

“...And he said unto me...worship God: for...

THE TESTIMONY

...of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:10

VERSE OF THE MONTH

“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Heb. 3:6

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THE HARVEST SOON...

The summer heat is lifting now, and soft the breezes blow,
And little changes in the leaves that give us all to know
That Summer season will give way to Fall, and this will mean
That change is in the air as we behold *the harvest scene.*

The reapers have now waited long and watched the growing fields.
The husbandmen have used their skills to increase the harvest yields.
And as the day approaches, and they look across the land,
They see the signs in every field—the harvest just at hand!

“My Father is the husbandman,” the Bible plainly speaks;
“He waiteth for the precious fruit.” (The souls of men He seeks.)
He “hath long patience for it...” the Word of God declares.
His calls go out to fallen man; His love He gladly shares.

Oh, careless soul! Wilt thou not heed the invitation sent?
Wilt thou not come to Christ before the day of grace is spent?
The Heavenly Reapers soon will come and thrust the sickle in,
And reap the harvest of the earth! Where will your soul be *then?*

Oh, sober thought! So many signs! The day approaches fast!
The fleeting things of temporal life will be removed at last!
The prophecies will be fulfilled! 'Twill be “just as He said.”
All will be judged—*the harvest past!* The living and the dead!

Christ is our Savior! And from Him all grace and mercy flows!
What He endured that we might live—only our Jesus knows!
The Harvest time is set, the reapers fly from pole to pole,
Yet He has giv'n protection for each *believing* soul.

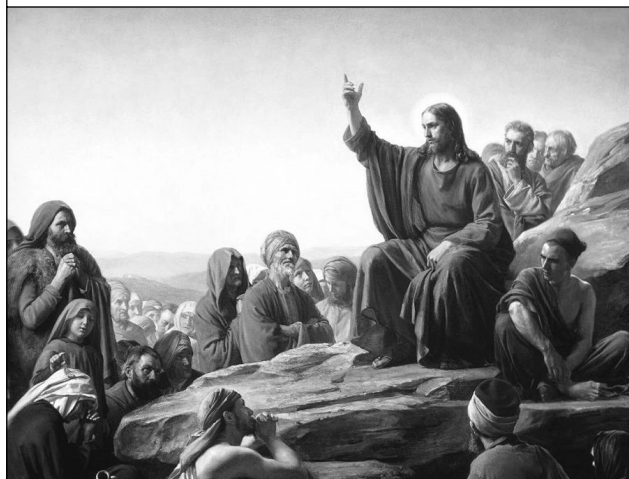
The Cross stands tall, and at its foot may all our sins be laid,
And let us worship Him who has such rich provision made!
Oh, haste to seek Him early lest your sun go down at noon!
Let all fear God and seek His face! Wake All!—the Harvest soon!

Lowell Miller

THE TESTIMONY

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“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
Matt. 11:29-30

EDITORIAL

**FAITH, CHARACTER,
DESTINY**

Words are wonderful things. We use words to describe words. We use words to define words. So what do the three words in the title have in common? At first glance, it appears that they are miles apart. What they have in common, however, is that each one asks a very important question. Faith: What do I believe? Character: Who am I? Destiny: Where am I going? Three very important questions indeed.

Faith is indeed the most important. Without it, it is impossible to please God. Without faith our character is all over the map. Faith develops our character. Faith determines our destiny. I hear Jesus tell a loving, heartbroken woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee." That woman in Luke 7 put her faith in the right person. She placed it in the right thing. What a person believes is precious and important to him or her. Some men put their faith in their political ideologies; others in their religious ideologies; others proudly look to their own intellects: they believe in themselves. However, I want a faith that builds Christian character; one that points to a pure and eternal destiny.

Quite a few years ago, a goodly number of us in our church district participated in a multi-session exercise called "The Truth Project."

Of the many good things that stimulated our hearts, one phrase still stands out today. It goes something like this, "Do you believe that what you say you believe, is really real?" Is Jesus real to you, or does He remain a rather vague concept? Is He someone we hear about on Sunday, but is largely forgotten through the week? Believing that He is really real, that is, alive in our hearts, will mold our characters into something positive and sweet. God's plan all along was to have His Son be the firstborn (a legal term) of many brethren who would be conformed to the very image of this Son of God. Romans 8 describes this process of God's foreknowledge right on through to glorification (destiny). Christian character is developed all along the way.

How then do we describe good Christian character? Maybe we should rather ask, "What does it look like?" Look closely at the life of Jesus. In Acts 10:38, Simon Peter describes Jesus in a sermon with these words, "He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Jesus had a health producing character. He was an uplifter. Those who came to Him with open minds went away blessed. They were uplifted. Burdens were made lighter, life became easier. Unlike the religious rulers of Jesus' day who bound heavy burdens and grievous

to be borne, Jesus said His yoke was easy and His burden light. Jesus made life better for those around Him. Jesus did not waste time complaining about the sinfulness of man; He just kept busy preaching good things, promoting good things; making the world a brighter, lovelier place. He invited men to follow Him and make life easier and better also. He showed us how to be uplifters. There is nothing sweeter than a joyful, fruitful, generous man or woman who is cheerful, wholesome and upright because they believe that Jesus is really real. He is a Man of

no ill will. Such an uplifter! What a beautiful, perfect model to follow. Life isn't always easy, but His burden is always light. No one can ease the pain like Jesus.

So, in conclusion, faith in Christ builds character; character causes good things to happen, and the destiny that it defines is out of this world. Jesus is really real, and I hope that you are enjoying your journey with Him through life. His destiny is secure.

Written with love and appreciation for a Savior like Jesus,

Phil King

GENERAL

TWO KINGDOMS

Committee Note: This writing will be continued in several issues because of its length. We would encourage the reader to take time to read each section so that the whole is understood. The message is vital.

The principle of Two Kingdoms is a central theme of Scripture and is especially important for believers to understand. Christians practice their faith in different ways, but an understanding of this principle will ultimately define their foundation for consistency in the practice of separation. It is the sole principle that defines the believer's place in the world and provides a scriptural basis for the proper practice of separation from the world.

Some have observed that an understanding of the Two King-

doms is one of the more difficult concepts to satisfactorily explain to neighbors who do not share our Christian perspective. Yet when viewed in relationship to both the natural and spiritual realms, a fundamental principle is revealed. It is one that authenticates and sustains the biblical approach that Brethren take when responding to the government of our land. It is one every believer should fully comprehend and espouse.

Why don't we fly the flag? Why don't we join the army? Why don't we vote? The answers for these questions emerge from the concepts we will consider.

Kingdom Characteristics

There are four characteristics that define each natural kingdom. One can observe that these traits relate to all kingdoms, irrespective of the technical name or form of

government under which they operate. These are intrinsic features, distinct and essential in every earthly kingdom.

