

THE NEW CREATION

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CDMI Main Office

36 Chapel Lane, Somersworth, NH 03878

New Creation Editor

Bob Whittaker
356 Fairgreen Pl
Casselberry, FL 32707
bobwhittaker64@gmail.com

Printing & Distribution Center CDMI

36 Chapel Lane
Somersworth, NH 03878
Manager: Bruce Blake
bblake351@gmail.com

Donations CDMI

2462 E. Laurel Street
Mesa, AZ 85213
Laureen Shaw
bowenshaw@msn.com

Bible Correspondence Courses CDMI

P.O. Box 540
Warrenville, IL 60555
Manager: Allan Crawford
ahcrawford@ameritech.net

CDMI Website: <http://www.cdmi.org> **Phone:** 239-237-6319

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

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Paul's Love for Onesimus

Paul, in his letter to Philemon of Colosse, in verse 9, writes that *for love's sake I appeal to you...and in vs.10, I appeal to you for Onesimus whom I have begotten in my imprisonment.* Onesimus was a slave of Philemon. He evidently was not entirely submissive to Philemon because he apparently took something and fled, eventually coming in contact with Paul in imprisonment at Rome. Now, it was not uncommon for Christians to have slaves at that time. That was part of the culture, but to run away from a master in Roman times was very serious and could end in death.



We do not know how Onesimus came in contact with Paul, but he was converted by the gospel message. Onesimus recognized that what he had done to Philemon was contrary to righteousness and he wanted to make good. Paul agreed, even though Onesimus was now a greatly valued brother and helper to Paul. But Paul knew that this was the right thing to do and did his best to reconcile the slave with his master. Paul urged Philemon to receive him, giving reasons as to why, even pointing to Philemon's debt to Paul for his hearing of the gospel. We do not have Philemon's reply but must assume that he received Onesimus back warmly, maybe even releasing him from slavery, thereby allowing Onesimus to go back to minister unto Paul. The letter illustrates active love in the cultural norms of that time. Paul had counseled converts to abide in whatever station in life the gospel called them. If a slave, it did not matter, but if there was a legal right way to gain freedom, take it. Now that Onesimus was converted to Christianity, Philemon could have the utmost trust in his returned slave and welcome him as a brother in love with open arms. Let us be of that same spirit that Paul urged on Philemon. 1 Cor 7:20-22; Eph.6:5, 6; Col. 3:22; 1Tim.6:1; Phm 1:16

R. Whittaker

Important Lessons Connected to Nazareth

Cities and towns are very often known for what has, or is happening there. For instance, New York City is known as the “Financial Capital of the World,” due to Wall Street and its financial markets. Groton Connecticut near where I grew up is called the “Submarine Capital of the World” where Nautilus, the first Atomic Submarine was built. Bethlehem, as we will see is known as the birth place of Jesus, while Jerusalem is described in Mat. 5:35 “...as the city of the great King.” And as you also know, Nazareth is best known as the “home town” of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This happened at the direction of God. We read in 2:19-23, *“But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.”*

“And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

We learn of Nazareth’s disrepute in John 1:46 when Nathanael asked the question, *“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* It must have been less than cosmopolitan, a simple place where Mary and Joseph each lived, as we read in Luke 1:26-27, *“... the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph....”* We read in Luke 2:3, *“And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, (with Mary) out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;....”* With no room at the inn, in a humble setting, she gave birth to Jesus there.

Nazareth is also the city where our Lord gave us the understanding that *“A prophet is not without honor, but in his*

own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” (Mar.6:4). Expressed another way, “familiarity breeds contempt.” Sadly, this is perhaps why many don’t appreciate what they have until they lose it. In an associated event, Jesus declared to those in Nazareth that “... *many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian*” (**Luk 4:27**), and that during the three and a half years of famine, Elijah was only sent to a widow in Sarepta, a city of Sidon, who was saved, being provided for by the power of God. Jesus provided this revelation due to their unbelief, which angered the people who sought to cast Him down headlong off a hill of the city. (Lu.4:29)

Jesus was never associated with worldly reputation. From the beginning, He had a very humble birth, and from His childhood, lived in a town of disrepute. He personified humility. Remember He rode into Jerusalem being hailed King on a donkey, not a great white stallion that outwardly would be more fitting for a King. But it is God who exalts, that provides the golden crown, throne, and great white conquering horse. (Rev 19:11) We read in **Mat 23:12**, “*and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*”

Jesus was and is, as we should be, meek and humble, devoid of pride, **thereby fit to be exalted**, with an unwavering heart to serve. When James and John each wanted to sit on His side in the Kingdom, Jesus explained in Mat. 20:27, “... *whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*” Paul preached in Acts 20:35, “*I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” Whether in this age or the next, true greatness affords the most opportunity to give and serve. Let us remember Php 2:8-9, “*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*”

Remember how Jesse brought seven of his sons before Samuel, one to be chosen by God to be King of Israel. With none accepted, Samuel asked if these were all of his sons. In the end, it was the youngest, minding the sheep who God selected, being able to read the heart, and not influenced by outward appearances. We read in 1Co 1:27, *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”*

When Jesus was risen, He confronted Saul who was persecuting Christians. When Saul was blinded by the light and asked who he was, Jesus answered, *“I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.”* (Acts 22:8) Jesus highly exalted, still associated himself with His humble beginnings as a man, growing up in Nazareth, and now as then, caring for those He loves.

