

THE NEW CREATION

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NOTE: The thoughts presented in the articles are those of the writer and are not necessarily totally endorsed by the New Creation Staff. *“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* – 2 Timothy 2:15.

“Prove ALL things and hold fast to what is good.” – 1 Thess. 5:21.

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Food for Thought



I was in a Mexican restaurant the other day. On the menu were vegetarian fajitas, but the vegetables were cooked in oil, so I asked the cook if she could steam them instead of using oil, and leave off the sour cream. The reason for my request is because, in the last year, I have gone from the Standard American Diet to a whole plant based way of eating without added refined oils, sugar, and salt. She was quite accommodating and the meal delicious. There is an illustration in this. For the last seven decades, I have eaten the Standard American Diet, the common way of eating with most everyone. But I changed that eating habit. At first, it took effort and thought, but eventually, it became a formed habit. Now, I am very content with eating this way. I think we can draw a spiritual application from this lesson.

For years, we may not have considered certain scriptures or lines of thought that could widen our perspective on God's plan. We have stayed with the Standard American Diet, but now making a break with what we had previously refused to consider, we find avenues of consideration that we find uplifting and rewarding both to our understanding and to faith.

In this issue, you will find an article on *New Covenant Considerations, Part 1*. For some, it will not be a new consideration, but for others it will open up avenues of thought. There is also an article on *The Truth about Good Friday*, an expose on the three days and three nights our Lord was in the sepulcher. My understanding of this phrase immediately follows and is intended as a balance for the preceding article. This will give you an opportunity to search the Scriptures to come to your own conclusion and faith.

These articles are timely because the annual observance of the memorial of our Lord's passion this year occurs on Thursday evening, April 18th, his crucifixion on the next day, Friday, and his resurrection on Sunday, this year coinciding with Easter Sunday. Then there are articles on the common fellowship we enjoy with our Lord in the *Upper Room*, in his voluntary sacrifice in *He Gave Himself*, and the resurrection proclamation in the *Easter Message*.

You have much to digest here. May your considerations not bring indigestion but nourishment with growth.

R. Whittaker

What Could My Jesus Do More?

(A Personal Testimony)

These words are the title to a hymn from my very early childhood. I loved that hymn as a child, and over all these intervening years, I have often sung the words of the hymn to myself when driving in a car, walking down the street, or even busy at some task. I've never grown tired of it. It has always been an inspirational song to me. I have shared the song with some other Christians and they too have been impressed with the power of the words. I'd like to share with you some of the thoughts I've had over the years concerning the words of this hymn, and the impact it has had on me. The hymn reads as follows.

*Oh what could my Jesus do more?
Or what greater blessing impart?
Oh silence my soul and adore,
And press Him still nearer my heart.*

*Chorus:
In Jesus triumphant I'll live.
In Jesus triumphant I'll die.
The terrors of death calmly brave.
In His bosom breathe out my last sigh.*

*In life and in death thou art mine.
My savior I'm sealed with thy blood.
Till eternity on me doth shine,
I'll live in the strength of my Lord.*

They are simple words. A child can easily learn this hymn. But there is a lot of appreciation for Jesus, and a lot of commitment to Him that is expressed in these words and this is what has always drawn me to sing it so often. The first verse is so general that it can be applied to the most recent great blessing I have received, and still have the same full impact of appreciation that it had when I first understood it to mean the love Jesus had for me as a child.

It was actually later in more mature, but still relatively young years, when I came to understand in greater detail the great blessing Jesus had wrought for me when He came to

earth, suffered so intently for me, and then died such a terrible death on the cross. For a long period after that, I had His sacrifice in mind when I sang that verse. This same verse and His sacrifice very often come to mind during my Memorial meditations.

That is not to say that I have displaced that understanding. Not at all. But I have learned to add to that all the many blessings that the Lord continues to pour out upon me so that the level of my appreciation increases constantly with His increasing blessings to me. This expansion becomes a perfect way to count all my blessings and at the same time give the praise for them to whom it is due.

The last two lines of the first verse draw me often to be silently in His presence, just worshiping and adoring. It is a most peaceful posture to assume. It is an attitude I try to acquire as part of my daily morning and evening prayers. But often it is just a special quiet time of meditation and worship.

Since a very young child, I've always felt certain that I would conform well to the last three lines of the chorus. As I've grown older, I am nowhere near as cocky about it, but I still have a quiet hope and a peaceful expectation that such will be the case. I certainly want it to be the case, and I pray at times to that end. It establishes a great attitude and commitment well in advance to expect to be triumphant even at the end of my life. Certainly, I want to be triumphant in the overcoming sense of being able to be part of the bride of Christ. But I like to apply it too to the way my life might end, that I would still be strongly rejoicing and confident in Jesus at the very end, and expressing that to those around me, that it might be an encouragement to them. I've seen this accomplished in others, and I want it to be part of my record also for the glory of God and Christ in showing what they have accomplished in me.

The line of greatest challenge to me has always been the first line of the chorus, "In Jesus triumphant I'll live". It has been a challenge because it expresses such a high ideal, and inherently also a very positive and joyful attitude of overcoming. This line contributed greatly to my making a commitment early in life, that no matter how often I might fall

from grace, "I will never give up, never give up, never give up!" And there has been more than one occasion where I have had to hold myself to that promise. It is one vow I know I will never regret making.

The second verse reconfirms the total commitment to triumphant life in Christ through all of life and unto, and even into death, where my hope lies still in my Lord and His power and desire to raise me to life eternal with Him. Two things hold me certain and secure. First, Jesus is mine. I claim Him! While I understand He claims me also, it is important to me to assert my claim on Him. Because He has promised He would never leave me nor forsake me, I claim Him as such, holding Him to His promise, and claim all the power, and direction, courage, stamina, and patience that is necessary for me to fulfill all that He asks of me that I might be found pleasing to Him, glorifying Him, and able to be with Him through eternity.

Till that eternity shines, and I am fully in Him, I live now in His strength. 2 Cor 12:9, "His strength is made perfect in *my* weakness." Gal 2:20, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me."

I love the scriptures. I love to meditate in them. I love what the Lord continues to reveal to me in them. But I am very thankful for the hymns also. I have very many favorite hymns. The hymn I've referenced here is just one of the oldest I had learned. I know many others from that era, but this one holds a special place with me because it first taught me some of the deeper things concerning Christ. What I especially love about it is that it has grown with me as I have grown. It still teaches me some of the deeper things of Christ. It is still a hymn for me to love. It is still reason to be thankful to God that what He early taught me concerning Christ has not faded with the years, but has grown ever stronger and more meaningful.

Praise God for His mighty being! Praise Christ for His mighty presence! Live triumphantly in Him!