First, there is a king, a ruler. Although many natural kingdoms do not have formal monarchs, each kingdom does have a person who holds executive authority and is the figurehead of government. He may be called a king, president, prime minister, sheik, tsar, etc. In strict monarchies this person defines the law, and his character and values become impressed upon the whole kingdom. He is the authority, the judge whose decisions are final, and the one whose rule is absolute. In these governments, the king shares his authority with no one and bears total responsibility for the well-being of his kingdom.

The second fundamental character of a kingdom is the realm, or the locale that is governed. It is the sphere in which the authority of the king is established and acknowledged. A map would identify this area as the geographical sphere of the kingdom. Outside the borders of this realm other authorities may exist, but within the boundaries of the realm, the king's authority is sustained.

The third attribute necessary for a kingdom is that it has subjects. Without them there would be no kingdom. These are the citizens who make their home within the realm and are governed and influenced by the king and the laws he establishes. In return for their loyalty and contribution to the kingdom, subjects share in the

benefits (or deficiencies) that proceed from the king and his government.

Finally, the fourth aspect required of a kingdom is a purpose. The purpose of a kingdom is closely tied to the person of the king, the land in which he lives, and the people over whom he reigns. It is important to observe how a kingdom's purpose is typically defined by the personal character and vision of the king. A good king is a ruler who demonstrates a prudent concern for his subjects and governs justly, establishing and enforcing laws that are beneficial for his people. Contrariwise, an evil king is one who rules with selfish intents. Many historical examples exist depicting those who ruled solely for their own enrichment, with little concern for their subjects. Men have long despised such self-centered rulers and history has justly branded them as oppressive tyrants.

It is obvious that the four characteristics of any kingdom are a king, a realm, subjects, and a purpose. All kingdoms in the natural world possess these attributes, but our topic is really the Two Kingdoms defined by Scripture. Though they are spiritual realms, they are real kingdoms, being the prototypes for those in the natural realm. One is called the Kingdom of This World; the other is the Kingdom of Heaven. Do they meet the same four-characteristic criteria?

Let us begin with the Kingdom of This World. Notice the scriptural title, "The Kingdom of..." As

used here, the word “of” denotes origin. The Kingdom of This World originated in this world. Isaiah and Ezekiel chronicle the fall of Lucifer from heaven to earth, and the first chapters of Genesis tell how he proceeded to found the Kingdom of This World by tempting and seducing Adam and Eve in the garden. This kingdom is peculiarly connected to This World and possesses all the attributes of a kingdom.

In parallel with the first kingdom characteristic, there is a king, who is Satan, Lucifer, the devil. Scripture reveals how he established himself as the sole ruler in this realm by usurping authority from heaven and conveying it to earth. His acknowledged plan has been to establish himself as the uncontested ruler of This World, exercising the dominion originally promised to man.

This king’s sphere of influence, his realm, is the heavens and the earth. Ephesians 2 calls him “the prince of the power of the air,” implying that the sphere he governs includes the entire world. It is the territory he has pirated away from the rightful King of the Kingdom of Heaven. When Satan met our Lord in the desert, he offered “all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” if He would bow down and worship him (Matt. 4). Notice that our Lord did not rebuke Satan’s assertion of possessing and controlling This World. Such authority and command is plainly his prerogative as king over his realm, and clearly

includes all the natural kingdoms.

Does this king have subjects? Scripture teaches that Satan secured allegiance from some of the angels in heaven. We also know he interfered in Eden, enticing Adam to follow his deceptive way. By choosing to follow Satan, Adam rebelled against the God of heaven and aligned himself with the king of This World. Hence, the subjects of the Kingdom of This World are the angels who follow Satan and all the descendants of Adam. All the children of Adam have their citizenship in this kingdom by birth. This is an important concept.

Satan has an avowed purpose for his kingdom, and it is defined by his personage and nature. In Isaiah 14 Satan said, “I will be like the most High.” He desires to be a copycat god and has established himself as a king with purposes that are counterproductive to all that God has designed for His followers. Referring to Satan, our Lord says that “... he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8). The characteristics of the Kingdom of This World revolve around this personal attribute of Satan, for he has impressed his evil character upon all aspects of his kingdom.

In view of the scriptural revelation concerning the real character of the Kingdom of This World, why do men not desert this realm? The answer becomes plain as one reviews the era of the 1950’s to the 1980’s. During much of this time communist governments ruled a good share of Asia and portions of Europe. History exposes how the

citizens of those lands were held in such great oppression that they had little physical ability to reach the border. In addition, when some were able to get near the boundary, they found it mined, fenced, and guarded by troops who prevented their access to freedom. But another issue is more important. Throughout all those years, the citizens living under those regimes were also held in mental bondage. They were taught that their governments were unsurpassed and the kingdoms around them were to be despised and hated. Information was restricted and the citizens of those lands were brainwashed by their governments in an effort to prevent them from desiring to leave their native countries. Understanding the natural technique used in recent time helps us comprehend why many do not leave the Kingdom of This World, for Satan employs the same method to control his subjects.

In contrast to the Kingdom of This World, consider the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, remember the word “of” denotes origin; it is the kingdom that originates in heaven. When our Lord came to bring an understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven and to acquaint us with Himself, He said, “...I came down from heaven...Ye are from beneath; I am from above” (John 6 and 8). He further declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18). Does His kingdom include all the important characteristics of a kingdom? Let us examine.

Does the Kingdom of Heaven possess a king? Absolutely. Jesus Christ is the only Potentate, the only King. He claimed to be such when He stood before Pilate and said, “...I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18). This statement was a significant factor contributing to His condemnation and crucifixion at the hands of the Roman and Jewish governments. It is evident that Scripture declares Jesus Christ as King of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Is there a realm? Yes, it is all the heavens and everything they encompass, including the sphere of the earth. Even though a portion of this sphere has been usurped, and for a time is under the control of another king, the Kingdom of Heaven ultimately encompasses the whole of the heavens and the earth. It is here that He will eventually assert His regal majesty and complete authority, establishing a perfect kingdom.

Are there subjects? Once again, there are all the holy angels and there are also men who have chosen to follow Him as their King. They are the ones who have succeeded in changing their citizenship, escaping from the Kingdom of This World by choosing to submit themselves to the authority of the Righteous King. (This process will be explained later.)

Is there a purpose for the Kingdom of Heaven? Certainly. One can sift through Scripture and repeatedly find that the purpose of

the King of the Kingdom of Heaven emphasizes the eternal good of His subjects. The Lord and His apostles speak of this often. The desire of our Lord is to bring “many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2) by first bringing His followers into a relationship with the Father whereby He can share the blessings of His glory with them (Eph. 1 and 2).