J. DiCesare

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*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. 2 Cor. 7:1*

HOW many of the prospective members of the Royal Priesthood find that they have defilements along this line, malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking! It is safe to say that everyone has some, if not all, of these weaknesses in the flesh to contend with--especially at the beginning of his entrance upon the priestly vocation. How carefully all should seek to put all these away! How each should scrutinize not only every act of life and every word and every thought, but, additionally, every motive underlying his words, thoughts and actions, so that they may be more and more purified from the earth defilements and be more and more acceptable to the Lord!

Daily Heavenly Manna

## Hezekiah, King of Judah

The Bible tells us that Hezekiah was the greatest of all the kings of Judah. “*Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was **no one like him among all the kings of Judah**, either before him or after him.<sup>6</sup> He held fast to the Lord and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses.<sup>7</sup> And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook.*” 2 Kings 18:5-7 (NIV)

Now that does not mean that he is to be considered greater than King David. David was the king of the whole nation of Israel, not just Judah. You remember that after King Solomon, who was David and Bathsheba’s son, died, the kingdom of Israel split in two. The northern 10 tribes of Israel went with Jeroboam as king, and the southern 2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin, stayed with Rehoboam son of Solomon.

Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became king and reigned for 29 years, from 716 BC to 686 BC. 2 Kings 18:1-4,

*“In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.<sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah.<sup>3</sup> He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.<sup>4</sup> He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)”*

### The Son of Ahaz

What is interesting and significant, at least to me, at this early part of our story, is that Hezekiah was the son of Ahaz and succeeded him as king. Why is it interesting and

significant? Because Ahaz, Hezekiah's father was one of the most evil and depraved kings of Judah. He was so bad that he even sacrificed some of his own sons in the fire, to the pagan gods. He abandoned the worship of the Lord God who had miraculously brought the nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, and chose instead to adopt the practices and customs of the gods made of wood and stone. 2 Chronicles 28:1-6 NIV,

*“Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and made idols for worshiping the Baals.<sup>3</sup> He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his children in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.<sup>4</sup> He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hands of the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him.<sup>6</sup> In one day Pekah son of Remaliah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah—because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their ancestors.”*

This is hard to believe, but it's what happened. Ahaz was an evil king. He was so bad that he was attacked and defeated by other kings. Even the nation of Israel, the northern 10 tribes, attacked him and inflicted heavy losses on him. His own kinsmen did this. In one day 120,000 of his men were killed. Did he repent and turn to the Lord God for help? No, he did not. Instead, he turned to the king of Assyria for help.

2 Chron. 28:20, 22 –*“Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help....<sup>22</sup> In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord.”*



Ahaz practically destroyed the established worship of the Lord God in Judah. He set up a replica of the pagan altar he had seen in Damascus, trying to impress and please the Assyrian king instead of turning to the Lord. He modified and rearranged the temple, which had been set up according to God's instructions. Ahaz did all these awful things.

Why spend time in reviewing what Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, did? Well, because Hezekiah, as a young man, became a king of a kingdom that is really in a shambles, a disaster, spiritually and morally, a kingdom that had turned away from God due to his evil father.

In addition, Assyria, which was a strong enemy gave the nation much trouble and exacted tribute. It had already all but destroyed the nation of Israel (the Northern 10 Tribes) and would soon take the people captive and scatter them throughout the Assyrian empire. In addition, people of other nations and cultures, Gentiles, were transported into the land of Israel. The Israelites who were left in the land intermarried with them and had children. These people later became the hated Samaritans in the New Testament. We know that God had warned Israel that this would happen if the nation went after false Gods in disobedience and rebellion against Him. Yet this is exactly what Israel and Judah did.

### **Hezekiah Brings Judah Back to God**

Hezekiah inherits this really bad situation. Yet, when he became king, he immediately started to turn things around. Hezekiah started to bring the nation back to God. Hezekiah walked into a mess, but he trusted God and began to clean up the mess and turn the heart of the people back to God.

How does that happen? How does a young man decide that he will not follow in the footsteps of an evil father and instead do the opposite and turn his heart to the Lord God and do what is right? Well, we are not really told, but we see again and again that this happens among the kings

of Judah. You get a bad king, followed by a good king, followed again by a bad king, and so on.

It is interesting to speculate how this could have happened. Somehow, Hezekiah's heart was with the Lord even though his father did not provide a good example. Maybe, he was taught by his mother, or maybe a devout priest had guided and mentored him, or maybe he figured things out on his own that it was best to do what is right and trust in the Lord. Maybe he was touched by the Lord in some way and so he trusted God. Maybe it was a combination of all these things. We just aren't exactly told. What we do know is that he made the decision to walk with the Lord and do what was right, and the Lord blessed him and made Judah a strong nation again. The lesson here for us is to do the same. We alone are responsible for our walk with God.

