

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth"

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It Is Obvious That It Is Even At The Door

The Coming of the Lord

By Fred O. Blakely

*It Will Mark the End of This World and the Induction
of the New and Eternal Order.*

In the field of Christian doctrine, no truth is more important than that concerning the Lord Jesus Christ's return to earth. That is shown by the considerable attention and emphasis the second-advent expectation receives in the inspired writings.

It is also shown by the generally beneficent ministry which the expectation thereof is represented by those writings as having upon the saints.

But, notwithstanding, the blessed hope of our Lord's blessed appearing has been badly abused. Suffering at the hands of both foe and friend, it--on the one hand--has been openly repudiated, pursuant to prophecy. On the other, it has been so badly garbled and confused as to render it unintelligible to many honest inquirers.

The practical result has been that with many there is little or no interest in the repeated promise of Christ's coming, or a distorted view of it. In either case, the doctrine's abuses have largely reduced its purposed effectiveness for the church.

Any effort, therefore, that contributes to the proclamation and clarification of this vital aspect of the Apostle's doctrine is abundantly justified. And such is the intent of this study.

Recognizing something of the vastness of the subject, and of the wide extent of its current perversion, however, we realize the impracticability of dealing with all of its ramifications in limited space.

Second coming teaching really constitutes within itself an entire field of inquiry. An exhaustive exploration and development of its phases and abuses would fill volumes.

Thus, the most that we can expect to accomplish here is to point the way along selected avenues of investigation. That will be done in the hope that it will stimulate the interest of the reader to make a more thorough study of the doctrine as it appears in God's Word.

Three Aspects of the Subject. With the specific needs of the church at this point in mind, as they have come to three aspects of the Lord's return, as follows:

1. The certainty of His coming. 2. The ministry of that prospect for the church. 3. The relation of His appearing to the "millennium" and the associated events with the completion of earthly existence.

By the narrowing of the field of discussion, some of the usualness of an overly-extensive inquiry can be avoided. Our energies can be expended on the particular angles of the subject that currently trouble the church most. Let us, therefore, proceed along these lines.

The Certainty of the Coming. The Apostle Peter foretold that ungodly men would deny the Lord's return, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" In justification of that repudiation, we are told, His prolonged delay in appearing would be cited. "For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning" (II Pet. 3:3-4).

Because He lingers, Christ has forgotten His promise to come back to earth. Because He has not come, He will not come, is their position. Jesus anticipated that attitude of His enemies (Mt. 24:48-50).

The Fulfillment of Prophecy. The fulfillment of that prophecy

today is clearly evident. It is true there have been many periods in church history when the promise of Christ's return was rejected. It appears likely that at all times there have been many who refused to believe it. But, undoubtedly, there never was a time before when so many churchmen openly denied and ridiculed the doctrine as now. It is a matter of simple--though deplorable--fact that today vast segments of the nominal church do so.

"Only Ignoramuses Believe." Particularly among the self-conceded intelligentsia is this infidelity apparent. Indicative of its solid entrenchment in those quarters is a statement which I personally heard from an outstanding leader, in whose authority respecting the modernistic viewpoint I have full confidence.

"No intelligent person any longer believes in the second coming of Christ," he said. "Our Bible colleges do not teach it as the modernist schools. In fact, no one but 'holy rollers' and ignoramuses any longer regard the doctrine as literally true."

But this attitude of denial is not confined to openly-avowed modernists. Many in traditionally staid old denominations which ordinarily are considered quite orthodox in fundamental doctrine, feel similarly. At best, they have so interpreted the teaching as to take away much of its scriptural content.

If that is doubted, I suggest that the reader refresh his mind with the scriptural representation of the Lord's promised return. Then let him take a poll on the subject on leading denominationalists in his community. I long since was quite chagrined at the results of such an inquiry.

I learned that many, whom I had considered to be staunch believers in every Word of God, expressed disbelief in Jesus' second coming, or by interpretation, obscured or nullified its meaning.