This King further defines His kingdom by impressing His attributes onto the whole government of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the one who witnessed, “I am...the truth” (John 14) and declared, “...that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18). This personal character of the King of Truth explicitly distinguishes the Kingdom of Heaven. When Pilate heard this pronouncement he asked, “What is truth?” Pilate recognized the glaring disparity between his own experience in the Kingdom of This World (where lies, untruthfulness, and political intrigue helped place him in power) and the claims of the Lord Jesus for His kingdom based upon truth. Further, the upright laws defined by the King in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) and the moral character that He exposed through the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 13) declare the righteousness and purity of this kingdom.

If the King of the Kingdom of Heaven is so regal, glorious, magnanimous, and One who loves His subjects as Scripture testifies, why

do men not seek His kingdom? Perhaps there are several reasons. First, the king under whom they have grown up has blinded their minds. They have been brainwashed to the point many do not even recognize that there is a Kingdom of Heaven. Second, those who do catch a glimpse of the glory of His kingdom must decide whether to continue living in the immediate, physical sphere, or to abandon the natural realm and take hold of the invisible and spiritual. Too many are willing to select what is visible in the temporal realm rather than the things they may concede to be true in the eternal, spiritual realm. They willfully turn away from the King Who may require something of their hearts even though He would reward them greatly for their allegiance. Their desire rises no higher than to serve the master they know best, the one under whom they have grown up. This is willful unbelief, an intellectual choice influenced by the tangibles of life and made against the evidence and the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. Unfortunately, countless men have chosen this path.

Now that the characteristics of the Two Kingdoms have been considered, note the interaction between them. Scripture teaches that these Two Kingdoms have been in conflict from the onset of their history, and the same struggle is actively continuing today. This dramatic universal conflict is between the rulers of these Two

Kingdoms as well as their subjects. It is a battle for the allegiance of the hearts and minds of all mankind. Which kingdom will prevail and rule upon the earth throughout the future?

Satan has consistently opposed and attempted to thwart the King of Heaven. Scripture recounts how he first drew part of the angels with him from heaven. He boldly approached our first parents in the garden, yet God graciously followed by intervening with a sacrifice. We know how Satan worked on men in Noah's day and how he approached Abraham and each of the patriarchs. In every age, when God has graciously provided a redemptive covenant, Satan has attempted to erect blockades to frustrate the progress of faith. Satan's violent attacks have been sent repeatedly against God's people from the time of Moses until Jesus appeared. Not only were his efforts to confound the people of God, they were attempts to thwart the King Himself by attacking all aspects of His redemptive plan.

When God moved to show His great power by sending His own Son into the midst of the Kingdom of This World, Satan actually brought the battle directly to the King Himself—and lost. At the time of the cross Jesus said, "Now is the judgement of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12). Scripture teaches that on the cross a transaction was accomplished in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus

that eternally precluded the ability of Satan to make unhindered inroads upon the authority of God. Finite minds have difficulty grasping infinite truth, but the effects of Calvary are openly evident in Scripture and in the lives of the redeemed. This truth is real.

In spite of the cross, Satan has not yet conceded defeat. From the time of Pentecost to the current age, the Church has continued to suffer the attacks of Satan. His fiery darts have often been hurled against believers. Many have been imprisoned, stoned, burnt, or even beheaded. Do not even we feel the pressure of his attacks? He is still violently pursuing the representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven in order to inflict damage to their King. (Remember how the Lord addressed Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?") Yet believers now live in an age blessed with the available power of the indwelling Spirit who will protect, fortify, and enable each one to obtain a personal victory in the struggle against Satan and cosmic moral evil.

Scripture reveals that a day will come when the Church will be taken home to heaven. After this, Satan will unleash his severe wrath against God's chosen people, the Jews, as they are again brought into the pinpoint focus of God's program. It will be a terrible time when the king of This World will overtly assert his power against any who represent God or His purpose. This period will culminate when the Lord Jesus literally in-

tervenes as King to deliver His people and physically establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. There will immediately be ushered in a kingdom of peace and righteousness lasting for 1,000 years. In spite of this, Scripture discloses that after this millennial reign of Jesus Christ, there will be one last attempt on the part of the king of This World to set himself up as the final ruler before he is eternally defeated and “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20).

There are Two Kingdoms. Yet we have the advantage of being able to read the last chapter of the Book and know that our King triumphs in the end. Victory for the Kingdom of Heaven is assured. Power and right and truth and might are all on the side of the King of the Kingdom of Heaven. Knowing He will prevail leaves one intensely important personal question to be answered. Of which kingdom are you a part?

Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. (John 19:19).

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:16).

To be continued...

David Rumble

“THERE IS A HAPPY LAND, NOT FAR AWAY”

No one has ever been to heaven to return to tell of its glory. No one has even seen a glimpse of the glory of heaven. The Apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven (but not into it), into Paradise which is somewhere near to heaven. As a child and youth, we sang song number 494 in our collection, of a place “far, far away”—too far and too obscure to imagine. We can think of what heaven might be like, but we cannot imagine its glory. The heaven we shall experience doesn’t even exist yet, for in the Revelation we read that God will (future) create a new heaven. Whatever exists now shall pass away. Isaiah (66:22) hints at a new heaven and a new earth. “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD...” We read of a new heaven in Revelation 21:1. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven [Gen. 1:8] and the first earth [Gen. 1:10] were passed away; and there was no more sea [a blessing to John surrounded by sea on the little Isle of Patmos].”

In addition, we read in the Revelation (21:2) of a new Jerusalem. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In Revelation 3:12 we read, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God [Jesus Himself refers to “My God.”], and he

shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." A new heaven. A new city. The old is passed away. From these Scriptures (Old and New) we understand that whatever exists now will have served its purpose and there will be a new heaven and a new city of God coming down out of heaven. What little we know of heaven now will then be superseded in that new heaven and that new Jerusalem. In thinking then of heaven, how can we imagine the glory of a place that does not yet exist?

Paul in I Corinthians 15:40 distinguishes the terrestrial from the celestial. Terrestrial pertains to the earth, including its immediate atmosphere where birds fly. The atmosphere is the first heaven. In Genesis 1:6–8 we read, "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven." By firmament we understand a vast space, the visible arch called sky; the "heaven" where the sun, moon, planets, and stars are. This is the celestial—the second heaven.

But even back in the Old Testament we read of another heaven—that place where God dwells. From ancient times man understood the concept of three heavens. As early as Deuteronomy 10:14 we read, "Behold, the heaven [2nd] and the

heaven of heavens [3rd] is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also [1st], with all that therein is." Here we see the celestial (the sky), the heaven of heavens (the Spirit world), and the terrestrial (the earth and its immediate atmosphere). The first, second, and third, heavens.