We now look at some of the events in his life. Right at the beginning we read in 2 Kings 18:4, *"<sup>4</sup> He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it."*

He removed the high places. Why is that so significant? Well, because none of the earlier "good" kings of Judah were able to accomplish this or went that far. Over and over again we read about a good king who did right in the sight of the Lord. But then there is a statement that says: But the high places were not taken down or removed. Here are two examples: 1) 2 Kings 12: 2-3, *"<sup>2</sup> Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him.<sup>3</sup> The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there."* 2) 2 Kings 14: 3-4, *"<sup>3</sup> He (Amaziah) did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father David had done. In everything he followed the example of his father Joash.<sup>4</sup> The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there."*

You see Hezekiah went a big step further. He took down these high places. The Lord God did not want the people to worship at their own individual high places and set up their own alters and shrines to other gods. They were supposed to have the priests do the sacrifices properly in the temple. The people stubbornly set up these high places and only during the time of Hezekiah were they removed. Apparently, this form of worship had become so entrenched among the people that the other kings, who tried to do what was right, were not able to take down these high places. They either were afraid that the people would rebel, or the kings just did not have the willpower or faith to do what needed to be done.

It is an important lesson for us. We need to be all in for our Lord. We need to trust and honor Him completely and wholeheartedly, not just in some things, not just part of the way. Hezekiah showed strength in his faith and true grit in what he did.

He also broke into pieces the bronze snake that the people were burning incense to. This practice had apparently gone on for a long time. The people were in a sense worshipping the snake by burning incense to it. Moses had made this snake as an antidote for the poisonous snake-bites the people were getting. They were being attacked by poisonous snakes because they were rebelling against God and Moses, who had led them out of bondage in Egypt. By gazing on this snake on a pole, they would be saved from death after a snake-bite. Numbers 21: 8 – 9, *“The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”<sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.”*

Again, it took a lot of courage and faith for Hezekiah to take down this bronze snake and break it into pieces. It was like a national treasure, basically, and he destroyed it. But he knew in his heart that it was wrong to worship this

bronze image when they were to worship only God himself, so he took it down and destroyed it.

Likewise, though it may be difficult, we also need to remove those idols in our lives that can destroy our true worship of God.

### **Hezekiah Delivered from Sennacherib**

Now, let's look at the very famous story of how the Lord delivered Hezekiah and the city of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army.

2 Kings 18:7-8 (NIV), <sup>7</sup> *And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.* <sup>8</sup> *From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory."*

Hezekiah strengthened his borders and his military position, fortified Jerusalem, and built a 1750 foot long tunnel to supply water to the city of Jerusalem in case of a possible siege—which did eventually come at the hands of the Assyrians. This amazing tunnel by the way, was discovered by archeologists and you can actually visit it. It had been hidden after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD. It was a truly amazing feat of engineering and construction for its time. Cut through a mountain of solid rock by hand tools. No one to this day knows exactly how it could have been done without asphyxiating the workers because there are no openings for air or light.

After all this good he was doing, turning the hearts of the nation of Judah back to God, Hezekiah would soon face his greatest crisis. One of the world's most powerful armies, Assyria, was coming up against Judah and the city of Jerusalem after Hezekiah had rebelled against Sennacherib and stopped paying tribute. 2 Kings 18:13 (NIV), <sup>13</sup> *In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them."* Sennacherib's army continued to march toward the city of Jerusalem and threatened to destroy or capture the

city. As the field commander stood outside the city wall, he called out to the people in Hebrew, "...Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. <sup>30</sup> Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us....'", 2 Kings 18: 28-30 (NIV)

The commander, who was representing Sennacherib, stood at the wall of Jerusalem and told the people to give up and surrender and not to listen to Hezekiah. He told them that no god would be able to save them from the power and might of the Assyrian army, as no one was able to stop them up to that point. And it was true that no one was able to stop the Assyrians yet. They were the world power at this time. They were feared greatly and ruthlessly destroyed anyone who would dare to resist them. So now, Hezekiah was in deep trouble as king of Judah. What did he do in this time of severe crisis? *"When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord."*

2 Kings 19: 1

Sennacherib withdraws for a short time after hearing that the army of Egypt was marching out against him. However, he sends a warning letter to Hezekiah not to let God deceive him into believing that he could save him, since no god had been able to save any city or nation from the Assyrian army up to that time.

So how does Hezekiah respond to this letter. He prays. He goes before the Lord God and asks God to deliver him from the hand of Sennacherib.

This is another great lesson for us. Hezekiah was in a terrible situation. But Hezekiah knew who to turn to in times of trouble. He knew that the Lord God was more than able to save him from this trouble.

### **Hezekiah's Prayer**

<sup>14</sup> *Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and*

spread it out before the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: “Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup> Give ear, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

<sup>17</sup> “It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. <sup>18</sup> They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. <sup>19</sup> Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God.” 2 Kings 19: 14 – 19

Hezekiah does not throw in the towel and give up. Though he is in a terrible situation, he turns to the Lord God whom he had trusted all along. The Assyrians were brutal warriors and a terrible foe. They killed and tortured those armies that they defeated and then dispersed the people to other lands. But Hezekiah does not give up. He respectfully approaches God in prayer, and acknowledges that the glory belongs to God for anything he does to help. That should be our attitude: “To God be the glory, for the things he has done and will do.” Then Hezekiah gets word from the prophet Isaiah. He had been consulting with the prophet throughout this crisis.