Joe Knapp

Convict or Condemn

This title has two very interesting words, which begin with the same three letters, but the last four add two very different meanings to the words. When we have done something contrary to God's Word and have sinned, the Holy Spirit will *convict* us and point out the wrong-doing to us. A "good guilt" is thereby laid upon us that directs us in a positive way. It reminds us that we need to not only acknowledge but confess our sin, as John tells us in 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* and in true repentance turn from our sin. When we do this the weight of the sin is no longer on us to carry around for we are told in Psalms 103:11-12, *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us."* Have you ever considered just how far the east is from the west? It is impossible for anyone who travels towards the west to ever reach it because it illusively is always before you. So it is with God's gracious forgiveness. It is gone forever and out of reach!

On the other hand, Satan is there to *condemn* us. He will attempt to lay on us what is called "bad guilt" because its purpose is to burden us down with a load of guilt that is intended for us to carry around so that our spiritual progress will be slowed down. In fact, we read in 1 Peter 5:8, that Satan is always looking for such opportunities. *"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* It may that he is roaring at you with such thoughts, such as, *"Well, there! You've done it again. Why don't you just stop trying and give it up as a lost cause. How many times have you failed at this very thing? God has probably already giving up on you anyhow."* Verse 8 begins with *"Be sober-minded; be watchful."* We should not be caught off-guard, but expect and watch for our enemy's attempts to discourage us. Remember we are told that he is a liar, and Jesus said this of him in John 8:44, *"When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

When we sin, which will happen since we are imperfect, it is our choice as to whom we are going to listen to. We can heed the Word of God, repent once again, seek forgiveness and rest in His loving care. Or we can believe this "father of lies" and give up in despair and descend into the sad state of despondency. May we always choose the former way, for God is faithful in keeping His promises!

E. Weeks

Important New Covenant Considerations - Part 1

Christians have always been interested in God's ancient promise of a "*New Covenant*." A covenant is an agreement between two parties. These questions call attention to points that touch on the subject, and help disciples of Jesus understand New Testament teachings of it.

1. Why did Jesus mention the *new covenant* as being "*in*" His blood when He requested the disciples to drink of the cup in remembrance of Him?

The words of Jesus were: "This cup is the *new covenant* in My blood, which is shed for you;" "drink ye all of it;" "this do ye...in remembrance of me;" "and they all drank of it" (Luke 22:20, Matt. 26:27, 1 Cor. 11:25,26, Mark 14:23). Our Master said the *new covenant* was "*in*" His blood. That *covenant* was dependent upon His death. The instruction that they drink of the cup meant they were to partake of the blessings and privileges, which that *covenant* promised. It was a ceremonial act to convey a truth. Every observance is to be in remembrance of the gift of His life, upon which all our hopes of blessing depend.

Jesus had a full understanding of all of God's arrangements with Israel. That understanding brought His teaching that "this cup is the *new covenant* in my blood." He knew that an old covenant had been put in force after animals had been slain, and that the blood of those animals was used in a prescribed manner (Ex. 24:5-11). He also understood that God's promise through Jeremiah of a *new covenant* (Jer. 31:31-a34) made the former covenant old. This fact was later plainly stated in the book of Hebrews. "When He (God) says '*new*' He has made old the first; and the thing being made old and growing aged is near vanishing" (Hebrews 8:13 Marshal Interlinear).

But there was even more intended by our Master's words following that eventful supper. God had said that through the *New Covenant* He would "forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more." And Jesus knew that the words, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities--for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:5, 11) prophesied of Himself and were written for His instruction as well as for the instruction of all who have faith. He was to be the victim by which the *New Covenant* would be firm; that *covenant* would be dedicated, inaugurated, ratified, put into

effect as a result of His sacrifice (Heb. 9:16-18). The blessing of sonship and fellowship with God was about to reach others. Jesus would have all believers acknowledge and remember His sacrifice, its purpose, and the new arrangement through which their new life and spiritual relationship with God become a reality.

2. Of whom did David prophesy in Psalm 110:4, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” and when did He become that priest?

Hebrews 6:20 answers the first part of the question: “Jesus, made (“who has become” or “having become”) an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” The quotations in Heb. 5:5, 6 and Acts 13:33 from Psalm 2:7 and 110:4 indicate that Christ Jesus became such a priest at His resurrection. “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the 2nd Psalm, ‘Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.’” “As he saith also in another place, ‘Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’” (Heb. 5:6). “He became the author (the cause or the source) of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9, 10). He has been made so “after the power of an endless life” in fulfillment of God’s oath given centuries before. (See Heb. 7:16-21.)

3. What did Jesus provide which qualified Him to become the Melchizedek priest?

Jesus is a priest forever because His sacrifice provided the blood which sealed the *New Covenant*. The several lines of logic written regarding Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:5-21 prove that even before the law established the Levitical priesthood, God planned to terminate what He foresaw would be an ineffectual ministry. The first reference in Hebrews to the New Covenant is made immediately following the last reference to Melchizedek in that epistle: “But so much (“to that extent also” or “because of this oath”) was Jesus made a surety of (“Jesus has become the guarantee of” or “Jesus has become the one given in pledge of”) a *better covenant*” (Heb. 7:22). That arrangement of the epistle, in which its last mention of Melchizedek was immediately followed by its first mention of the *New Covenant*, is as though the writer anticipated that a recognition of Jesus as *priest* in the higher order would lead them to discern the reality of the *New Covenant* and its blessings.

Furthermore, this is suggested by a summary of the chief points in the first seven chapters of Hebrews. The writer affirms that Jesus is “**a minister** in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” In the type, the Levitical priest ministered on earth; in the antitype, Jesus ministers in heaven. Regarding the ministry of Jesus, it is written: “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by so much as He is Mediator of a *better covenant* (the *New Covenant*), which **has been enacted** on *better promises*.” Hebrews 8:1-6 NAS

4. The blood of what covenant is referred to in Hebrews 10:29?

The reference to blood in vs. 29 is to that of the New Covenant. “...the *blood of the covenant*” expression in Heb. 9:20 refers back to the blood of beasts similarly mentioned in Ex. 24:8; “...the blood of the *covenant*” in Heb. 10:29 refers to the blood of Jesus. Vs. 29 contrasts the punishment of transgressors in the Old Covenant with punishment of such in the *New*. Both covenants were put in force by blood, but blood of such merit as to bring eternal redemption--*the blood of Jesus*--is identified only with the *New Covenant*. The “sorer punishment” would come upon one who “was sanctified” by “the *blood of the covenant*” but who came to consider it as common or unholy as not alone the *only blood* efficacious to remit sins. Note that *there would have been no warning to the Hebrews (vss. 25-35) of punishment for disrespect of “the blood of the covenant” if the covenant ratified by His blood were not in operation.*

Preceding verses are very significant: “For by a single offering He has perfected *for all time* those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ‘This is the *covenant* I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,’ then he adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more.’ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb. 10:14-18 RSV). The Holy Spirit, which communicated prophecy to Jeremiah, also testifies to those who are having God’s law put on their hearts, and written in their minds. It testifies that the entirely effective and sufficient, and by no means common or unholy offering for sins made by Jesus, who offered the “**one sacrifice for sins**,” is that which sanctifies. The Apostle’s words-- “*the blood of the covenant*”--relate to those of Jesus: “this cup is the *new covenant in my blood*” (Luke 22:20)

G. Rice

The Truth about Good Friday

“An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Matthew 12: 39-40

In this and the following article are 2 views of the three days and three nights, the first taking the phrase literally and the second as an idiomatic expression (editor)

Easter Sunday is the most attended church service of the year. The Friday before Easter is traditionally called “Good Friday” because most of Christianity believes that Jesus was crucified, placed in a tomb on a Friday afternoon and was resurrected back to life on Sunday morning. But how does that reconcile itself with Jesus’ words that He would be in the grave 3 days and 3 nights?