So, Paul could write in II Corinthians 12:2 "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... such an one caught up to [but not into] the third heaven." Paul was "...caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Paradise is near the heaven of heavens. Paul was caught into Paradise but not into the third heaven where God resides. Though Jesus once said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The first and second heavens we understand. From paradise Paul was able to hear things but wasn't permitted to record what he heard. Was it Superhuman voices praising God? Whatever Paul saw and heard shall pass away! Why? We don't know—except that God has said, as early as the writings of Isaiah, that the old (present) heaven shall be no more, and there will be a new heaven and earth (Why a new earth?) and a new City of God. We anticipate that place, but why do we stretch our imagination for a place that doesn't even exist yet!

Most of us would like to know something of what heaven will be like. One of the dearest promises

left to us by Jesus is found in John 14:2–3 “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” We understand this to be heaven. Jesus was a carpenter before He launched His Galilean ministry. Can we not trust the Master Carpenter to build and furnish a dwelling place called Heaven, suitable for us to spend eternity?

Some have contemplated the size of heaven. In Revelation 21:15–17 we read, “And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.” We envision a cube having four equal sides. I used to hear brothers say that since a furlong is approximately 660 feet, a cube of 12,000 furlongs on a side would be about 1,500 miles square. They said heaven would be almost 3.4 Billion cubic miles in size. One brother even divided this by an estimated population of the earth for all time and came up with an approximate area each person could occupy in heaven! All such calculations are futile! John recorded measurements in terms his readers could comprehend, but God is not sub-

ject to measurement, either in space or time. The human mind cannot conceive space without bounds, length without end, width immeasurable, height without limits, time (or timelessness) without finish, nor sizelessness, nor eternity. John wrote what he could, but he could not describe heaven in terms of human understanding.

Furthermore, those measurements were of the city only. But John wrote in Revelation 21:2: “I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In Revelation 21:10 we read, “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God...” The city is four-square. The city occupies 3.375 Billion cubic miles. But that is only the City of God. That doesn’t include Heaven. Heaven will be far more enormous than the city. Heaven is immeasurable. There is no limit to Heaven. But Solomon said in II Chronicles 2:6, “...the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him...” God has no limits. With Him there is neither space nor time. Which is why we, as humans, cannot comprehend eternity, nor space, nor heaven, nor God.

Another thing that bothers some is this—will we know one another there? We have a hymn in our collection which reads, “When we hear the music ringing in the

bright celestial dome, When sweet angel voices, singing, gladly bid us welcome home to the land of ancient story, where the spirit knows no care, in that land of light and glory, shall we know each other there?" The author, Robert Lowery, poses further questions: "Shall we see the same eyes shining on us as in days of yore? Shall we feel their dear arms twining fondly round us as before?" Lowery concludes: "Yes, my earth-worn soul rejoices, and my weary heart grows light, for the thrilling angel voices, and the angel faces bright, that shall welcome us in heaven, are the loved of long ago; and to them 'tis kindly given, thus their mortal friends to know."

I have heard expressions by brothers and sisters in the past both of appreciation and dislike for this hymn. It touches differing chords for those who have fond relationships here, those who have painful memories, and those who have had more than one affectionate, spiritual bond in marriage. With all empathy for the heart of each, and attempting to lay aside, for the moment, all cherished earth-bound ties, I believe that we shall know each other there. Not as we know one another here—with all the faults, idiosyncrasies, and peculiarities that this flesh is heir to—but we shall know one another there as God knows us. We get a glimpse sometimes, a view into the very soul of a very dearly loved one. But when we get

to heaven we will see as God sees, understand as God understands, and embrace one another as God embraces each and every soul. When considering whether we will know each other personally there, think of this. When Jesus was nearing the unspeakable suffering at the end of His life, to strengthen Him the Father sent two special messengers, not just angels, but two men who talked with Him "...which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." At that moment heaven came down to earth. The Shekinah of God shone around in white glistening raiment. Peter, James, and John had never seen those men before. But they knew them by name! That was about as close to heaven as anyone has gotten here on earth!

Some have asked, "Will there be flowers in heaven?" "Will there be beautiful things in heaven?" "Will there be gardens in heaven?" I think we do not know about all those details. One thing I am sure of though. Whatever beauty we see in heaven will be far more beautiful than the most beautiful things we experience here.

Some have said, "When I get to heaven, I am going to ask God ____" Probably we will have forgotten all that by the time we get there. Whatever seems important here will probably have lost its significance when we see the glories of heaven.

Some have said, “What will we do with our time there?” First off, there will be no measurement of time there. “When we’ve been there 10,000 years...” our eyes will not have yet accommodated to the dazzling glory. A place where there is not time is impossible for us to understand. But “time” will be filled with worthy service.

Gold will be used to walk on. Pearls will be used for building material. But “...the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.” We will eat fruit of the Tree of Life transplanted from Eden. We will bask in the glow of the light of the glory of God. No cloud will cut out the sun—there will be no sun there for the light will be Shekinah.

We often hear it said that we shall spend eternity worshipping God. But consider that we shall worship in the presence of Moses who said on earth, “The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him...Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?...The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.”

Or we shall worship in the presence of the shepherd boy David—or King David as the case may be at that time. Will we sing praises with him from his psalms? “Great

is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” “Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.” “Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD

Or will we sing praises with Mary the mother of Jesus, with the shepherds, with the wise men, with parents of children raised from the dead, with the blind who see, with the lepers who were healed, with the lame, the widows of old, and with the orphans? Will we sing praises with all the saints over the millennia joining in worship with all the brothers and sisters who have worshipped with us in our meetinghouses here, in our homes, or in our Bible studies and private devotions over years?

As we meditate, heaven becomes more real. We still cannot comprehend a place without time, or space. God has eternally existed somewhere. But the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot hold

Him. No, we cannot comprehend existence without time. But God is eternal—whatever that means. We say, “for ever and ever.” But for ever is but a measurement of time. In heaven there will be no time.

As we meditate, heaven becomes closer. Right now, heaven might be even nearer than we realize. Perhaps His angel messengers are hovering around us even now. Perhaps the Spirit world surrounds and permeates the physical. Perhaps we don’t understand the full meaning of the phrase “... Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

When we get there, nothing will disappoint us. There may be much to surprise us.

Perhaps we sing that song wrong. As we grow older, we are coming to realize more and more that there is a happy land, not far away.

Marcus Miller

ONE SOLITARY LIFE

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He drew up in still another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty.

Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He was a defender of unpopular causes. He counted among His friends the poor and the weak. He associated with outcasts and lawbreakers. He

never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house.

He didn’t go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled more than two hundred miles from His place of birth. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing, the only property He had on earth.