In the reaction of the audience which heard with me the remarks of the modernist leader to which I have referred, I also found evidence of the prevalence of passive infidelity. More than a hundred representatives of the city's churches witnessed his repeated renunciation of second-coming teaching. When I, in defense of the truth, arose to oppose him, no one stood with me to oppose him. By their silence they all impliedly showed agreement with his vicious attack on this blessed hope of the church.

But even though, as God warned, men are denying that our Lord will come again, that--praise God!--can have no bearing whatever on His unailing promise to return.

The Word of Him who cannot lie has gone forth. It is that, in the fullness of time, "He that shall come, will come, and will not [longer] tarry" (Heb. 10:36-37).

"If we believe not, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (II Tim. 2:13). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, by My words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:35). "The Word of the Lord endureth forever" (I Pet. 1:23-25).

Old Testament Evidence. "This promise of His [second] coming" antedates even His first advent, reaching back into the Old Testament.

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" (Dan. 7:13-14; cf. Joel 2:28-31; Zech. 14:5; Mal. 4:1-6; Jude 14).

In fact, some of the prophecies of the initial appearance of our Lord are so interwoven with those of His second manifestation that the Jews generally failed to discern the distinction. The passage of Joel 2:28-31, a portion of which Peter quoted as fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, is a striking example.

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Modern Day Sadduceism

The Sadducees who lived during the days of Christ's flesh were the so-called "modernists" of the day. On at least one occasion the Lord Jesus had a confrontation with some of the members of this sect, "*which say that there is no resurrection*" (Mt. 22:23; cf. Mk. 12:18). And what a damnable, and at the same time, grievously unfortunate position to hold! Everything they stood for was an outright denial of a "thus saith the Lord" and their doctrine thrust them into a condition of being "without hope."

The Pharisees, who were the "fundamentalists" of that day, did not ordinarily see eye to eye with the Sadducees, except in their opposition to the Savior. Some of the points of perpetual disagreement among themselves are recorded for us in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Acts. And it is in this place where we are given a closer look at the position held by the Sadducees. "And when he [Paul] had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*" (Acts 23:7-8).

In our day there is a selective form of Sadduceism that is gaining ground in the churches. The modern day adherents of this doctrine do not go all the way with the Sadducees of old who scoffed at the idea of a resurrection life for any and all men (cf. Mt. 22:23-28). The twentieth century Sadducees simply deny that there is a resurrected life for some men, namely the ungodly (and consequently no everlasting punishment for them). And many deny that there is life, or consciousness for any men, between death and the resurrection. Sadduceism's common ground, then and now, is in its opposition to and denial of "the promise of life" (II Tim. 1:1), or the life which is had by promise. In the old school it was denied altogether, but in the new it is subtly denied in part.

Incidentally, the resurrection speaks not only of the specific divine act of raising the bodies of men to life again out of the graves. It entails the reversal of the Edenic death sentence. It speaks of an enduring resurrected state and the continuance of life which most assuredly follows that

reversal. The ancient Sadducees, attempting to entrap Him in His words, asked the Lord regarding a woman, who, in her lifetime, had seven husbands, "*Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her*" (v. 28). The Lord Jesus replied to them, "*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven*" (vv. 29-30). In both of these mentionings "the resurrection" has reference to the resurrected state and life in the world to come. It speaks of a state and a condition that has permanence and is enduring. It was used in that way even by the Sadducees who denied that there was such a state, and, more importantly, the expression was also employed by our Lord, who is the final authority in this matter.

The resurrection life pertains to and will be realized by all men, but for some it will be a "resurrection of life" and for others a "resurrection of damnation" (Jn. 5:29). For some the resurrection shall be a state of unspeakable blessedness, and for others, an endless condition of incomprehensible misery and woe. It is not a resurrection of, or unto that which men have termed "annihilation"! "Everlasting punishment" (Mt. 25:46), shall be the portion of the rejecters of the gospel, not annihilation.