Many religious scholars, theologians, pastors and elders have tried to explain away this discrepancy by arguing that any part of a day or night could count as a full day or night. But even if one is inclined to accept this premise, it would still fall short because Friday afternoon to Sunday morning only adds up to 3 days and 2 nights.

So, what does the Bible say concerning our Lord’s death, burial and resurrection? When was Jesus crucified and resurrected?

Where the Disconnect Is

The Bible is clear that after Jesus died on the cross, that His body was quickly placed in a nearby tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, just before sundown as the sabbath was about to begin. In biblical times, sunset began a new day at 6 PM.

In John 19 we read, *“Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away... after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body... Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”*

Two things to notice in this passage, one, that the day was called “preparation day”, a time when, in Jewish tradition, heavy cooking and housecleaning were done in preparation for the Sabbath, where work was not be done, of any kind, according to the Jewish Law.

Secondly, since the Sabbath is mentioned, many people assume that John is referring to the weekly Sabbath that would be observed on Saturday. But the fact is, that there were two Sabbaths that were held during the week that Jesus was crucified. The regular weekly Sabbath, which fell on the seventh day of the week and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened, which fell on Nisan 15, the day after Passover. See Leviticus 23:6-7, Exodus 12:16.

John also confirms that he is referring to the annual Sabbath day of Unleavened Bread. Notice that he refers to the next day Sabbath as a “high day” (vs.31). A term that was always used in reference to the holy convocations or Sabbath days that occurred during any of the 7 annual festivals that the Lord God had instituted for the nation of Israel

So, the question might be asked ‘is there any proof that both Sabbaths couldn’t have possibly occurred on the same day?’. Yes, there is, if you use the combined gospels for your evidence.

In Mark 16:1 we are told, *“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.”* Notice that the women had to wait until the *Sabbath was over* before they could buy and prepare the spices to be used to anoint Jesus’ body. This could not possibly be the weekly Sabbath because the Luke and John accounts tell us that the women went to the tomb with the spices at early dawn *on the first day of the week*, Sunday morning, *while it was still dark*. (Luke 24:1 and John 20:1).

I would suggest to you that the day of week for the first Sabbath was a Thursday. After the Sabbath was over, the next day, on Friday, the women bought and prepared the spices. This is confirmed by Luke’s account that states in 23:56 *that the women “...prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.”* The Sabbath day that they rested on was Saturday, the weekly Sabbath.

And while they rested, precisely at 3pm on Saturday, Jesus was resurrected from the tomb, 3 days and 3 nights after he died on the cross at 3 PM on Wednesday.

Luke and John’s account both accurately describe for us that when the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices, on the first day of the week, (Sunday morning), while it was still dark, *“... they found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”* Why didn’t they find Jesus’s body? Because he had already been resurrected the day before, a little before sunset, on Saturday.

Church traditions are wonderful things to keep if they enhance our worship and are done to the glory of God. But as students of the Word, we must always be expedient to analyze all things under the microscope of God’s Holy Word. As the Apostle Paul admonishes each and every child of God, we must be willing to *“Prove all things; and hold fast to that which is good.”* The Lord will bless us continually in all things when we are willing to do that.

The following table gives a timeline of the view expressed.

A Biblical Chronology of Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection

Nisan 14	Nisan 15	Nisan 16	Nisan 17	Nisan 18
Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Jesus crucified around 9 AM and died at 3 PM. This was the Passover and the Preparation day.	A 'High Day' Sabbath - the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.	The women bought and prepared spices for anointing Jesus' body.	The women rested on the Sabbath day according to Jewish Law. Jesus resurrected at 3 PM.	The women arrive at the tomb while it is still dark. Jesus had already risen.
Mark 15:42 Luke 23:54 Matthew 27:46-50	John 10:31 Leviticus 23:4-7 Matthew 27:62	Luke 23:56	Luke 23:56 Exodus 20:8-11	Luke 24:1 John 20:1 Matthew 28:1-6

Three days and 3 nights as our Lord Jesus had said in Matthew 12:39-40.

D. Gorham

Editor's View

As the previous article makes clear, the Scriptures do state that the women bought spices after the Sabbath was past. (Mark 16:1 ESV) *"When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him."* The next verse states that they left for the tomb at some point after the sun had risen on the first day of the week, Sunday: (Mark 16:2 ESV) *"And very early on the **first day** of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb."* So far, so good, BUT...

Sunday was the 3rd day after his death as evident from the context in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus where Jesus talks to two of his disciples. (Luke 24:21 ESV) *“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the **third day** since these things happened.”* The 3rd day being Sunday, the 1st day would have been Friday, the day of his crucifixion. He died at 3 PM on Nisan 14 and was entombed until Nisan 16. Nisan 15 was Saturday, both the weekly Sabbath and the First day of Unleavened Bread in the year Jesus died. This is in agreement with Luke 24:46 (ESV): *[He] said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and **on the third day** rise from the dead.”* It also agrees with Paul in (1Co 15:4 ESV), *“that he was buried, that he was raised **on the third day** in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

The phrase used by Jesus in Matthew 12:39-40 is purely idiomatic, and implied that he would be in the heart of the earth until the third day. Proof of this can be found in the following Scriptures: Esther 4:16; 5:1; Gen. 42:17, 18; 2 Chron. 10:5, 12.

(Est 4:16 NASB): *“Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for **three days, night or day**. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”* (Est 5:1 NASB): *“Now it came about **on the third day** that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.”*

(Gen 42:17-18 NASB) *“So he put them all together in prison **for three days**. Now Joseph said to them **on the third day**, ‘Do this and live, for I fear God.’”*

(2Ch 10:5, 12 NASB) *“He said to them, ‘Return to me again **in three days**.’ So the people departed.... So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam **on the third day** as the king had directed, saying, ‘Return to me **on the third day**.’”*

R. Whittaker

In the Upper Room with Jesus

“He will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.” Mark 14:15

“The four Gospels contribute individually distinctive touches to the story of Jesus’ last Passover with his disciples. Matthew is brief, with no detail about the place selected. John tells us that Jesus rose from supper and washed their feet. Luke adds Jesus’ words, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,” or as the marginal reading: “I have heartily desired.” Mark adds the last two words of our text--“for us.”

The disciples had asked: “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover” (Mark 14:12)? Jesus said, “He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there” (vs. 15). This was in keeping with his remark, “I have heartily desired to eat this Passover with you.”