When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nearly 2,000 years have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race, and the leader of mankind’s progress.

All the armies that ever marched,
All the navies that ever sailed,
All the parliaments that ever sat,
All the kings that ever reigned,
All these together have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that...

ONE SOLITARY LIFE.

Attributed to James Allan Francis

Selected by

David Miller

VICTIMHOOD

Louis Miller

Jesus came down to this fallen world as a baby. He was born in a livestock shed and His crib was a feed trough. He grew up under the oppressive regime that was the Roman Empire. And if that isn't bad enough, the very people who should have been shouting His arrival on the rooftops, the same people that should have cleared the temple for this Anointed One to speak, these people would have The Son of God tried in a court of law, stripped of His clothes, beaten, spit on, and mocked with a crown of thorns. Then they would force the Son of the living God to carry the very instrument that would be used to kill Him. The very hands that He created swung the heavy hammers that drove the nails through His own hands and into the very timber that He created. And the very life that gave life was dead. Was He a victim of His creation?

Jesus never blamed the Roman government for bad social policy. He never blamed His parents for His circumstances. And He never blamed the Father for making Him take this bitter cup. This was a true victim, one who was absolutely blameless. One who had no sin but had to suffer for sin. The innocent Lamb who had to die so we could understand that every time we sin we bring about death.

Today our culture is rife with a different kind of victim and unfortunately many of these allege to be in the church. These "victims" are a bane to society and the church.

These "victims" are like a vacuum. Resources, praise, kindness or even pity that get too close are sucked into the oblivion that is the "victim." Parents good or bad are blamed for problems. Teachers are blamed. Churches are blamed, government is blamed, And often God Himself is blamed. This is religious malfeasance. Jesus taught us to confess our sins, not blame them on others. He taught us to forgive others. If a victim doesn't forgive, do they expect God to forgive?

And finally, we need to realize that not only are we not the victim, but we are the perpetrator. Our sins put Jesus on the cross. He died to save us from them. A true victim is blameless and no repentance is needed. No sentient mortal on earth falls into this category. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Instead of blaming we need to take agency of our actions. Life is hard for everyone. You don't have exclusive rights to pain. Instead of vacuuming up praise, kindness, pity, resources, etc., just turn that vacuum off.

The opposite of the victim mentality is thankfulness. People that are thankful for all the things God has given them don't have time to brood on their "victimization." I have hurt a lot of people with my sins and in some cases they were sins that someone else encouraged me to commit. I can use the victim excuse that "a friend got me to do it," or "a family member got me to do it," or "I was forced to go along with it." Even if someone else did coerce me to sin I still had the abil-

ity to run from it. But by shifting responsibility in this way I am operating under the delusion that I have somehow circumvented my sin. In essence I have just changed the curtains on the Titanic. This ship is going down unless I find a way to repair the damage done by my sin. When I repeatedly obfuscate the truth in this way I get into a never-ending cycle of blame, bitterness, and victimization. If I confess my sins before God, He can help me escape the mire of victimhood. Old habits die hard and it's easy to fall back into the victimization game. It's so easy to play because you don't have to succeed to win! In fact the inverse is true. Losing is tantamount to winning. But when I come to the Judgment Day, all the victim blame games stop. I will answer for my sins and my sins alone. There will be no scapegoat to foist the blame onto. Just The Lamb. Or maybe in this case, The Just Lamb.

May God have mercy. To be ensconced in a state of victimhood is despicable. Most of us were born in excellent facilities, have warm houses, good food, kind parents, a government that has allowed us to worship, and more wealth than any country in recent world history. But all these blessings aside, Jesus gave His life for everyone, no matter how good or bad they have it, and in the end Jesus chose not the mantle of the victim, but of the Victor. Which have you chosen?

Selected by

Paul Dickerson

MEN AND WOMEN

What has brought mankind to its current state of confusion? Most of us have grown up in homes where "Who am I?" is asked, but "What am I?" is not. We all frequently come face to face with the fact that we are not who we should be and most of us decide we'd like to be different in a better way. That choice, around an age of accountability (12 to 20's on the average) changes several things including how we dress.

Because we know God and have read Genesis, this soul searching, while trying, is not difficult. We have no need to question how the world was made, to process all the theories or philosophies of men and so-called science. Our world does not evolve. It really is quite simple and straightforward and we find it interesting that God saw the need to explain how it all came about.

In foresight He saw death and separation coming and a heart-rending emptiness that would result. At a surprisingly early age children feel it. Death drives it home sooner for some than others and usually the untimely (before illness or old age) gains our attention. Well this author remembers the accident of a Brother's son in our youth and life was never so carefree after that reality. Passing by the casket of a 16-year-old boy left a profound impression on a 5-year-old girl who could barely see over the edge. Watching the family, (indeed the whole district)

grieve, left a hole to be filled.

We hear the off-handed term “inclusiveness” in our day. Our parents would occasionally admonish us, as we did our children, to include everyone in our play and not leave others out. Yet we have observed that this is indeed something that causes pain. There came a day when I was considered “old enough” to sit back from the communion table, but it wasn’t very enjoyable. Other occasions of feeling out of sorts come to memory and these, too, left a hole to be filled.

There was the time when classmates began to do what my parents didn’t allow. There were parents among us who weren’t quite as aware as mine were, and that caused some separation in young folks. As adults, money and circumstances have done the same. It is less bothersome with age, but as a child and in the teens it’s the end of one’s little world and hard to overcome.

Take yourself out of your comfort zone as I got thrown out of mine in a store the other day. The clerk was kindly helping me but I was not feeling so kind. This was a very polite young person, not pressuring me like another clerk trying to make a sale. I had to remind myself not to lose my grace. The young man was not sure what he was.

It changed his mode of dress and he was working a job most boys would never consider. It necessitated a change in my attitude.

I have a very hard time accepting the fact that mankind questions God in today’s way. Growing up we could ask anything of our parents and God, but ultimately you ran up against facts that did not change and had to be accepted. What a person was in our home was fact and while birth defects might happen there were chromosomes to verify what God created. We didn’t question the Potter’s plan with “Why hast thou made me thus?” That would have been an insult and woe betide the person who insults the Creator. Everyone makes choices and changes but true satisfaction was found with God and there wasn’t any point in putting up a fuss. It may have seemed like “boys got to do all the fun stuff,” but when it came time to hoe beans maybe they didn’t.

I remember a time when ladies wore dresses. I never saw my grandmother, who was not from our faith, in pants. A woman wearing work-a-day pants would wear a dress to town, church, wedding, or funeral at least. A few years ago we had an occasion to buy a dress for a woman on short notice and two of us had a hard time finding a skirt and blouse in a big box store. There were no respectable dresses. You have probably heard of cross dressing? Who started that? Who will God call to account? A neighbor countered me one day with the excuse that there are “women pants,” but as long as there is one, just one woman, in a dress there is still light and salt.