### **Isaiah Prophecies Sennacherib’s Fall**

<sup>20</sup> Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: 2 Kings 19:20-23, 32-37 “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. <sup>21</sup> This is the word that the Lord has spoken against him: <sup>22</sup> Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! <sup>23</sup> By your messengers you have ridiculed the Lord.”

<sup>32</sup> “Therefore this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. <sup>33</sup> By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the Lord. <sup>34</sup> I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.”

<sup>35</sup> That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! <sup>36</sup> So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. <sup>37</sup> One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.”

Wow! When God delivers, he truly delivers. Hezekiah did not have to fight with his army against the Assyrians. The angel of the Lord put to death 185,000 of Sennacherib’s men and Sennacherib was eventually assassinated by two of his own sons.

A poem written by Lord Byron in 1815 so eloquently described the destruction of Sennacherib:

### **The Destruction of Sennacherib**

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

*Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.*

*For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,*

*And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;  
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew  
still!*

*And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride:  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.*

*And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;  
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.*

*And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!*

### **Hezekiah's Illness and Recovery**

We now move on to cover the next amazing event in Hezekiah's life, as recorded in 2 Kings 20:1-11 (NIV), *"In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."<sup>2</sup> Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord,<sup>3</sup> "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.<sup>4</sup> Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him:<sup>5</sup> "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> I will add fifteen years to your life....<sup>7</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poul-*



*tice of figs.” They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.*

<sup>8</sup> *Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?”* <sup>9</sup> *Isaiah answered, “This is the Lord’s sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?”....* <sup>11</sup> *Then the prophet Isaiah called on the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.”*

Another prayer by this faithful king and another amazing miracle. Actually, two amazing miracles. Hezekiah is told by the prophet Isaiah that the Lord says you are surely going to die from your illness. Hezekiah prayed for healing. *“Remember Lord how I have walked faithfully and fully devoted to you.”* And before Isaiah left the court, the Lord tells him to go back and tell the king that he will be healed and that the Lord will add 15 years to his life.

Sometimes the Lord takes a while to answer prayer, sometimes he says no because we are not asking for the right thing or he has a different plan, sometimes we don’t understand why the answer is what it is. But in this case, God answers Hezekiah immediately. <sup>16</sup> *... The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”* James 5:16 (NIV) Hezekiah, I believe, was so startled or amazed by such an immediate positive response that he asks for a sign to confirm this will all happen? The sign to me, is just as amazing or even more so than the healing. That sign and miracle is that God was able to make the shadow of the sun go backwards. Only God, the almighty creator of the universe, can do something like that. Its beyond human comprehension. How awesome is our Heavenly Father.

## **Envoys from Babylon**

Now we come to the last chapter of Hezekiah’s life as recorded in 2 Kings 20:12-13 (NIV), <sup>12</sup> *At that time Marduk-*

*Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah's illness. <sup>13</sup> Hezekiah received the envoys and showed them all that was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices and the fine olive oil—his armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.”*

It seems as if there was a touch of pride in Hezekiah's life at this point. His people and these visitors from faraway Babylon probably flattered him. His healing, the victory over Sennacherib, his successful tunnel project and all his accomplishments in establishing his kingdom and turning his people back to God, plus all of his wealth and honor caused him to become a little proud. We get some insight into this in 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 (NIV), *“<sup>24</sup> In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the Lord, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. <sup>25</sup> But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord's wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.”*

When Isaiah asked him about these visitors Hezekiah told him what he showed them. *“<sup>16</sup> Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord: <sup>17</sup> The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. <sup>18</sup> And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” <sup>19</sup> “The word of the Lord you have spoken is good,” Hezekiah replied. For he thought, “Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?” 2 Kings 20: 16- 19 (NIV)* This is exactly what happened. Not too long after Hezekiah's death, these same Babylonians became the new world power, attacked and

conquered Judah and Jerusalem and carried off all these treasures.

Did you notice Hezekiah's attitude concerning this. He thought, well at least there will be peace and security during my lifetime. It seems as though, he was not too concerned about the future of his nation after he was gone. In addition, it seemed that he did not instruct and nurture his son, Manasseh, to walk in the way of the Lord, because Manasseh became probably the most wicked king of Judah.

### **In Summary**

Hezekiah was a very good king, a great king, the best king Judah ever had. However, he was not perfect. Neither was David his forefather. There have been no perfect people in history except Jesus, the Son of God. But as we have seen, Hezekiah's life story provides some strong lessons for all of us. One man, who walked by faith in the Lord was able to do so much good and leave so many lessons for us.

H. Gmiterek

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Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
'Colossians 3:3'

SOME Christian writer has well said: "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have sooner or later inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or to suffer all the good pleasure of his will; sweetness under provocation; calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others (where there is no conflicting principle involved), and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear--all of these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is 'hid with Christ in God.'" Songs in the Night

Elijah Must First Come

Introductory Thoughts

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." -- Malachi 4:5, 6.