Who, more than he, could have rejoiced in the last of all the typical Passover feasts? It must have been a joy to know that a new and more wonderful day of divine favor was about to begin through his own death. No doubt he rejoiced in leaving them a memorial in which they would be identified with him “till he come.” How greatly he loved them: “This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Is there any more heart-moving illustration of Jesus’ readiness to be linked with his own than in his marvelous prayer in John 17? There he says, “All I have is yours, and all you have is mine and glory has come to me through them....Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John. 17: 10, 24). How intimately he joins himself to us. Is he not repeating his words to the two sent to prepare the upper room? Make ready for us, for me and mine? We say of our espoused Bridegroom, as the Bride portrayed in Song of Solomon, “I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me” (7:10); and with the Psalmist: “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them” (Psalm 139:17)

There are lessons to be gathered in this Upper Room with Jesus. The Upper Room experience can be with us still if we will turn our steps aside to be alone in his presence. Our blessed Lord has not changed. In days of old he found a place to be near his own. Today he also chooses the times and places where we may come apart from distracting things

and find rest and enlightenment in some "Secret place of the Most High" (Psalm 91:1). He brings us there in order that we may sense more of the beauties of his words and ways, and that we may carry the fragrance of these into our lives.

Consider the words, "a large upper room furnished and prepared." There were only twelve, besides the Master who would gather for that evening hour. For so few it would seem a smaller room would be sufficient. Why the particular reference to its capacity? Recall that Jesus had selected the place. He knew what would transpire in that appointed room. That evening was to be of special interest to his people throughout the Age.

The disciple must learn that the narrowness of the heavenly way is real indeed. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way...and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). But the fellowship and blessing into which the Good Shepherd will guide his faithful sheep is not so narrow. These he feeds in pastures large and fair, leading them beside deep and wide streams of living water. They are able to say, "He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me" (Psa. 18:19). Jesus seeks those with hearts large enough for the fullness of his blessing.

The Memorial of Jesus' atoning death and his all-embracing prayer with which that evening closed brought new meaning into view. Even Judas, traitor though he was, was not excluded from Jesus' attention. His feet were not passed by, but washed as were the feet of them all. Not until he chose to leave, going out into the night, did he cease to share in the feast or the ministrations of him who made himself servant of all. We are ashamed as we see Jesus' patient dealings with the frailties of men so like ourselves.

Can we believe that the dimensions of that room grew larger as the disciples witnessed the loving, tender service of Jesus? If for the moment there was a faint sense of expanding vision, we know that in subsequent days the scene unfolded in ever-widening perspective. Their hearts grew broad in brotherly sympathy, and large in Christ-like love. Has it been so with us? How sad if this is not in our experience. Think of the large room into which divine love has led us through the sacrifice of Jesus. Paul said it is furnished according to his riches in glory; prepared with a multitude of reminders of condescending grace beyond our deserving or comprehension. Here there can be no more making. "the love of God too narrow by false limits of our own," for of his fullness we have received, from grace to grace.

We learn another lesson from that Passover evening. A dark presence was felt that night. Satan intruded, just as it had been written of an earlier time: "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6). This he has continued to do to our own day. How great must be our watchfulness lest he insinuate himself into our fellowship; even in angelic garb, like Bunyan's *Mr. Valiant for Truth*. If Satan dared to enter that Upper Room in the presence of Jesus, then where, yes *where*, can saints gather that Satan will not intrude? If there be one heart in which he may find a place, through that one he will come, even to the Lord's own table. He came into the Upper Room in the heart and aims of Judas. A selfish heart it was, and selfishness is always a blinding thing. How much of heaven's riches has been bartered away for a mess of pottage of trifling worth! What an example Judas becomes of those who for some temporary gain lose sight of real spiritual riches. The spirit of betrayal grows rapidly in a selfish heart.

In that hour, Jesus said, one of you shall betray me. Is not our time just such an hour? How sobering the warning: "And then many will be ensnared, and will betray their associates, and abhor them" (Matt. 24:10, Diaglott). *My soul be on thy guard!* How shocking the spirit that will cooperate in putting a child of God into the hands of an enemy or assist in his beheading! It may mean spiritual suicide for those who do such things. O, the possibility of losing heaven itself, or all opportunity for life, for a thing of such little value as thirty pieces of silver! Yet, temptations to selfishness, wrong ambitions, and covetousness will assail us until we pass beyond the veil. Let us watch and pray that we be not overcome of these and thus fall as a prey of the great Adversary. Let us follow the Master in the spirit of loyal devotion.

There are times when the Word speaks directly to our hearts; times when through it we seem face to face with glaring defects in our own lives. We remember that even a loving John could desert his Master in fear; that Peter denied him with vehemence because he was too sure of his ability to remain loyal. This is a lesson to be learned in the Upper Room. Even though Jesus' warnings are generalized, our own fall may be involved in their application to our lives. It would be well that we think not so much of what others may or may not do, but say with our brethren of long ago, "*Lord, is it I!*"

In some moment of self-laudation has the Lord not heard us affirming our loyalty, declaring (or perhaps only thinking) that while others have fallen or may yet fall we can be depended on to remain steadfast and true? How often has he found us comparing others with ourselves, and too often to self-praise? How glad we should be that he

loves us too much to let us go on without rebuke and correction. Sometime, somehow, he will make us conscious of his searching gaze, while he asks, "lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15)

Our feelings are not different than Peter's when he was reminded of his weakness and disloyalty by that heart-searching question. No hint now that he thought himself to be a better disciple than the others. Too humbled to flatter himself, he could only say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). Such humbling may be painful, but thanks be to God for all that destroys the spiritual pride of self-righteousness.

Remember the largeness of the Upper Room! The Lord's words reveal that some very close to him will fall, so let us remember how we have thought ourselves to be superior to saints of former days who did not see some things we now know. *Let us remember for what minor differences we disparage a brother walking beside us. He too is under the efficacious blood of Christ.* Do we deserve a halo of faithfulness more than he does? If we are honest we will not ask the Lord, "Is it I? We will confess, "It is I. I have not done better than Peter or others." Humility and unspeakable joy go hand in hand when we learn this lesson of the Upper Room. There is no sweeter witness to our relationship to Jesus than this lesson permanently learned. Then we have entered the spirit of oneness with Jesus; the love wherewith he loves all his church.

We next turn our consideration to Jesus' last words to his disciples as given in chapters 14 to 17 of John's Gospel. Jesus' last sermon opens with a word of comfort to his disciples and to all such followers throughout the age. It closes with a plea to God on their behalf by which we ought to be transported into the highest sense of blessedness. To his disciples he says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me...I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3). To the Father he prays: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am,... I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:24, 26). Between these statements, Jesus yearns for our intimate relationship with God and himself and for the interrelationship of the whole family of God. The chief points of his prayer are the following.

1. The sending of the Comforter, which would be of greater meaning than if he remained with them as a man.
2. Their subsequent identification with him as branches in him, the Vine, and their bearing fruit to the glory of the Father.