And by the way, which of the restrooms do you use, the one with the pants, or the dress? There was sputter of defense that fell to silence. Honestly, we do know, and parents that permit daughters to wear pants are making a mistake. I know the pressure is intense and I got no relief from the questions of peers until I was baptized and put on the uniform. Fifteen years of trial for a girl is a long time and parents need to be sympathetic in the right way and not give in to peer pressure.

I remember something called a "mock wedding" in young folks. The boys dressed as the female wedding party and the girls as the male, all in fun of course. Not funny today, is it? I had a female classmate our senior year who was spotted walking around town holding hands with a girl who graduated the year before. Of course this caused quite a stir until we learned her friend was a boy. That's correct, his mother had always wanted a girl and passed him off as one all his growing up years with a girl's name, long brown curls and a frilly dress in photos. We saw "Lanita" at school in short hair and pants and never guessed this was a boy until he turned 18 and could be who God intended. Needless to say the gossip came to an abrupt halt and though shocking, the truth was quickly accepted as well as a new name.

Some place in my youth we had taken a trip, and passing through a gift shop, came upon an unfin-

ished sculpture of a man. The sculptor was forming the legs and feet.

I looked around the rest of the shop but was as intrigued with the ability of a person to be able to sculpt from clay as I was with someone who could do it with a wheel and returned to watch. The sculptor had gone to ring a sale and for whatever reason, either my parents sake or because of my youth, had draped a napkin across the lower torso of the work. In that innocent moment I can remember thinking "Why? I wanted to watch the feet carved!" Then I sadly realized the sculptor was uncomfortable and thought it a pity for such talent. In a bit of a snit I thought: God was not ashamed of His man and if the sculptor was then don't carve people!

"Arise," God told Jeremiah, "and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels" (Jer. 18:2-3). If you think about it creativity plays a big part in the life of man enough so that it has given him free time. What has he done with that time? He has thought to be the Potter. This year a group of researchers at University of Cambridge developed a synthetic mouse embryo from stem cells with a brain and beating heart. One said, "It is just unbelievable we got this far." If we knew all of what man is trying

with God's clay we'd be shocked. Today mice, tomorrow men? Don't scoff. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia has already grown a lamb to full development and scientists in the Netherlands gauge they are about ten years from an artificial human womb in what is being touted as "motherless birth." Sort of explains Romans 1:18–32, and we'd like you to read it. This is not the natural use of the woman. See that word synthetic? It is pronounced "sin-thet'ik" and imitates a natural product. Not at all unbelievable out of fallen mankind.

Suffice it to say there are already some marred vessels and they have changed their minds concerning the wisdom of answering the Potter. Too late comes the understanding of "But now, O LORD, thou art our father, we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8). Any surgeon or person who has had surgery can attest that things are never as good as before. We are the work of perfect hands and no man can restore the physical integrity of nerves or muscles once breached with a blade. Scars are scars, and contrary to what young people are being told there is no reverse. There is forgiveness, and Jeremiah watched the potter reform a marred vessel. "...cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand..."

Understand that the devil has a tremendous advantage when

young people have not been churchied for two or three generations. They aren't just confused. They are ignorant and deceived. Don't try to educate an activist, which is where things currently stand. Be patient, be kind, because there will come a painful, sorrowful reaping when you can be heard. There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" the wise man said.

As for speaking, what is this that we read: a portion of the anabaptist group led by Menno Simons has changed their position on the issues of the day? When it comes to the Church, we must hold one another accountable and not keep silent. This has now moved beyond mainline Protestant churches!

A world of men is not God's plan. He made woman. That's quite an honor and not a second thought. Don't believe in unisex anything because Men and Women are different for a reason. People are most happy and work together best when there is a godly respect for His clay creations. The problems start when somebody gives the idea that the Potter made a mistake. He didn't, the clay was perfectly mixed howbeit now marred. Let's not make matters worse. But though we groan, wait patiently for a new vessel to replace this earthen one. Be the vessel God created here and now.

Rachel Brubaker

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

“THAT HARDEN!”

“I can’t stand it! I can’t stand it!” said John, throwing his coat and books in the corner. “It’s that Harden Steel! He cheats and looks on my math paper; he’s always first in line because he pushes!” Mother didn’t say much, but she gave him a cookie.

The next day was the same, only, “He was captain of the ball team, and he can’t catch a ball, nor can he bat!”

Mother quietly went and asked the school, and this is Harden Steel’s story:

Harden’s mother is sick, and his Dad was killed in an automobile accident. He wears the same overalls day after day, and he has two stained shirts...

So (not telling John), his Daddy and Mother went to see Harden’s mother. She told them she has cancer and not sure how many days she has left. She worried what would happen to Harden.

Mother took them some food and helped clean Harden’s home. She also gave some of John’s clothes to him. Then when John came home, both Daddy and Mother were home. They began to tell John about Harden...

“I still don’t care!” John pouted.

Then John’s mother did something unusual for supper. They all ate dry bread with no butter or jam or anything else. Then Daddy began telling the story of the man in the Bible who “fell among

thieves” (Luke 10:30). The thieves ripped off his clothes and wounded him, so that he had no strength to get up off the ground. Then there came a priest (like a preacher) who when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And after that a very religious man, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and setting him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. This man also paid for the sick man’s stay at the inn. “If it requires more, I will pay you when I come back.”

But John continued to pout. “Yes, but that was different.”

The next day John’s parents took John to Harden’s home, and then John began to change his mind. Soon after, John told Harden he could use his new pencil. “Thank you!” said Harden. John also had too many shirts, so he and his mother took some to Harden. Mother took a casserole and cookies, and also took some things to pack in his lunch.

It was not long before Hardin began to do his own schoolwork. John took Hardin out to see his matchbox trucks, and even let Hardin keep two to play with. Hardin began to do better, and one

day Harden's mother turned worse. But it seemed to be too late. Harden's mother wanted John's parents to adopt Harden when she was gone, and signed papers.

Harden and John became friends, and their friendship helped Harden be a nicer boy.

"You know," John said one day, "I almost like Harden as a good friend!"

The day came when John's moth-

er signed the adoption papers for Harden. Harden's mother did pass away, and Harden changed his name to David, because he liked the story of David in the Bible.

This is a story just like our story, because, you know, we all are adopted!

Vicki Witmer

MEDITATIONS

Man's concern is more where earth came from than where it is going.
 The Word of God is perfect. Translations and interpretations vary.
 Understanding gender confusion starts way back with Sodom.
 My failures are my own. My achievements are from God.
 Zeal without knowledge is sometimes disaster.
 Today's rain will be tomorrow's grain.
 The hand of God is in history.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

This section offers some questions to think about, or for Sunday afternoon discussions, or to prompt future articles from our readers, etc. Readers are encouraged to offer questions.