The Prophet Malachi declared that one of two things would follow the work of the true Elijah -- either it would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the children to the fathers, i.e., bring into full accord and loving harmony the people -- or else it would result in the bringing of a great curse upon the people and great tribulation.

After the transfiguration scene there is recorded a question the disciples asked Jesus, when they came down from the mountain: *"And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'"* Jesus' answer to this question is of great importance.

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:10-13)

The literal Elijah, of course, remains in the grave, peacefully sleeping until the resurrection of that Great Day of Messiah. But, in many respects Elijah was a type, a picture, that others since have fulfilled to a greater or lesser degree.

Malachi: Three Minor Fulfillments

1. John the Baptist. Even before birth, it was stated of him, *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* [Luke 1:17] John the Baptist was playing the role of the messenger who was announcing our Lord's presence and the Kingdom of Heaven "at hand", and he was

also acting in the same capacity to the Israelites as Elijah did when he brought about a change of sentiment as recorded in 1 Kings 18. John the Baptist failed to "restore all things," hence the "curse" [end of Jewish polity; destruction of the Temple] came upon the nation in AD 66-73. Nevertheless, his mission to the believing "remnant", as forerunner and announcer of Messiah, was a success.

2. The Man Jesus. He did a work similar to, but larger, than John the Baptist, presenting himself (the Messiah) to the nation, proclaiming truth and righteousness, and announcing the Kingdom of God "at hand". He also failed [except for the believing "remnant"] to convert the nation of Israel, and the "curse" [end of Jewish polity; destruction of the Temple] came upon the nation in AD 66-73. See Matthew 17:10-13 above. Nevertheless, his mission to provide the "ransom for all", and to set the foundation of the church, was a success.

3. The Gospel-Age Church. Not enough space to elaborate the matter in this brief presentation, but there is good reason to consider the church in the flesh as also typified by Elijah, and as also doing an Elijah work during this Church age. The church's commission was to "make disciples of all nations" and "teaching them to observe all things" that Jesus had taught [Matthew 28:18-20]; yet it was foreseen that the church would fail, only a relative few would respond, and the majority would reject the message. Hence, the "curse", the great "Time of Trouble" [shown in Elijah's vision of wind (war), earthquake (revolution), and fire (anarchy) -- 1 Kings 19:11-12], will come upon this "present evil world" to bring it to its well-deserved end.

Malachi: The Major Fulfillment

The Great Messiah. In the Millennial Kingdom, the returned Jesus, having "all power in heaven and earth", and with his Bride at his side, WILL SUCCEED.

The "still, small voice" [1 Kings 19:12] -- or "the voice of Eden" (as Luther phrases it) -- will be heard; the voice that stilled the tempest on Galilee's waters will once again be heard -- "Peace, be still"; and raging humanity will fall silent.

The greater fulfillment of the prophecy will be on a grand scale, far beyond anything that was ever done by John the Baptist, or Jesus in the flesh, or the church in the flesh.

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” Psalm 46:10

Even so, come, Lord Jesus Messiah!

L. Schneider

All Scriptures from the NKJV unless otherwise stated.

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***"Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, then spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions, so the Lord alone did lead them..."***  
**Deut. 32:11, 12**

God, like the eagle, stirs our nest. Yesterday it was the place for us; today there is a new plan. He wrecks the nest, although He knows it is dear to us. He loves us too well not to spoil our meager contentment. *Let not our minds, therefore, dwell on second causes. It is His doing!*

Though the destruction of the nest may seem wanton, and almost certainly come at an hour when I do not expect it and least anticipate ~ let me guard my heart and be not forgetful of God's care, lest I miss the meaning of the wreckage of my hopes. *He has something better for me.*

“God spreads broad wings;  
And by His lifting, holy grace,  
We find a wider, fairer place,  
The freedom of untrammelled space;  
Where clearer vision shows us things  
The nest-view never brings.”

## **A Book of Beginnings**

In Genesis we read about the Creation story,  
A Book of Beginnings, beholding God's glory.

When God said, "Let there be light,"  
He started the day and then came the night.

The invisible God spoke and things came to be,  
He created the mountains, oceans and seas.

He made puffy white clouds to drift in the sky,  
And flying birds soaring up so high,

Sea creatures to swim in the water and sea,  
And animals of every kind for you and me.

The wonders of nature and beauty of the land,  
Were so wonderfully designed by the Master's hand.

Then in His image God created man,  
He blessed him and gave him a long lifespan.

And God made a garden as nice as can be,  
But beware of that tree! "Don't eat of it," you see!

Obey my commands and I'll tell you why,  
For if you eat of that tree, "you will surely die."

But one day, the sneaky snake whispered a lie,  
And told Eve, "You will surely not die."

So Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden,  
Ate of the tree that was forbidden.

How sad that day was when they didn't do what's right,  
Eating from that tree was a sin in God's sight.

Now they must leave the garden and go,  
Where thorns and thistles and weeds would grow.

Disobeying God had caused them to fall  
And the penalty for sin was death to all.