3. The rich blessings possible through prayer.
4. The joy of being together with him in the home prepared above.

“You are My friends!” What a privilege this represents! But more than a privilege, it is a requirement. Jesus lifts our relationship above that of servant; for it is our friendship he desires. If we fail to reach this plane we do not belong to that inner circle defined in this last-hour sermon. We must abide in him and he in us, a relationship in which there will be a mutual sharing of interests and joy in all things revealed to the Son by the Father. We must prove, like Paul, that having Christ formed in us is the purpose of all Christian experience. And like him, we will learn to turn away from everything else in order that we might eventually be found in him. The ideals found in this farewell discourse are the only ideals consistent with our High Calling. They are not impractical or impossible, but are intended to inspire every disciple with the same glorious hope given to Paul -- the hope of attaining all that there was in Christ for him. Any who stop short of this, stop short of God’s will for them.

Jesus’ closing words lift our thoughts into the sublime. He portrays the Christian life, not as a hard and burdensome experience, but as a life similar to his own. *His joy, his peace, his fruitful prayers, his love:* all these can be known, experienced, and reflected in this life. In Ephesians, Paul sums up the lessons of the Upper Room. In chapter 2, vss. 1 to 7, he shows us *our* place in the will of God. We are raised *with* Christ and seated in heavenly places *in* him. Jesus’ gracious words reveal the breadth of his love. Paul expands this saying: He “...hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit *together* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). *Our conception of union with Christ is wholly wrong unless it embraces all saints as sharers together with us.* Can we listen in the Upper Room and miss this lesson? We do not sit alone, or with a select few chosen by ourselves, but with *all* who love our Lord in sincerity. This is the fullness of life, -- that we have passed from death unto life. Love to Christ will fill the heart, give strength to shake off hindering prejudices, and adjust all our intellectual difficulties. That love to Christ will broaden our love until we can survey the whole field of Christian brotherhood and say with the Savior, *There prepare a room--a place for us!*

J. J. Blackburn

He Gave Himself

It is not without reason that we find the phrase "*He gave Himself,*" repeatedly used of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who died for man, a ransom for all, did so freely giving Himself for this very purpose. As He said of Himself, "*I lay down my life, no man takes it from me. I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay It down, and have authority to receive it again*" (John 10:17, 18). Many have suffered and died because they were victims in the hands of their enemies, but Jesus, who could have summoned twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, submitted Himself to those who sought to destroy Him.

The priests were beginning to realize that they would not be able to arrest Him unless He was ready and willing that they should do so. They feared not only the people, but Jesus, who had demonstrated such miraculous powers. Understanding Him so little, they foresaw all kinds of ways in which He might thwart their purpose. Jesus, however, took the initiative in His own arrest, by His announcement that the hour had come when His blood would be shed for many; that the Son of man was to be betrayed and the Shepherd would be smitten. These statements, carried by Judas to the Jewish rulers on that fateful night gave them the impression He would not resist arrest, causing them to issue hasty orders that He should be taken.

This was at the very time of the feast, which they had already decided would be too inconvenient and dangerous an occasion to take Jesus ~ 'Not on the feast day lest there be an uproar among the people' (Matt.26:4 & 5). But it was the time chosen by God before the foundation of the world, for the death of the Lamb that was to be slain for the sin of the world. Jesus was ready to drink the cup of suffering, knowing that the hour had come for Him to pour out His soul unto death. He had foreseen not only the manner, the reason and the place of His sacrifice, but also the exact time, and in the light of this knowledge He went resolutely forward, co-operating in every detail with what He saw to be God's great eternal purpose. As Luke 9:51 records, "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

It is in the garden of Gethsemane that we see vividly displayed the determination of Christ to give Himself as a willing offering for sin, in fulfillment of the purpose of God. The question naturally arises, why did Jesus go to the garden of

Gethsemane that night, unless it was with the express purpose of surrendering Himself to His enemies? He knew Judas had gone to the priests with the intention of betraying him...Christ was not obliged to go to the garden, still less was He compelled to remain there at such a late hour, and for such a long time. Matthew and Mark refer to three separate periods of sleep, broken by the return of Jesus from His place of prayer, at a distance of a stone's throw. This must have covered some considerable time. The disciples, arriving in the garden on such a strange and mysterious errand, would not have gone to sleep until after much watching and questioning among themselves, and only then as fatigue overcame their desire to keep watch with their Master.

During this time the Jewish leaders, calling an urgent representation of the Sanhedrin members, were taking hasty consultation together over the message Judas brought. They could not thrust a capital charge in front of Pilate early the next morning without his knowledge, so before they took any action some communication with him was first necessary to ensure their plans were successful. To arrest Jesus and have to hold Him for trial over the feast might involve a popular reaction, and they were afraid of the people, and witnesses had to be found before they could proceed, for it was essential to keep the letter of the law. This delay would have allowed any ordinary fugitive to escape long before. Yet, Judas knew Jesus would remain where He was for he took the expedition straight to the garden in spite of the lateness of the hour.

Jesus waited in Gethsemane long after His disciples had fallen asleep...and He was prepared to go on waiting. This visit to the garden was different from any previous occasion, for the disciples were being held there much longer than ever before. They were waiting at His bidding, unaware of the reason, but He was waiting that the Son of man should be delivered into the hands of sinners to be taken by wicked hands, mocked, scourged, crucified and slain.

The circumstances that arose, due to the long delay before Judas arrived in Gethsemane, are very remarkable. It would almost appear as though God caused this delay for the very purpose of demonstrating the whole-hearted submission of our Lord under the most trying conditions. Soon after their entrance into the garden, the disciples could see that Jesus began to be very unlike His usual calm and peaceful demeanor. He felt the

need of solitude and yet at the same time he craved for the sympathy and company of His closest disciples, even though at a distance. He had to tread the winepress alone, for they failed to watch with Him even for one hour, as He discovered on His first return to them during His horror of great darkness. He could have said then, as at any other time, "*Arise, let us be going.*" But no, He went back a second and third time to face the great and momentous decision He had to make. By so doing He displayed and enhanced His resolute spirit of self-sacrifice.

This was not the choice of one who had not counted the cost. He had weighed and fully appreciated all the consequences that were to follow. He was not a fatalist, nor a stoic. He had a pure and sensitive man's natural abhorrence of treachery, pain and death. His human will shrank from the cup that was now at His lips; yet because it came from His Father, He accepted it. "*Not as I will, but as You will.*" He prayed for deliverance from the horrors which faced Him, yet He was prepared to submit to them if it was God's will. How real must this test have been that caused Him to be in such an agony, to pray so earnestly with tears and strong crying, and to sweat great drops of blood. This was no trifling choice, but a great internal struggle convulsing the inner man. His shuddering nature striving and struggling against His unconquerable will. Yes. praise God, it was unconquerable will. He gave Himself - in spite of Himself.

Many have faced the suffering of death without realizing its terrors beforehand, being stupefied or hardened by sin, but Jesus saw clearly what was before Him. He knew and experienced it all to the full. And He, who in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, was heard. In His agony, there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him. Though a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The battle was over, the victory over self was won, and He went forward unmoved, to suffer patiently and to die at the hands of His enemies.