Trials and troubles enter into our lives every day. It is predictable. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation..." It almost seems like a promise. It will happen.

But when believers come to the Savior in faith, and give their lives to Him, receiving the infilling of His Spirit, this brings questions:

1. Should the gift of the Holy Spirit equip us now to meet our daily trials?
2. When an extreme disappointment faces us during the day, should we not be well able to meet it?

3. When someone questions us, or argues with something we say, in what way are we now better prepared?
4. When we are interrupted or criticized, what is there about the believers new frame of mind that is now able to keep him in perfect peace?
5. Which of the fruit of the Spirit helps us most in those moments?
6. Does the believer's faith in God and His care prevent failure?
7. Is the believer's constant fellowship with God his greatest guard?
8. What is the believer's secret?

GENERAL ITEMS

BAPTISMS

June 25, 2023; Modesto, CA
 Daniel Flora, Asher Long,
 Eben Long
 July 7, 2023; West Modesto, CA
 Emma Bauman
 July 27, 2023; Stillwater, OH
 Katelyn Denlinger
 July 30, 2023; Living Epistle, NM
 John Hollandbyrd
 Aug. 3, 2023; Sugar Grove, OH
 Mark Wheeler

Oct. 8, 2023.....Bethel, OH
 Oct. 14, 2023..... Maple Grove, OH
 Oct. 14, 2023..... Clearwater, IN
 Oct. 14, 2023..... Zillah, WA
 Oct. 14, 2023..... Western Kansas, KS
 Oct. 21, 2023..... Stillwater, OH
 Nov. 4, 2023..... Columbia River, WA
 Nov. 4, 2023..... Kidron Valley, KS
 Nov. 11, 2023.....Covington, OH
 Nov. 11, 2023..... Shenandoah, VA
 Jan. 27, 2024 Pine Grove, FL
 Apr. 6, 2024 Fair Haven, KS

COMMUNION NOTICES

Sept. 23, 2023Pleasant View, OH
 Sept. 30, 2023Providence, IN

HARVEST MEETINGS

Sept. 10, 2023Bear Creek, OH

POEMS

CONTENT WITH THEE

Thou hast not *that*, my child, but thou hast Me,
 And am not I alone enough for thee?
 I know it all, know how thy heart was set
 Upon this joy which is not given yet.

And well I know how through the wistful days
 Thou walkest all the dear familiar ways
 As unregarded as a breath of air,
 But there in love and longing, always there.

I know it all; but from thy briar shall blow
 A rose for others; If it were not so
 I would have told thee. Come, then, say to Me,
 My Lord, my Love, I am content with Thee.

— Amy Carmichael

"THE INDIVIDUAL YOU"

Jim Thomas

The message from the Holy One,
 "Come you" draw near to Me;
 I'll show you great and mighty things
 Which few shall ever see."

"Most eyes can see but not perceive
 That I alone am Lord;
 I know each one that I call 'son,'
 And give each son reward."

"Not all will enter to My grace,
 Though it is there for all;
 I've known so many lying lips,
 That I will not recall."

"All knowing, searching, hearts of men,
 Knowing what each will do;
 I have a long forbearing hand,
 That's waiting just for you."

"You are the one I've waited for,
 Knowing that you would come;
 You are the apple of My eye,
 A very special plum."

"The last to come will be the first,
 Let everyone draw near;
 Our going could be any time,
 Remember whom to fear."

Coincidence or providence,
 I have great news for man;
 God's providence is every day,
 He's working out His plan.

And in the twinkling of an eye,
 Saved in the dust come out;
 They could not stay there in the ground,
 Because they heard Him shout.

Because it was a settled thing,
 By God who cannot lie;
 All of the saints will join Him there,
 Then soar beyond the sky.

Selected by

Ron and Caroline
 Holsinger

GOD IS POWERFUL TO SAVE

There once was darkness everywhere,
 And "Nothing" ruled this lower sphere,
 While somewhere in another place
 Existed God with smiling face.
 He lit the universe with might,
 And power, for **God is Light**.

Before the heavens and earth began,
 And skies, and seas, and space, and man,
 And e'er the nations and their kings,
 And wars, and pestilence, and things,
 Before disease, and death, and strife
 God ruled it all, for **God is Life**.

Man fell from grace, but God stepped in
 And brought a remedy for sin.
 He sent His Son in mercy down,
 And gave to man a glorious crown.
 There is One who rules above,
 And over all, for **God is Love**.

So, now's the time. With fond embrace,
 Receive the loving terms of Grace.
 Accept the Mercy Jesus gave,
 When He came down, mankind to save.
 Eternity with Him is bright,
 For **God is Love, and Life, and Light**.

Marcus Miller

BE STILL

Be still my heart! We murmur, you and I.
 We fret and fret, while precious hours fly.
 Be still—the silent are truly blest;
 There is no rapture for a heart distressed.

Be still my heart! The deep, dark night is still.
 The trees in prayer, the star above the hill.
 Be still—and to this promise softly cling;
 The silent hear the great archangels sing.

— Rosco Gilmore Scott

THE HARVEST AND THE TEMPEST

Deep in the shadow of slumber, one night I lay on my bed,
And dreamed I stood on a mountain, with valleys before me spread;
The valleys were wide, and yellow with beautiful waving grain.
And a cloud hung black in the distance, loaded with tempest and rain.

Looking, I saw in the valley, laborers—but, oh, so few!
I knew the gathering tempest would break before they were through.
Although they were all so busy, bending themselves to the work;
They saw the storm was approaching and knew that they dared not shirk.

Then near the foot of the mountain, I happened to turn my eyes,
And there stood a Man whose visage was brighter than sunset skies;
He spoke in such tones of sorrow, it caused my heart to bleed;
“Behold, how white is the harvest—with reapers so few indeed.”

“Why are the workers not many?” I thought to myself—and then
I glanced about me and noticed the mountains were full of men;
Men who were laughing and joking, playing some sort of a game;
Not seeing how ripe the harvest, or heeding the storm that came.

Soon I could stand it no longer, “Listen!” I shouted amain,
“The tempest shall soon be rushing over the beautiful grain;
Why waste your time in a frolic? Look at that gathering cloud!”
But one of them quickly answered, “*You’re* one of this idle crowd!”

Then came the crash of the tempest. The rushing wind, and the rain,
Came howling over the valleys, ruining the yellow grain!
The heavens were rocked from thunder, the lightnings split the skies
Till we who stood on the mountain covered our poor, blinded eyes!