Alice Gmiterek Ryden, May 14, 2023

## What Takes Place When You Die

Let's go back to creation and refresh our understanding. In Gen. 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." So, we see that every human being who has been born since Adam has the "breath of life" (God's breath) within him or her.

Physiologically speaking, we breathe in oxygen into our lungs and exhale carbon dioxide, but we do not empty our lungs completely; there is what physiologists call residual air remaining in the lungs after CO<sub>2</sub> expiration; otherwise, the lungs would collapse.

So when a person dies, this residual air (God's breath) leaves the lungs for the first and only time. When Jesus was on the cross of Calvary (Luke 23:46): "and...cried with a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the spirit.'" I believe it was there that Jesus gave up this residual air and died. Some believe that Jesus went into hell and preached...but we are clearly told that Jesus was dead three days and three nights (Mathew 12:38-40).

Likewise, when we die, our residual air (God's breath) returns to our Creator, along with our history here on earth — we're dead! We don't go up to Heaven at that time. As the Lord told Nicodemus: "And no man has ascended up to heaven, but him that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man..."(John 3:13). Only Jesus has come down from heaven, and thus, no one has ascended to heaven yet.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 says: "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." When we die, we go into the grave, as if we were sleeping. Jesus pictures death as a sleep: "These things said He: and after that He said unto them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may wake him out of sleep.' Then said his disciples, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well.' Howbeit, Jesus spoke of his death; but they



thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11-14). Job also understood about death being a sleep: “...for now shall I sleep in the dust” (Job 7:21). When Stephen was being stoned to death, the account (Acts 7:60) says: “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

The Apostle Paul states in 1 Thes. 4:13-18: “But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep (dead), that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet The Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord...comfort one another with these words.”

So we see that death is likened to sleep. When we go to bed and sleep (without dreaming), it is like being dead because we don't know anything until we wake up. So it is the same when we die -- it is like an overnight sleep though many years may go by; but it will seem like only a night's sleep to those who have died before us. How wonderful! Remember, “the dead know not anything.”

Dan Donnarummo

### **Asleep in Jesus**

Asleep in Jesus! Blessed sleep,  
From which none ever wakes to weep;  
A calm and undisturbed repose,  
Unbroken by the last of foes.

Asleep in Jesus! Oh, how sweet  
To be for such a slumber meet,  
With holy confidence to sing  
That death has lost its venom'd sting!

Asleep in Jesus! Peaceful rest,  
Whose waking is supremely blessed;  
No fear, no woe, shall dim that hour  
That manifests the Savior's power.

Asleep in Jesus! Oh, for me  
May such a blessed refuge be!  
Securely shall my ashes lie  
And wait the summons from on high.

Asleep in Jesus! Far from thee  
Thy kindred and their graves may be;  
But this is still a blessed sleep,  
From which none ever wakes to weep.

Author unknown

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“The Wesley brothers, Charles and John, together wrote more than 6,000 hymns. Both men were known to say that they made more converts through their hymns than through their preaching.”

¹My song shall be of Jesus,
His mercy crowns my days:
He fills my cup with blessings,
And tunes my heart to praise.
My song shall be of Jesus,
The precious Lamb of God,
Who gave himself, my ransom,
Who bought me with his blood.

Anger – a Divider

Anger has been a problem to mankind almost since the beginning of time. It has proven itself the source of division that has affected almost every area of our lives. If anger is not dealt with properly, it can become a very destructive force.

The first example of this is in Genesis 4:2-8, *“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.’ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”*

Anger seems to be inherent in mankind since the fall in the Garden of Eden. So how does one *“rule over it”* as we read above. It definitely is not by ignoring it. If we do, the anger will fester and grow. A choice must be made to quench the anger and this we find in the advice of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:26-27, *“In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”* Action is required in dealing with this problem. Anger must be dealt with quickly and with firmness if it is to be resolved.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 12:25, *“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.”* In our country anger and hatred have taken their toll and caused deep divisions. In 1858 Lincoln told the nation that *“a house divided cannot stand.”* He was trying to unify the country that had two opposing cultural views – one side (mostly in the South) was against the abolishment of slavery; while the north felt very strongly that it was immoral and should be outlawed. The feelings were so strong

that in time it brought about the Civil War, the Confederate Army of the South against the Union Army of the North. Anger and hatred were prevalent on both sides and brought about unbelievable atrocities and one of the bloodiest wars of that era.

Anger and hatred are prevalent still in our country in so many areas. It is so divided that it seems very doubtful that some degree of unity can ever be obtained. Some of these divisions are: Democrats vs Republicans; Pro-life vs Pro-choice; the Right vs the Left; the Liberal vs the Conservative, the Religious vs the Atheist, a divided House of Representatives; a divided Senate; the moral vs the immoral; defund the police vs support the police; and the list goes on. Years ago, these various factions would just strongly disagree with each other while respecting another's viewpoint, but sadly that is not the case today. The end justifies the means regardless of how that is to be carried out.