The modern day Sadducees also deny that there is consciousness or life for saint and sinner alike between death and the resurrection. This is the doctrine that is currently called *soul sleeping*. In response to this, however, hear the words of the Savior. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: *for all live unto him*" (Lk. 20:37-38). The death of God's saints would not be "precious" (Ps. 116:15) in His sight if it were not for the fact that they go immediately at their death to be with Him. If the soul sleeping adherents were right in their contention, the psalmist would have said that the resurrection of God's saints was precious in His sight, *not the death of them*. And Paul would have said "to be risen from the grave is to be present with the Lord", not to be absent from the body.

Some sophist will most assuredly rise up and say, "Yes, but these just mentioned are among the righteous dead," implying that the wicked are not included in the number of those who are alive and conscious after death. But let us call the rich man of Lazarus' day to the witness stand. It says of him, "the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Lk. 16:22-23). And this record of Lazarus and the rich man is not a parable as some foolishly claim. They do so in a desperate attempt to deny the obvious implications of this account regarding the condition which immediately follows death.

"The dead" (Lk. 20:38; II Tim. 4:1; I Pet. 4:5; Rev. 20:12), as they are called in Scripture, are thus very much alive. They are not non-existent, but have just departed into another place. Incidentally death, as the word is used in Scripture, speaks of a condition where "the body" is "without the spirit" (Jas. 2:26), not of a total cessation of being. It is the state of the person being "absent from" the body (cf. II Cor. 5:6-8) and thus being made to be "present" elsewhere. In the case of the righteous dead, they are "present with the Lord." The unrighteous dead are led away into Hades where they are presently "in torments." --Editor

The Noise of the Storm. "And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And his disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Mt. 8:24-26). On this occasion the Lord Jesus heard not the noise of the storm, but was instantly aware of the disciples' cry for help. And He is the same, yesterday, today, and for ever! His ears are open and attentive to our prayers as well.

Patience is the humble and submissive waiting for and expectation of eternal life and the accomplishment of the promises of God. --Floyd M. Coffman

Divers Musings for the Times

The Blessing of Confidence. The confidence born of saving faith in Christ glorifies both Him and the Father. And, of course, if accompanied by due submission to Christ, it will save the soul of him or her who has it, and make their life fruitful for Christ.

Thus, the exhortation of the Apostle: "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 10:35).

Through Christ we "have access with confidence" to the Father (Eph. 3:12). We also have assurance of God's dealings with the brethren.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

The first fruits of the Spirit which we now have in Christ Jesus become an assurance of the complete harvest that is yet to come. --*Floyd M. Coffman*

Sister Rubbelke Writes. "I want to thank you for all the sermon tapes, videos and the answer to my letter. It is so refreshing to know that there are some of God's children who truly care about our faith in Christ, and who help strengthen and build us up in the faith. We are praying for all of you, and your ministry. Thank you so much for caring for us. In Christ's Name. --*Diane Rubbelke, Watertown, SD*

The Apostolic Concern. In First Thessalonians, chapter 5, Paul impressively demonstrates his apostolic care for the church. The wide extent of his exhortation of them in verses 11-22 is to be noted. It includes 16 distinct areas of spiritual life and service. Then in verses 24 and 28 he commits them to God, praying that they may be preserved "blameless" unto Christ's return. In verse 25, he asks the church to pray for himself, Silvanus, and Timothy. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Christ's Blessed Ministry. "When we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). That was His mission to earth, since He "came into the world to save sinners" (I Tim. 1:15).

I thank God for that blessed work of the Lord Jesus. Since I, along with all mankind, am a sinner by nature, that makes the Savior personally relevant to me, and exceedingly precious in that relevancy. --*Floyd M. Coffman*

The Victory of Faith. If we can see things as God sees them, it will not be difficult to give up the things which He requires us to give up. In other words, faith is "the victory that overcometh the world," as the Apostle John declares (I Jn. 5:4).