When Jesus went to Gethsemane, He waited there for His betrayer, knowing the rulers would take Him and that He would be ill-treated, condemned, and nailed to the cross. Yet He waited and waited as the darkness increased praying while His disciples slept. He need not have remained, there was none to

prevent Him escaping out of their hands as He had done on previous occasions. However, He knew that the hour had come, at this very Passover, for Him to be slain as the antitypical Lamb. No others understood this, though He had sought to tell them in plain language, as well as by means of the memorial bread and wine. They had failed to grasp this unwelcome and unpleasant truth. He faced the test alone; there was none with Him. Nor did He seek to evade the issue, as any other man would have done under similar circumstances. He went willingly, led as a sheep to the slaughter, yet He could have paralyzed them all by the power of His own personality. He gave His life a ransom for all, laid it down by His own volition, offered Himself without spot to God, as a lamb without blemish. For He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; yet He endured the cross, despising the shame, that He might wash us from our sins in His own blood. *“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,”* was the expressed spirit of His life.

Without that magnanimous giving of Himself, we, in common with the whole world of mankind, would have been forever without God and without hope. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift, for with Jesus, God freely gives us all things. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!*

Bible Student Magazine

“...John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’” John 1:29

“...Since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” 1 Cor. 15:21, 22 NKJ

“...God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to a full knowledge of truth. For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself having been a man, Christ Jesus, the one having given himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times.” 1Ti 2:3-6 RVIC

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.”

1Co 5:7 NASB

An Easter Message

The Passover had come and had been celebrated in the Upper room. There the Lord instituted the Last Supper as a memorial of His coming death. Following this, He and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus desired to pray and prepare Himself for His coming ordeal and there He was betrayed and arrested by the officers of the Chief Priests. During that same night, Jesus was illegally tried by the Council, greatly abused and taken before Pilate who sent Him to King Herod, then back to Pilate where the mob demanded His death. Pilate, who tried to have Him released, bowed to the will of the mob, consenting finally to Jesus' death.

Carrying a heavy wooden cross, the Lord was led to Calvary's Hill and there crucified between two thieves. Six hours later, He died in great agony, as an earthquake shook Jerusalem. That same day, Joseph of Arimathea went before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He and Nicodemus then anointed the Lord's body, wrapped it in pure white linen and laid it in Joseph's own new tomb. It was now almost sunset. The large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb and with heavy hearts, they returned home.

What were the disciples feeling during the three days that followed? *"They mourned and wept"* (Mark 16:10). They were a grieved and discouraged lot. Jesus' death dashed their hopes. All their plans lay crushed to the ground. Said the two disciples sadly, as they walked on the road to Emmaus, *"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"* (Luke 24:21).

Besides their broken hopes, they had become fearful for their very lives. This is attested to by their barred and locked doors *"for fear of the Jews."* They reasoned that what had happened to their Master could happen to them as well. The fact that the Lord often told them He would be betrayed and killed left no impression upon them. He reminded them of this on the very evening He was arrested, saying, *"It is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee"* (Matt. 26:31). They had forgotten His repeated statements that after three days He would rise from the dead. The Lord's death now seemed final. Filled with these thoughts we can imagine how dejected they must have been.

And so we come to the first day of the week - Sunday morning! Each of the Gospels gives us a different account of our Lord's Resurrection - not conflicting ones, but according to their way of viewing this great event. Taking them all together we see that very early in the morning,

while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, carrying sweet spices, headed toward the tomb with the intent of performing one last act of love and devotion on their dear Master's body. But, how were they to roll back the heavy stone that was at the entrance to the tomb?

Going back in our narrative, we remember that the day following our Lord's death, the Chief Priests and Pharisees, remembering Jesus prediction that He would die and rise the third day, went to Pilate and requested the tomb be sealed and guarded by soldiers to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and claiming that He had risen. Thus, the stone was sealed and well-guarded.

So, on the third day, while it was yet dark, an angel of the LORD came down and there was a great earthquake. John, in the 20th Chapter, gives us the most detailed and moving report of that wonderful morning. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early and found the stone rolled away, the guards gone. She didn't go inside the tomb, but looking inside she saw it was empty. She ran to Peter and John and told them - not that Jesus was risen but that *"they have taken away the Lord and we know not where they have laid him"* (John 20:2)! Peter and John ran to the tomb, and finding it empty, returned home. Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene stood back weeping for the missing body of her Lord - then hearing a voice ask her why she was weeping, and thinking that it was the Gardener, replied, *"If you have taken the body away, please tell me where you have laid it and I will take it away."* It was then the Risen Lord revealed Himself by uttering one single word - her name, in the familiar tone she knew so well, **"Mary!"** Then she cried out, with what must have been the utmost joy, **"Master!"**

The Lord manifested Himself on numerous occasions before His ascension, leaving no question that He arose from the dead. The disciples also witnessed His ascension into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God. Soon He will return for the Church - His Bride! Thank God for such *Blessed Assurance!*

The question for each of us to ask is this: *"What does Jesus Resurrection mean to me personally and to the world?"* The question is answered by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17-22 where he says: 1. Our faith in Jesus is not in vain; 2. Our sins are forgiven and forgotten; 3. Our resurrection is guaranteed as well as that of all mankind. *If we were to stop at the cross, it would be like mistaking the door for the room. **The empty tomb** is the revelation of God of the triumph of life over death - of a living universe and of His promise that all those who are in their graves shall hear His voice and come forth. **Praise God!*** G. Boccaccio

Phototropism

Trees planted on flat, level ground grow straight up. Trees planted on a steep slope or on a hill do not grow perpendicular to the ground. Instead, they also grow straight up regardless of the angle of the ground. Trees naturally always try to reach up toward the sky and seek as much light as possible. The motivation is survival. The scientific name for this process is *phototropism*.

Phototropism is the growth of living cells toward the greatest source of light. Light provides trees with the energy and food that enable them to grow in the first place. The principle of phototropism is not just a natural law; it is also a spiritual one. *For a spiritual life to grow, it too must always seek as much light as possible.* Spiritual energy and growth depend on light. The motivation: *spiritual survival*.

John 1:3-4, in reference to the logos says, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."* The natural, physical world was created through the Word of Yahweh. The Word was made flesh and named Jesus. Although few recognized or acknowledged who He was, life was *in and through Him...the light of men*.

In John 8:12, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* Jesus stated clearly that He was the light. He told us about the source and power of that light. He explained the effect it could have on us.

The Apostle Paul verifies and clarifies all this in his second letter to the Corinthians (4:6). He ties together the concept of Yahweh's creating light by the spoken Word and the light and revelation of Yahweh by means *"of Jesus."* *"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

There is also, however, another tropism at work both in the natural and spiritual worlds. (A *tropism* is an *involuntary movement toward or away from a stimulus*.) Geotropism is the movement away from the pull of gravity. The pull of gravity is, even on a hill or slope, directly down. The greatest source of light is directly up.

Spiritually, you and I need both phototropism and geotropism. We need to learn to instinctively stretch and reach for our Lord Jesus.