Above the crash of the tempest the voice of the Stranger broke;
“Behold, the ruin of the harvest—this is the heathen!” He spoke,
“The storm that so widely rages is God’s great Judgment Day!”
And I woke, and wept in repentance as there on my bed I lay.

Calling on God in the heavens, with contrite spirit I prayed;
“O Lord, I will be a worker! Too long, too long have I played!
Because of the ripened harvest, I give you my heart and my arm;
I’ll spend my strength in the valleys to save the grain from the storm!”

— Lon Woodrum

OBITUARIES

DUTTER — Ivan Keith, second son of George and Edna (Blocher) Dutter was born on April 17, 1930, near Cutler, Indiana.

He departed this life peacefully at his home on July 5, 2023, at the age of 93 years, 2 months, and 18 days.

His childhood years were spent on various farms in rural Indiana. During his teen years he lived with his family near Minot, North Dakota before moving to California in 1949.

He felt the call of the Lord and was baptized into Jesus Christ in September of 1950. At his death he was a member of the Cornerstone Dunkard Brethren Church near Covington, Ohio.

On October 7, 1951, he was united in marriage to Myrna M. Kline. This union was blest with three sons and one daughter.

Dad and Mother resided in California from 1951 until they moved to Goshen, Indiana, in 1973. They moved from Goshen to Cleveland, Georgia, in January 1998.

This union was broken when Mother passed away on June 23, 2000. He was again united in marriage to Bonnie L. Kline (who was Mother's sister) on April 14, 2001, sharing the joys and sorrows of life together for 22 years. They resided in Georgia until the fall of 2006 when they moved to Union City, Ohio, and later moving to West Alexandria, Ohio, close to the home of his son Galen, where he passed away.

He leaves to mourn his passing his loving companion; 2 sons, Galen (Judy), David (Jeanette); one daughter, Linda Culp (Ray); and 1 daughter-in-law, Nancy; 19 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grandchildren. Also 1 brother, Marshall (Rosalene); 3 sisters, Charlotte Flora (Hollis), Doris Oyler (Atlee), Martha Meador (Michael); one sister-in-law, Norma Dutter.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife; one son, Paul; 2

brothers, David (Jane), and Gordon; one sister, Georgia; and one brother-in-law, Donald Kline (Alice).

Dad's influence has affected the lives of his children and their posterity in many positive and spiritual ways, and also the lives of many with whom he came in contact.

Funeral services were held at the Cornerstone Dunkard Brethren Church near Covington, Ohio, on July 8 by the home brethren.

Burial followed July 9 at the Yellow Creek Old German Baptist Church cemetery near Wakarusa, Indiana.

The Family

WURM — Robert Dennis, 79, of Modesto, California, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on July 22, 2023. He stepped through the door of eternity while at home, surrounded by his loving family. He was born on October 17, 1943, to Rosco Robert and Martha Jennise Wurm, in Portland, Oregon. He attended Thomas Downey High School, Modesto, California, dropping out his junior year to join the United States Marine Corps in 1961 at the age of seventeen; he completed his term of service in 1965. Dad attended Modesto Junior College from 1966–1968, where he met his future wife, June Ann Nyquist. Dad and Mom were married on Mom's twentieth birthday, July 9, 1967, and they were happily married for 42 years. On October 22, 1974, Dad and Mom accepted our Lord as their Savior and were baptized. They were members of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church, N.C. Following Mom's passing, Dad married Denise Metzger on September 25, 2010. They were married almost 13 years.

Dad had various occupations throughout the years, including farming, landscaping, and landscape maintenance. These jobs often enabled him to pursue his educational goals. In 1969 he graduated from Sonoma

State College with a BA degree in Psychology; he graduated from the University of San Francisco in 1985 with a Master's degree in Counseling; and, in 1998, he received his Ph.D. from Oxford Graduate School. He worked as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist for more than 30 years, including 20-plus years in the Stanislaus County Department of Mental Health. The majority of Dad's working life was spent helping others in need.

Dad was preceded in death by his wife, June; his parents; his brothers, Thomas and David Wurm; and son-in-law, Neil Marshall. He is survived by his wife, Denise, of Modesto, California; his children, Susan Marshall of Turlock, California; Jennifer and Marc Wray of Peru, Indiana; Dennis Wurm of Danville, Kentucky; Jesse Wurm of Juneau, Alaska; a foster son, James Bryant of Redding, California; his brothers Duncan Wurm of Florence, Oregon, and John Wurm of Roseburg, Oregon; 10 grandchildren; and 18 great-grandchildren.

At a young age, Dad learned to love God's handiwork in nature, and he hiked many miles during the course of his life; however, he will be most remembered for his love of our Lord, his

love of people, and his dedication to his family. He knew how to engage in conversation with people, empowering them to go and do, or be, what they needed to. He loved people well. In a message written to him by one of his granddaughters, she noted, "Your care for any person in need is still your crowning accomplishment." How true! Dad once wrote, "I am a Christian who has clearly been blessed by my Lord. Through Him I have obtained purpose, meaning, and hope in my life. Without Him I would have surely been dead years ago." It is out of this life perspective that he was who he was. We, the family, echo what one of his grandchildren said at the time of his passing: "See you on the other side, Grandpa. Well done!"

A funeral service was held on August 5, 2023, followed by a short graveside service and burial at the Wood Colony Cemetery, in Modesto, California.

We are thankful for the care given Dad by family, friends, the church, and medical professionals. We are also grateful for the loving support shown to our family during his illness and after his passing.

The Family

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Authors of essays, devotionals, poems, etc. are asked to review the Statement of Purpose on the back page of this periodical. Articles should

be based on Scripture. References are appreciated. Shorter focused articles are more desirable than articles that move from one topic to another. Selected material will be considered. Original writings are preferred. It is recommended that writers submit themselves to the Spirit, which reveals the will of God to the Church in every age, according to the varied needs and circumstances.

Written articles should be legible. Typed material is preferred and should be double-spaced. Electronic transmission or CD will be accepted. The author's name and address must be included on all material. An attempt will be made to contact the author of articles that are not accepted.

Old German Baptist Brethren
Church—New Conference

THE TESTIMONY

353 Billman Rd.
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The Testimony is a Christian publication intended for those who desire nourishment in their spiritual walk, and for writers who wish to express witness to the Truth of the Gospel as experienced in their own lives. It holds the Holy Scriptures to be its only Creed. Its purpose is to bear witness to the Truth of God's Word as it is applied in the daily life of committed Christians. It supports the anabaptist and pietist foundations of the Brethren of Schwarzenau, Germany (1708) including the biblical principle of the community of believers bound by a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus confirmed by adult immersion baptism (Mark 16:16). It strives to promote a life of true living piety among all who confess Jesus as their Lord. It seeks to restore and

maintain a fellowship of true primitive Christianity through the communication of all good things.

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