We now suffer by our conformity to Christ's death. That is so that we may now by faith live unto God through His Son, then at our death or Jesus' return, go to live with and serve God forever. --*Robert Cobb*

"We can trust God with our lives; we can trust Him with our deaths. That constitutes the nonchalance of faith." --*Jackson Forstman, "The Disciple," December 1994, p. 7*

In Christ, faith is "the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1). It is not a "shadow" that we have, as was so with ancient Israel (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5). So have we "tasted of the heavenly gift," and been made "partakers of the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:6). Let us live in awareness of that situation, and have grace to live becomingly of it. --*Albert G. Stoner, Jr., noted and recorded by Fred O. Blakely*

"They which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Christ Jesus" (Rom. 5:17; cf. v. 20). --*Dean E. Boelt*

The Jews crucified the Lord Jesus. But God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heaven. There He now lives and reigns over all the works of God's hands. And He --praise God!--is interceding for His brethren (Acts 2:23-24; cf. Mt. 28:18; Rom. 8:34; cf. vv.26-27). --*Dan Powers*

In Revelation 3:14 the Lord Jesus is called "the Amen," which means that in everything His word is the ultimate and final one on the subject. --*Given O. Blakely*

Hope is central to the eternal purpose of God. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

God turned man's hideous instrument of death (the cross) into His tool of triumph for the salvation of all men. The cross benefits only those who avail themselves of it, but it is powerful enough to justify all who come in faith. Now the message goes out to all who have ears to hear. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

To receive the true Christ is to submit to all the demands that He makes upon us. --*Fred O. Blakely*

The primary consideration with God is the heart (I Sam. 16:7; II Chron. 16:9; Rom. 10:10). It has always been this way. A heart devoted to Him will give and will give the best that is available. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

Wherever the prayers of the saints are heard, the earth suffers the consequences (cf. Rev. 8:2-5). --*Given O. Blakely*

Men have sought, from the beginning, a remedy for sin. They look for answers in philosophy, education, biology, and even in religion. However, rationalizing, reasoning, and religiosity cannot satisfy justice. Sin answers to the justice of God. He is just, absolutely. --*Gene Hutchcraft* The good news of the gospel is that God has found a way to satisfy His justice without putting the sinner away from Himself. And that way is this: Christ has tasted death for every man. --*Editor*

Make every effort to maintain a sensitive conscience toward God. This keeps the way clear for seeking mercy and grace in the time of need. A defiled conscience will not come to God. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).

God is certainly a pilgrim's companion. --*Harold F. Lohse*

Living in this world neutralizes the vision of the things of God. Giving all diligence combats this neutralization. --*Given O. Blakely*

We do not crucify the flesh through sheer will power otherwise it would be a matter of who has the strongest will. Rather this strength flows out of the knowledge of our being strangers and pilgrims in this world. --*Fred O. Blakely*

God's promises to the faithful shall certainly be fulfilled, but faith, meanwhile, must be their sustaining principle. --*J. Barmby, Pulpit Commentary*

Walking in the light (cf. I Jn. 1:7) does not mean sinless perfection. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Love is the wellspring that feeds faith. Doubts arise because our love is deficient, not our faith. "Faith" "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). --*Given O. Blakely*

The retention of God in our knowledge necessitates the crucifixion of the flesh. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Consequently, the Messianic expectations of the Jews were confused. The "great and terrible day of the Lord," which is to be associated with His second, was identified with His first appearing, which was characterized by meekness and gentleness.

The result was an expectancy of great power and glory for their Messiah, which the humble Jesus did not fulfill. Hence, His relation to Israel--even to this day as "a stone of stumbling and rock of offense" (I Pet. 2:6-8).

Testimony of the Deity. It is in the New Testament, of course, that the fullness of the promise of Christ's return is given. Jesus Himself, under oath before Caiaphas, the high priest, solemnly declared in the language of Daniel's prophecy, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:63-64).

Earlier He had made the same promise to the disciples, saying, "All the tribes of the earth . . . shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:26--25:46).