Christ is the greatest source of our light. But we, likewise, need to learn to move instinctively and steadfastly away from the pull of gravity. Anything that holds us down, keeps us rooted in the physical world, pulls us back to our natural and sinful tendencies must be resisted and defeated.

While natural tropisms are involuntary, spiritual ones are voluntary. *We have a choice.* The neat principle in all this is that the more we seek light, the more easily we will move away from the darkness. But be clear about this: phototropism comes before geotropism.

We cannot resist evil successfully in our own power. We do not have the might necessary to change ourselves. We can never make ourselves good enough or worthy of the Christian way. It is only as we acknowledge our need for Christ and His power to save and regenerate us that we can begin to grow in the light. And then if we commit to Him fully, there is nothing that can stop our growth.

L. Urbaniak

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26-29 ESV

A Portrait of Jesus Why Are You So Afraid?

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. Matt. 8:23-26



The disciples set sail to the opposite of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is sleeping when a furious storm came upon them. Keep in mind that a good number of the disciples were seasoned fishermen. They had encountered their share of storms, but this one frightened even them to the point that they felt their lives were in danger. The Mark account states that the boat was taking on water. They cried out in desperation to their sleeping Master for saving. Before Jesus calms the storm, He takes time to make a statement about their faith and ask them a question. Jesus' response is rather strange, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" It seems obvious to me why they were afraid, after all their boat was taking on water, they were sure they were going to drown. Jesus does not accuse them of having no faith; they had enough faith to wake Him and ask for His help, but of having too little faith to believe that they would get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee as Jesus had told them they would.

Storms can threaten to sink our faith too. Sometimes in our lives the storms come upon us unexpectedly. Will we let fear overwhelm us or will we remember that Jesus is "in the boat with us." The bottom line is do we have enough faith to believe that Jesus is able to calm the winds and waves in our lives? That He has a plan for our lives and He is able to see that plan to fruition? Do we trust Jesus enough to believe He can save us, despite the winds and waves tossing us about? How much faith do we have? Remember it is faith that drives out fear. The point of this story is not so much about a storm that threatened the disciples, but about who is in the boat during the storm. It's not that Jesus doesn't care about the storms in our lives; it's that Jesus is not going to let our boats sink. We are safe because He is with us.

Donna Mathewson

The Children's Story Corner

A Display to Angels



Did you know that those things we say and do are seen by men and even the angels in heaven? In 1 Cor. 4:9, the Apostle Paul tells us that *“we are made a display to the world, and to angels.”* That means that the angels are looking down in wonder and great interest at how we are living our lives. It is something to think about when you are tempted to do that which is not quite right, because you think no one is watching. God and the angels are!

When Adam disobeyed the Lord's command: *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you will surely die,”* he brought the penalty of sin and death on the whole human family. He disobeyed because of his great love for Eve and the thought he might lose her. Adam loved Eve more than he loved his Creator. We must love God first.

How thankful we are that all mankind who believe on Jesus as their personal Savior will have everlasting life. God's Word tells us our Lord Jesus is *“the second Adam,”* and because He died and was resurrected, He has given us the chance to live forever!

When Satan was cast out of heaven, many angels followed him. They were very curious to see what men were able to do on earth. Because they also became disobedient to God, they are no longer in heaven. The Bible tells us they are *“chained in darkness”* until their time of judgment by Jesus and His Bride. Even though they are in *“darkness”* – possibly meaning they are no longer in heaven living in the Light of God - they can see what is going on with mankind. So, if you obey the teachings of your parents and the Bible and do not do what the other kids are doing because you know it isn't right, the angels, both the good ones and bad ones, will notice. Our Guardian angels rejoice when we make the right choice and do what pleases

God. It may be that in the future some angels who left heaven will repent and be restored because they see the blessings in the lives of those who obey God and do what is right.

The Bible doesn't tell us this to make us nervous and afraid, as though the angels have check lists for each of us and are keeping track to see who has been naughty or nice, but to show us that we all need to make very careful choices; not only because men and angels are watching, but because we want to please our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's choose to do the right thing!

Joyce Bateman

His Veiled Angels Guard Thee

*Often when thou art faint and weary in the struggle and the
strife,
And thy heart nigh sinks within thee, beneath the strain and
stress of life;
When thou art tried and fearful, and thou cannot see the
way,
And each night looms black with shadows from the sorrows
in the day;
I would ask thee still to trust Him, He who sees all in the
light,
For He guards thee by His angels, though they are veiled
from thy sight –
Yes, He guards thee by His angels though they are veiled
from thy sight.*

“The angel of the Lord encamps around about them that fear Him and delivers them.” Psalm 34:7

“When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."
Acts 12:11 ESV

The Family Corner

Mean What You Say, Say What You Mean



“So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11)

“I will walk in my house in the integrity of my heart.” Psalm 101:2

When God speaks or determines a course of action, you know that He will carry out what He purposes. All throughout the history of humanity, God has shown how faithful and unshakable His word is. Every short-term plan that He has set out to accomplish, he has brought about to completeness. God set forth this example from heaven when He sent His son, not only for Salvation, but so we could see how a human kept his word, and finished every task he set out to accomplish.

“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” (John 17:4)

Jesus gave us this tangible ideal to shoot for; he preached it, and more importantly, he lived it. He taught us that integrity is of utmost importance when it comes to carrying out what we promise others. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus admonishes us, as recorded by Matthew in chapter 5:34-37:

“But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

Now I hope that you don't use some phrases as freely as did the Jews in Jesus' time. We do however hear some people say things like; “I swear on my Mother's grave” or worse, “I swear to God.” These types of vows or oaths can only mean

one thing -- that our everyday word doesn't carry much weight. If we simply let our Yes truly mean Yes, instead of probably or maybe, then there would be no need for oaths. Perhaps the value of what Jesus is saying doesn't strike our consciences the way it should. Consider our normal activities around the family or the people at our workplace. Our spouse and children look to us to mold their thinking. They may come to believe that living a Christian life is just something you do occasionally. If you say, "I will take out the garbage" or "I will call so and so for you" and you don't do it, what kind of reflection of Christ are you to them? If Jesus said he would do something, he did it. No reminders were needed, ever! If we need reminders, what does this say to others? It says, "I don't consider your request important enough to take place over my interests and concerns." Is that what we want others to think of us, and by extension -- to think of Jesus? What will our children think of Jesus' integrity if we, who profess to be his followers, tell them that we will play with them or help them with their school work later, and never do it. It would be much better to say, "No, I can't do what you are asking today," than to say "Yes" and not do it, or be hounded into doing it.

We witness many ways to our coworkers. However, our words about Christ lose their credibility if we agree to carry out duties, and then fail to follow through. How can they possibly believe in a King whose servants are untrustworthy?

