moses struck, yielding water to sustain them in the parched desert region. The rock followed the people on their journeys and provided an ever-present reminder of God’s marvelous provision. (If one should further doubt as to the identity of the Rock, “that Rock was Christ,” 1 Corinthians 10:4.) They totally forgot, however, the God of their creation and salvation, and sacrificed to demons, old gods, and to any new gods around (Deuteronomy 32:17).

God has given us life, and without His daily sustenance all life would cease. How foolish it is to attempt to live life without the One “that begat” us—who gave us life and even now maintains it. All too often the Creator God is excluded from our churches, our government, and our schools. Even many Christians live their lives as practical atheists, making decisions and living their lives just as if no God exists. Let us recommit ourselves to giving the rightful place in our lives and in our sphere of influence to “the Rock that begat” us.

“I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). JDM

Friday, August 27

Always

“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:20)

A favorite old song of many senior citizens (of this writer, at least) is the sentimental “I’ll be loving you—always” ballad written long ago by Irving Berlin. The sincerity of some who sing it may be questioned, but the many “always” promises of the Bible really mean it. Consider a few of these precious promises, for example.

The apostle Paul urges believers to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). And to the same Corinthian church he later wrote: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Then there is that other tremendous promise in the same epistle: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). The greatest such promise is that in our text, when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself promised that “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

These are also a number of very important exhortations in the Scriptures involving an “always” type of commitment. For example, Jesus said “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). That is, never give up praying just because the answer seems a long time coming. Furthermore, Paul says that we should be “giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

Then, we are to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). Finally, there is the command to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). HMM

Saturday, August 28

The Apple of the Eye

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” (Zechariah 2:8)

This common phrase is often used to identify an object of one’s special favor or affection. The apple of the eye, of course, is not a fruit but the pupil of the eye, so essential for sight that it becomes a peculiarly apt symbol for a prized possession. It is used five times in the Bible as a translation of three different Hebrew nouns, none of which refer to the actual apple fruit. In each case, however, it speaks of something highly valuable to the owner.

Three of these (Deuteronomy 32:10; Lamentations 2:18; and our text above) are in reference to the chosen people, Israel, as the “apple of the eye” of God Himself. God has often punished Israel for her sins and has allowed other nations to be His rod of judgment, but woe to that nation that touches the apple of His eye in this way!

That individual believers can also be so regarded by the Lord is evident from one of David’s prayers: “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness....Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings” (Psalm 17:7-8).

To be kept by God as He would keep the very apple of His own eye requires an implicit trust in Him and His Word. In fact, His Word must become the apple of our eye! “My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye” (Proverbs 7:1-2).

There are many beautiful and appropriate figures used for God’s Word (“light,” “hammer,” “sword,” “milk,” etc.) but none more personally meaningful than this. May the holy Scriptures, the indispensable Word of God, truly be the apple of the eye for each of us. HMM

Sunday, August 29

The Weight of the Wind

“For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure.” (Job 28:24-25)

It was only discovered by scientists in modern times that the air actually has weight. This passage in Job, however, written 35 or more centuries ago, indicated that the two great terrestrial fluids of air and water forming Earth’s atmosphere and hydrosphere are both “weighed” by God’s careful “measure” to provide the right worldwide balance of forces for life on Earth.

Another remarkable “weighing” act of God is noted in Job 37:16: “Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?” Clouds are composed of liquid drops of water, not water vapor, and water is heavier than air, so how are they “balanced” in the sky? “For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distill upon man abundantly” (Job 36:27-28).

Meteorologists know that the weight of the small water droplets in the clouds is “balanced” by the “weight of the winds”—air rushing upward in response to temperature changes. Eventually, however, the droplets coalesce to form larger drops that overcome these updrafts and fall as rain. “By watering he wearieth the thick cloud” (Job 37:11). The coalescence is probably triggered electrically in the clouds themselves, “when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder” (Job 28:26).

Although these verses are not couched in the jargon of modern science, they are thoroughly scientific and up to date. “Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?” (Job 26:14). HMM

Showing the Way of Salvation

“The same [a demon-possessed servant girl] followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.”
(Acts 16:17)

Paul and Luke first witnessed to European unbelievers in Philippi and saw them wonderfully converted (v. 14), but a young “soothsayer” continually interrupted them, mocking and interfering. Paul cast out the controlling spirit of divination (v. 18), denying her owners their source of income. In retribution, they convinced the city leaders to have them brutally flogged and thrown into the innermost prison (v. 24).

But God had other plans. A mighty earthquake seemingly freed them, causing the jailer to prefer suicide rather than face capital charges for his “offense.” Paul intervened, and the jailer desperately pled, “What must I do to be saved?” (v. 30).

What would cause a Roman official in a decidedly pagan culture, who had heard little (if anything) of the truth, to abruptly turn to God for salvation? Certainly the earthquake had captured his attention, as had Paul’s behavior through his trail and abuse, but what made him think the truth was with Paul? Why did he ask for salvation from an incarcerated prisoner?

Perhaps during the trial he had heard of the slave girl’s testimony. In our text she had exclaimed, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” Was this ringing testimony, given in derision but heard nonetheless, involved in his decision?

We can’t know for sure, but we do know that this was the introduction of the gospel to Europe. Surely God’s ultimate plan can be seen in the events at Philippi that day. Even the unknowing truth from a demonic soothsayer contained lasting truth. Christians should never hesitate to declare gospel truth, for God will not allow it to go unheeded (Isaiah 55:11). JDM

Tuesday, August 31

Early Risers

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

One of the best ways to meet the Lord is to rise up early in the morning, before activities of the day can interfere. This apparently was the practice of Jesus Himself.

There are also many other occurrences in the Bible: “Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD” (Genesis 19:27). In order to set up an altar, “Jacob rose up early in the morning” (Genesis 28:18). When Moses gave the people the laws of God, he “wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill” (Exodus 24:4). Later, when he was to receive the commandments a second time, “Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai” (Exodus 34:4). “Joshua rose early in the morning” to lead Israel over the Jordan, and then to capture Jericho; and to take Ai, “Joshua rose up early in the morning” (Joshua 3:1; 6:12; 8:10).

During the time of the Judges, Gideon “rose up early on the morrow” to prove God’s will through putting out the fleece (Judges 6:38). Hannah and Elkanah, in praying for the son who would later become Samuel, “rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD” (1 Samuel 1:19).

No doubt there are justifiable exceptions, but late sleeping is in general not a good thing. “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?...he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame” (Proverbs 6:9; 10:5). It is good to seek the Lord early each day. “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Proverbs 8:17). “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psalm 5:3). HMM



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