And, in the well-known and -loved passage of John 14:1-3, He had declared, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may also be also."

Then, some sixty years after His ascension and coronation, our Lord flashed back to the church through the Apostle John's reaffirmation of His promise to return. "Behold, I come quickly," He said; "and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12; cf. 1:8; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 20. See also Mark 8:38 and John 21:20-23).

To this testimony of the Son may be added that of the Father. He publicly acknowledged Jesus, and ratified every word He proclaimed, at the transfiguration scene. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," He declared. "Hear ye Him" (Mt. 17:5).

Explicitly aligned with Christ in the promise of His return are the angels. Said they to the upward-gazing disciples, as He was "taken up" from the earth, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

The Apostles' Witness. When we turn to the teaching of the Apostles, "the promise of His coming" becomes even more emphatic, under the application and elaboration of the Holy Spirit. So thoroughly did the inspired men saturate the early church with the expectation of that rapturous occurrence that it appears to have become an obsession in the first century.

Thus, the Jerusalem congregation individually disposed of their earthly goods, and apparently went into full-fledged communalism under apostolic oversight (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37).

The Thessalonian brethren became so distraught over the fear that their departed loved ones would not be present to share in the experience of the Lord's supposedly imminent return that a special apostolic correction of the delusion was necessary (I Th. 4:13-18; II Th. 2:1-2).

Indeed, it appears that John voiced the sentiment and typified the attitude of the first-century church when he breathed his prayer at the close of the Revelation given to him by Christ. "Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

The church was, thus, aflame with the hope and expectation of Jesus' second coming--made so by the Apostles' repeated emphasis of the certainty of that blessed event.

Peter, John, and Paul Testify. It would be impractical to here list all that the post-Pentecostal writers said on this subject, so filled are their writings with it. Some representative assertions must suffice.

Of these, none is more emphatic than that of the Apostle Peter, made in the course of his refutation of the denial by some of the second coming. "The day of the Lord will come," he proclaimed. And the text makes plain that he means to imply, notwithstanding the scoffings and gainsayings of infidels--ancient and modern (cf. Acts 3:19-21; I Pet. 1:3-13; 4:12-13; 5:1-4).

John adds his direct testimony in his prologue to the Revelation.

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (1:7; cf. 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2-3).

When we come to the Apostle to the Gentiles, the prominence of second-coming teaching is equal to that of any other teaching, and surpassing of most.

"Ye yourselves know perfectly well," says Paul, "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Th. 5:11). "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God" (4:13-17). The likeness of His coming to a "thief in the night" will be in its unexpectedness by the people of the world.

"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27-28; cf. Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 2:16; 8:16-25; 13:11; I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; 50-52; Phil. 2:16; 3:20; Col. 3:1-4; I Th. 1:9-10; 2:19; 3:11-13; II Th. 2:7-12; 2:1-10; II Tim. 4:6-8; Tit. 2:13). See also Rev. 6:12-17; 14:14-15; 16:15-21; 20:7-15.

The Immutable Assurance. Of this, as Peter tells us, we, thus, can be sure: "The day of the Lord will come." It matters not if He seems to delay His appearance. "For one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4). That is, God does not reckon time as we do.

As Adam Clarke remarks, "All time is nothing before Him, because in the Presence, as in the Nature, of God, all is eternity. Therefore, nothing is long or short before Him. No lapse of ages, nor need He wait to find convenience to execute those purposes."

"And when the longest period of time has passed by, it is but a moment, or individual point, in comparison with eternity."

Thus also Plutarch, the first-century Grecian writer. "If we compare the time of life with eternity, we shall find no difference between long and short."

In the "fullness of time," however--when the day of God's appointment arrives--Christ shall be manifested. That He has promised. And on that we may steadfastly depend.

Accordingly, settle it in your heart that our Lord shall return to earth, "as He said." Do not permit Satan's messengers to move you from that blessed hope. Jesus will come. It is as certain as if it had already taken place. "If I go," He promised, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

He unquestionably ascended to the Father. Hence, He will assuredly come back to the world. And in that day of His glorious appearing, He will wreak His righteous vengeance upon all unbelievers who have scoffed at the promise of His coming.