Say What You Mean -

Proverbs 29:20: "Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Proverbs 12:18: "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

It should be obvious to all Christians that Jesus never took back words that he spoke. Can you imagine Jesus saying, "I didn't mean that." However, we utter those sorrowful words way too often. The two scriptures quoted above should be very humbling and sobering if we give any thought to them

whatsoever. We have all been on the receiving end of a piercing rebuke--one that came from emotion rather than logic. That pain can be carried a long time. We certainly don't ever want to inflict such pain on our spouse or children. Children will carry the burden of guilt much longer than adults. Phrases like, "Get out of my sight" carry with it the thought, "you disgust me, – I can't bear the thought of you being in my presence," and "I don't care about you or your feelings." Perhaps this is overstated, but maybe not. We must always show support to our families, even when sin in them becomes obvious to all. Our tendency is to speak from emotion first, rather than thoughtful, prayerful consideration. Disappointment can come out as bitterness, which only serves to drive our families farther away from us.

Strong words are needed at times. But they should always be weighed carefully. Hasty and reckless words will only bring about division in our families, workplace and places of worship. If strong words are ever needed, we should make sure that we have biblical backing, and speak them only after we have prayed about the matter. Jesus had very strong words for the proud of heart -- never for the bruised reed. We need the wisdom from above to know when and how to speak to others, always remembering to -- "speak the truth in love."

Jesus said, "For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). Though we would like to believe this to be an overstatement, it is nevertheless true. At the start of this year, let us take care to honor our families by keeping our word and not speaking hastily when emotions are running high. The thing to be gained by such a commitment will be respect for ourselves, a good relationship with others, and most importantly, honor for our King.

Andrew Weeks

Prayer List

"Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you." (1 Samuel 12:23)



Let us be Prayer Warriors for our Brethren!

Anas, Julie – FL	Jones, Arlene - VA
Allen, Peggy & Russell – VT	Karavas, Anna - CA
Anderson, Family– WI (d)	Knapp, Jamie – NH
Andrada, Delores & Family – CA	Knapp, Joseph & Pat – IL
Bews, Sandra and Family TX (d)	Ketko, Marion – MI
Boswell, Arlene – IL	Leavitt, Denise & Richard – ME
Buxton, Jean & Family - UK	Lepitre Family - IL
Carpenter, Gloria – KY	Howes, Paul & Carla - UK
Caudle, James – WA	Kingsmith, Beresford - UK
Cline, Ruth – MO	Mazzotta, Eva – FL
Collins, Bert - NJ	Miller, Alain – Canada
Cooper, Carmela – NJ	Mitchell, Mitch - France
Csutor, Judith – CT	Moore, Ralph & Maryellen – CA
Day, Ronald – PA	Munoz, Sue - NY
Dickson, Roberta Jo – CA	Newling, Roseanna – NH
Dobbins, Esther - NH	Niewiowski, Elaine – NY
Donnarummo, Dan – OH (d)	Parker, Geraldine – CA
Duhaime, George & Martha – CT	Penton, Jim – Canada
Dunn, Kim - IL	Phillips, Stella – OK
Fantuzzo, Sharon - NY	Riggio, Fran – NH
Feliciano, Carmen - NY	Rowe, Bryan - UK
Fischer, Mike & Liz – WI	Schultz, Dan – MN
Foster, Jean – IL	Schwartz, Ruth – TX
Gary, Inez – VA	Seminoff, Brenda - CA
Hauslein, Karen – MD	Tuscia, Priscilla – FL
Hawk, Barbara – PA	Trent, Frank & Thelma - FL
Hildebrandt, Lois - FL	Teunis, Doris – IL
Hogrebe, Joan – MO	Weaver, Eddie - NY
Hopkins, Linda & Andrew – VA (d)	White, Ken & Joan - NY
Iannaccone, Bob & Marie – IL	Wisdom Hezekiah Ikpo - Nigeria
Ibasfalean, George – FL	Zychal, Ruth & Craig– NJ

(d) = death in the family

Entered into rest: Marie Clonar, NH, Oct. 25, 2018
Joan Donnarummo, OH Jan. 7, 2019

Important: If you know anyone in the names listed above whom no longer need special prayers, please advise us so we may remove their names. Thank you.

Bible Correspondence Course New Graduates & Notices

Congratulations to the following students who have completed their course and have been awarded a Certificate.



Basic Course

Pearlie Hudson, North Carolina

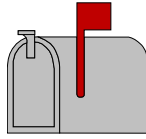
Advanced Course

Ernesto Agonoy, Hawaii

You are invited to view the following websites:

<http://www.cdmi.org> (Christian Discipling Ministries International)
<http://www.cbfchurch.com> (Christian Believers Fell. in NH)
<http://www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk> (Bible Fellowship in UK)
<http://www.bbschur.ch.org> (Lombard, IL)
<https://sites.google.com/site/quietwatersdevotions/home>
<http://www.cartyorkshire.co.uk> (CART)
<http://www.campblessing.com> (Camp Blessing)
<http://www.homechristians.net> (Fraser Valley, B.C.)
<http://www.christianrespondent.com> (R. Frye)
<http://www.bibelgemeinde.at> (Free Bible Students, Austria)
<http://www.bibelgemeinde.org> (Mission Work Bible Students, Austria)
<http://www.kronline.at/bibelstudien> (Free Bible Students, Germany (English))
<http://www.softgrafic.com/bibbia> (Italian Bible Students)
<http://www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au> (New Covenant News- Australia)

Letters from Our Fellowship and Readers



We thank you for your correspondence. Please send us your comments, questions, or article.

From Our Mail Box

In Jesus' name I greet you with a prayer for your peace and continued reliance upon our beloved Jesus for all things.

May your new year bring each of you a contentment and renewed strength in your endeavors to please our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus.

"His" Servant

A gift for the spiritual work that you all carry forward!

M.S. in Italy

Think about this --

Reputation is what men think you are; character is what God knows you are.

The light of God's Son in your heart puts His sunshine on your face.

If we save the candle, there will be no light.

Conferences & Conventions

Note: If you would like to have your Convention, Conference, Camp, or Seminar published in The New Creation Magazine, send information or a program *at least three months in advance* of the issue month of the magazine to the editor, Bob Whittaker

**Date of the annual memorial of our Lord's death, Thursday,
April 18, 2019 after 6:00 pm**

Apple Valley Christian Believer's Conference, April 19-21, 2019
Ontario Gateway Hotel, Ontario, California
Theme: My Living Hope
Contact: David Karavas, djkphil413@gmail.com, or 760-220-9288

Christian Believers Conference, 111th Annual, August 3 – 8, 2019
Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts
Registration details available later

Bible Students Fellowship Conference, August 16-20, 2019
Felden Lodge Conference Centre, Felden, Hemel, Hempstead,
HP3 0BL, England
Theme: Salvation, - Philippians 2:12
Contact Nicholas Charcharos at editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk

Donations

Many people around the world appreciate the New Creation magazine. For many, it is their only source of Christian communication. Also, for many, they only have it through the generous contributions of others. If you feel moved to help them in continuing to get the New Creation, please consider a donation to CDMI.

Article Contributions

Please send articles for possible publication to Dennis Gorham,
4 Alicia Street Somersworth, NH 03878
email: dennisgorham@comcast.net