Since this is the environmental culture that surrounds us today, the Christian needs all the more to focus on God and His Word. It is only there that we can find lasting hope and assurance for a better future for mankind. We should not be surprised with the evil around us for the Bible reveals this to us, such as in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”*

But let us not despair for the day is coming when:

“He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” Micah 4:3

*“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, says the **LORD**.”* Isaiah 65:24-25

*“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the **LORD** and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their chains and throw off their shackle.’ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ‘I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.’ I will proclaim the **LORD’S** decree: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the **LORD** with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”* Psalm 2:1-12

*“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**.”* Revelation 19:11-16

“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no

longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"
Revelation 21:1-5

For those who have even the slightest doubt that these prophetic scriptures will take place, let us look to what the prophet tells us in Isaiah 55:8, 9 and 11: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts, 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."*

E. Weeks

Beware! Anger is just one letter short of **danger**.

Anger that answers anger is like a stone cast into a hornet's nest.

Perfect Love is Slow to suspect ~ quick to trust.
Slow to condemn ~ quick to justify.
Slow to reprimand ~ quick to forbear.
Slow to demand ~ quick to give.
Slow to provoke ~ quick to reconcile.
Slow to hinder ~ quick to help.
Slow to resent ~ quick to forgive.
Slow to expose ~ quick to shield.

A Call to Repentance

It is generally believed among Christians that we are now living in the Laodicean period of the Gospel Age. Some believe the seven messages apply to the entire Church Age.

These seven messages or letters were dictated by the Lord Jesus Himself to the Apostle John, the former "*son of thunder*," who had become *the Apostle of love*. He was known as such to the Christian churches of his time. His letters were filled with love as doubtless was his preaching and general conversations. Did this mean that he wrote and said nothing but sweet words of comfort and encouragement? Not at all! John was first and foremost the servant of Jesus Christ, having been exiled to the Isle of Patmos because of his loyalty in preaching Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom. The messages that he wrote down for the seven churches, located in Asia, were not his words, but the words of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, his Master, who stated repeatedly, "*He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.*"

Naturally, living at this end of the age, our attention is attracted by the message to the Church of Laodicea. We can imagine how hard it must have been for the Apostle to write down the words of this book, and particularly this message to the 7th church. John, who regarded those of the Church as his "*dear children*," now was directed to write strong words of rebuke and condemnation: "*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot; but because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth*" (Revelation 3:15, 16).

One of the primary messages, from the day of John the Baptist until now, is the call to *repent, confess your sins, and be saved*. The call to this Church was for them to *repent again* for they had strayed far from the Lord. They had lost all their zeal and now lived in complacency brought about by luxurious living. Jesus, whose eyes are described as "*a flame of fire*"

looked down on the Laodicean Church, insipid, bursting with false spiritual pride, a mere outer shell with no inward convictions. Those “*eyes of fire*” were able to read their hearts and judge their works. He described this church as “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” (Rev. 3:17). It stands in history as a church who preached Christ half-heartedly, more concerned with their own prosperity and numbers than with the calling of those with hearing ears *to repentance*. They were so far gone that Jesus warned them unless they changed, they were about to be cast off. The need for repentance was the last thing which that Church regarded as applicable to them. Just how did she view herself? Revelation 3:17a tells us, “*You say, ‘I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.’*” In her spiritual blindness she saw herself as wholesome, fulfilled, and perfect with not a need in the world. She stood there in her pride rather than in her true spiritual poverty, shame and nakedness. How very sad!

And now for some very personal questions: Do we apply to ourselves this same message that was written to the Christians in Laodicea? Is it possible that we might also be lukewarm in our zeal for the Lord? It is so easy to justify ourselves. This Church had deceived herself. Is it possible that we are also suffering unawares from self-deception? Some say they have no need; they have everything in abundance, not only materially but spiritually as well. They have been given “*all the truth*” that was to be revealed...at this end of the age. They truly believe that they alone have “*THE Truth,*” and that there is nothing to be gained by studying the Bible alone. Because of this assumption, they have erected invisible walls around themselves and their followers, becoming themselves imprisoned within and thus impeding the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, who Jesus said would be the Church’s guide in understanding the Word of God. 1 John 2:27 tells us, “*But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*” There is no longer the liberty that the Spirit of God engenders

among the followers of Jesus in some groups of Christians. 2 Corinthians 3:17 states, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Let us consider our true spiritual condition and if it be wanting, let us quickly heed the Lord's counsel: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Revelation 3:18).

Gaetano Boccaccio

*The penitent can see with more than mortal sight;
Earth's wisdom gropes and fails like lame men in the night.
To penitents alone are heavenly things made clear;
The best of lenses is a penitential tear.* .M. I. Reich

Rev 3:14-22 NASB "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 '**Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,** 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; **therefore be zealous and repent.** 20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

A Portrait of Jesus:

Healing on the Sabbath



“Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.” Mark 3:1-6

Oh, those Pharisees, they were so pigheaded they couldn't even see the obvious that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath. They studied the law; they knew it backwards and forwards and yet they had no idea why God created the Sabbath! In chapter 2, Jesus told them that the Sabbath was made to benefit man. It was to give him a break from the daily toil and draw him closer to God. Sabbath was all about restoration of body and soul. How could they stand there and not see that healing a man who had suffered his whole life would surely draw that man closer to the God who had healed him! How could they not see what the purpose of the Sabbath was, to allow man to be restored to his relationship with God. Worship would surely follow. Were they worshiping God with all their rules and regulations? No, they were actually a distraction. They were so busy enforcing the rules that they missed the purpose for those rules. Surely the man whose hand was restored to wholeness left worshipping God. He probably never missed a day of worshipping God after his healing.