But--praise His Name!--He will reward with eternal glory all who have loved and clung to "the promise of His coming."

We, who live in the age of the new covenant, are presently living in the year of jubilee, which was foreshadowed in the law. --*George Brewer*

By faith, we reckon that we are complete in Him and a new creature, our old man having been put off by the circumcision of Christ, until finally at death we shall come into the full realization of this. This is the fight of faith! --*Fred O. Blakely*

As we rise on the Lord's Day, we must say to ourselves, "Today we break bread with Jesus!" --*Given O. Blakely*

Hope connects us with the future, as memory with the past, and is intended to neutralize the materializing influence of earthly life around us. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Bearing the cross has to do with submitting to and not drawing back from the repercussions that result from living godly. --*Given O. Blakely*

Some Unsearchable Riches

By Michael Blakely

“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isa. 64:4).

Whatever the people of God may think of heaven; whatever our most fond hopes are, or most glorious contemplation; whatever our most vivid dream or brilliant view; no matter how wondrous our vision of the glory to come may be, we may be well-assured of this, that we are not thinking big enough, our view is not lofty enough, our surveyings not glorious enough, and that our finite minds cannot possibly perceive the total purity and grandeur of what God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus. We may no more comprehend the full glory of the kingdom than we can the fullness of the glory of God, Himself. So infinite in wisdom and power is He that mortals, though He made them in His own image, cannot possibly contain the fullness of Him. And yet, He has made Himself accessible and His kingdom surveyable. It is even His “good pleasure” to give all that He has to His saints, redeemed by the blood of His only Begotten Son (Luke 12:32). “What a wondrous prospect is this that the Lord has set before us! It is an incentive so lofty and good that we cannot even conceive of its fullness, and yet “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (I Cor. 2:10).

The Father knows that we will run with greater effort when great incentive is in our view. He has, therefore, not hidden Himself from us, but graciously and lovingly revealed the kingdom unto us and allows us to fill our limited minds with as much of it as we can. So much can be known of heaven that men of faith allowed themselves to be “tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise”, (Heb. 11:35-39).

It was possible for these to endure such contrariety and suffering because they had seen the goodness of God and His desire to bless abundantly, and reckoned that the riches and esteem of this world were but nought by comparison. As testing and trying as they are, even the “sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Let’s not be thinking mean and lowly things when we consider the inheritance. Nothing done in the name of the Lord is menial and none of God’s sons or daughters will receive menial rewards. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Mat. 5:12).

Is your view of God and Christ wholly lovely? They are more lovely still. Have you shed tears when counting the cost of Christ’s sacrifice for your sin? But it cost Him more. Have you soared above the mountain tops of this world on the wings of the Spirit for a blessed view of Canaan? You have not yet seen the half of it. Have you with joy and vigor renewed your work in expectation of receiving that special, glorious reward the Father has reserved for you? You are yet looking through a dark glass. That which God has revealed unto us is more than abundantly sufficient to get us from here to there, and still we cannot perceive the real sum of these things while here in the body. “But then, face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (I Cor. 13:12). And what joy and blessedness shall we experience then!

In his book “The Saints’ Everlasting Rest”, Richard Baxter penned his anticipation of what it must be like to have realized the fullness of the inheritance as it dawns upon the soul. “To stand in heaven and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment, how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out, ‘Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder. O blessed price! and thrice blessed love, that invented and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit’s workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor? Is it hither that Christ hath allured my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? I see the gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations. Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking, come to this? Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend, come to this? Are all my afflictions, Satan’s temptations, the world’s scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place thou camest to so unwillingly?”

Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Couldst thou not leave all, deny all, and suffer any thing for this? Wast thou loath to die to come to this? O false heart, thou hadst almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! Art thou not now ashamed, my soul, that ever thou didst question that love which brought thee hither; that thou wast jealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord; that thou suspectedst His love, when thou shouldst only have suspected thyself; that ever thou didst quench a motion of His Spirit; and that thou shouldst misinterpret those providences, and repine at those ways which have such an end? Now thou art sufficiently convinced that thy blessed Redeemer was saving thee, as well when He crossed thy desires, as when He granted them- when He broke thy heart, as when He bound it up. No thanks to thee, unworthy self, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory for ever.”

So then, let us keep God, Christ, and heaven ever present in our view so that we will “fight the good fight of faith,” and ‘lay hold on eternal life,, (I Tim. 6:12). “So run, that ye may obtain” (I Cor. 9:24). THE END

Our conviction of our righteousness is based on the same foundation as our conviction of God’s righteousness. --Fred O. Blakely

We, who live in the age of the new covenant, are presently living in the year of jubilee, which was foreshadowed in the law. --George Brewer

By faith, we reckon that we are complete in Him and a new creature, our old man having been put off by the circumcision of Christ, until finally at death we shall come into the full realization of this. This is the fight of faith! --Fred O. Blakely

Grace is a matter of cooperation with God. As we set out to do the will of God, He imparts the grace. --Given O. Blakely

We can’t scripturally conceive of the righteousness of God except in its application to His creation. It’s not just an abstract quality. --Fred O. Blakely

Essentially we, that are in Christ, belong to the future more than to the present. --Fred O. Blakely

Repentance entails “thinking differently, being changed in mind, judgment, attitudes, desires and will.” Repentance is not so much looking upon the past with regret as it is looking to the future with better intentions.--Seth Wilson

God not only wants to change our record (from guilty to pardoned). He also wants to change us. --Seth Wilson

The Power of God's Word

By Timothy McCulfor

"The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is quick to discern thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, ASV).

"With many other words did he [Peter] testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40; cf. vv. 32-39).

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

The angel of God told Cornelius, the Roman centurion, to send for Peter, who would tell him what he ought to do. That done, Peter, commanded Cornelius and his household to be "baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 10:48).

When the Lord's angel liberated the Apostles from prison, he told them to "go and speak unto the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20).

"And we are witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

God's Word also has power to "cut to the heart" those who are set against it (Acts 6:33).

It is written of Jesus, "And His Word was with power" (Lk. 4:32). It still is, having the capacity to accomplish God's will in the hearts and lives of those who give it free course in themselves.

To the Ethiopian eunuch Philip preached Jesus. And when the eunuch believed, he asked to be baptized (Acts 8:35-39).

The Word of God, faithfully proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, will produce the fruit of due submission to It in the hearts and lives of those who hear it. So is the Word God's "power unto salvation" to those who properly receive it (Rom. 1:16).

So are we "begotten again unto a living hope," and ultimately saved by the divine Word, as we keep it and bring forth fruit with patience (1 Pet. 1:3; cf. v. 4; Jas. 1:21)

Christ took upon Himself "the form of Servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). That was so that He might bring to God all who would receive Him (1 Pet. 3:18).

To those who receive and continue to cleave unto Him will the Saviour appear "the second time without sin and unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28)

As Paul received grace for His Apostleship (Rom. 1:5), so have we believed through grace (Acts 18:27).

Thus it is that we are saved by grace "through faith," and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

So did Jesus declare, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent me draw Him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:44). Let us praise God, if we have responded to that drawing (Acts 26:9). Let us have grace whereby we may continue to duly respond to God' drawing. --*Noted and Recorded by Fred O. Blakely*

The church of the living God is a college for angels (cf. Eph. 3:10-11). --*Given O. Blakely*

Hereditary orthodoxy: this is the fatal result of a new generation not laying hold of the truth for themselves. --*Fred O. Blakely*

The church must learn to live in an environment of exhortation. --*Given O. Blakely*

The Beginning of Sorrows

The Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has testified abundantly regarding the events that shall precede His appearing in the clouds of heaven. While these pronouncements are somewhat general in nature, yet it appears that there is a reason for this. It is so that we would learn to expect Him to come on any day and at any time. As we hear of earthquakes, pestilences, famines, etc., occurring throughout the world, our spiritually-attuned minds and hearts are to call to remembrance the words of the Savior in this connection. These calamities are to serve as a reminder to us that His coming is near at hand because He has taught us to make this association.