Jesus wants all that distracts us from restoration with God to be removed from our lives. He does not want the blindness of the Pharisees to fill our hearts and minds. They were blinded to their own sins because they focus on the perceived sins of

others. In fact, they were so blinded they thought Jesus was a sinner! Now we might not fall into that category of blindness but are we more aware of our own sins than others? Do we repent of those sins immediately? Jesus also wants us to put people first! Do we put others and their needs ahead of our own? Jesus did this continually in His ministry. People over our desires, people over our plans, people over rules! Others came first to Jesus and they should come first to us as well. Let's remember that Jesus was all about restoration and that's what we should be about as well!

D. Mathewson

Singing to the Lord

"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."
Matthew 26:30

Just think of it! Jesus was on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed and die on a cross, yet He was able to sing! In the darkest hour of history, He gave thanks to His God!

And because He sang, His followers can sing today, in any circumstances: in persecution, trials, sorrow, tragedy, even death. When Paul and Silas were in prison, their feet in stocks and backs bleeding, they "sang praises to God at midnight," and all the prisoners heard them. As they sang an earthquake caused the prison doors to open, and the bonds of the captives were loosed.

Christianity is a singing religion, for we have something to sing about. David writes, "[The Lord] drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet on a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (Ps. 40:2-3)

In the New Testament, Paul exhorts us to "be filled with the Spirit." This, he declares, will result in speaking "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). The Holy Spirit enables us to sing in any situation.

At the closing of the age, when the saints gather around the throne of God, there will be a great multitude from all nations who will sing praises unto God Almighty. In Rev. 5:9, John writes, "They sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'"

Thought for the day: Christ helps us to quit sinning and start singing.

J.T. Seamands

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!

Adkisson, Grace – TX	Howes, Paul & Carla - UK
Boswell, Arlene – IL	Karavas, Anna - CA
Buxton, Jean & Family - UK	Leavitt, Denise & Richard – ME
Casell, Agnes & Family –VT (d)	Lepitre Family - IL
Cooper, Carmela – NJ	Mazzotta, Eva – VA
Csutor, Judith – CT	Miller, Alain – Canada
Day, Ronald – PA	Moore, Ralph & Maryellen – CA
Dalesandro, Jim and family - IL (d)	Ostwald, Dick - WI
Dickson, Roberta Jo – CA	Parker, Geraldine – CA
Dunn, Kim - IL	Penton, Jim – Canada
Feliciano, Carmen - NY	Phillips, Stella – OK
Fischer, Mike & Liz – WI	Rice, Michelle – MA (d)
Foster, Jean – IL	Rowe, Bryan - UK
Hauslein, Karen – MD	Schwartz, Ruth – TX
Hawk, Barbara – PA	Seminoff, Brenda – CA
Hildebrandt, Lois - FL	Tuscia, Priscilla – FL
Hoffner, Steve – NH	White, Joan - NY (d)
Hogrebe, Joan – MO	(d) = death in the family

Entered into rest:

Jeanne Dalesandro, IL, May 2023
Ruth Szybinski, NY, May 2023

Important: If you know anyone in the names listed above whom no longer needs special prayers, please advise us so we may remove their names. Also, if any of the information is incorrect, please let the editor know. Thank you.

People do not care what you think until you care what they feel.

Bible Correspondence Course New Graduates & Websites

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



Joanna Dzepovski of NJ completed the Basic Course in April

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You are invited to view the following websites:

<http://www.cdmi.org> (Christian Discipling Ministries International)  
(Current/past NC magazine issues are available on our website)

<https://www.christianbelieversconference.com/>

<http://www.cbfchurch.com> (Christian Believers Fellowship in NH)

<http://www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk> (Bible Fellowship in UK)

<http://www.bbschurch.org> (Lombard, IL)

<https://sites.google.com/site/quietwatersdevotions/home>

<http://www.cartyorkshire.co.uk> (CART)

<http://www.campblessing.com> (Camp Blessing)

<http://www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au> (New Covenant News, Australia)

<https://e-biblia.org/> (Os Estudantes da Bíblia, The Bible Students, Brazil - Portuguese/Span) email: [contact@e-biblia.org](mailto:contact@e-biblia.org)

### **Be Patient With God**

God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold,  
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;  
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.

## Conferences & Conventions

### 114<sup>th</sup> Christian Believers Conference

Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts, **August 2-5, 2023**

Theme: **“The Pursuit of Godliness”** 1 Timothy 6:11

Go to: **www.cbconference.com** for more information

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Bible Students Fellowship Conference

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, England

9-13 August 2023 DV

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.

Notice: If you know of Christian friends who would benefit from receiving the bimonthly New Creation Magazine via mail, send their names and addresses to the CDMI main office, care of Bruce Blake. The address is inside the front cover.

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