It will be recalled that the disciples asked the Lord Jesus with regard to future events, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Mt. 24:3).

We will draw attention here to that part of His answer which is given in verses 7 and 8. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Mt. 24:7-8). And again, "for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows" (Mk. 13:8). In Luke's gospel it is written in this manner: "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (Lk. 21:10-11).

Some Current Events. The recent earthquake in Kobe, Japan and the devastating floods in California and other world calamities, as well, ought to continually serve to remind us that this world is not the main world. "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13). In the news it was reported that one of the survivors of the Japan earthquake said, "I thought it was the end of the world." This person was thinking in the right direction, but did not reason things out far enough. If this individual was an unbeliever, he or she should have given thanks that it wasn't the end of the world, thus giving him or her space to repent. If the person was in Christ, he or she should have been able to rejoice that, perhaps, this is the end of the world and that the Savior's second appearing is near at hand.

An Unworthy Comparison. As we hear of the sorrow and heartache that people are undergoing because of calamities such as these, let us not forget that Jesus said, "All these are *the beginning of sorrows*". The sorrows that men outside of Christ are made to endure now are as nothing compared to the torments of hell. And for them, death shall not bring an end to sorrows, but rather an unspeakably great enlargement of them. In addition, for such ones there shall be no hope of recovery.

Hear the testimony of Scripture on this matter. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is *the second death*. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into *the lake of fire*" (Rev. 21:14-15). "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into *outer darkness*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 25:30). "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into *hell fire*" (Mt. 18:9). And of those persons who worshiped the beast and his image it is written that, "*the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:11; cf. vv. 9-10)

"Suppose ye that these" thousands of Japanese citizens "were sinners above" other people, "because they suffered such things?" The Lord Jesus interpreted a similar calamity by saying, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:2-3). Or what about the many individuals in California, who saw their possessions swept away in one day by flood waters. Were they worse sinners than other men? No, this was a trumpet of warning to all men to alert them to repent, obey the gospel, and so to prepare themselves for the world to come. --*Editor*

The Sin of Sodomy

By Robert Cobb

One thing is most certainly true, when God sends Christ back to gather together His elect from the four corners of the world, not one sodomite will be among that blessed number!

Let Us Preach the Word! Some will say, "How can you be so sure of that?" Well, God has gone on record in His Word regarding this subject, that's how! (cf. Rev. 22:11). Many more may ask "How do you know that the Bible is true?" (cf. II Tim. 3:16). Such questions, however, proceed from unbelieving hearts. And we cannot and must not attempt to soften the message that we have been given to preach in the hope that men will listen. If men refuse to receive the gospel of Christ, then they cannot be saved!

Believers of the Word of God do take a stand! They cannot help but speak forth the things that they have seen and heard. It matters very little if others receive these things personally. The important thing is that we are faithful in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:20).

Many preachers today say that they cannot determine if sodomy is a sin. They say that sodomy is just an illness or an "alternate lifestyle" and thus we ought to accept the "believing sodomites" as brethren. This is evidence that these preachers are not of God! By the very nature of the case, a preacher pronounces, publishes, and proclaims what God has declared in His Word. We cannot reason with the carnal mind and have the mind of Christ as well (cf. Rom. 8:7-8).

The Unrepentant are Without Hope. I have already stated that when Christ returns He will not receive any sodomites unto Himself unto salvation. He will consign them to the lake of fire. They will forever be separated from the God that made them and from Him that did all that He could do to change them into the divine image. They would not have this Man (Christ Jesus) to rule over them. And thus they have consigned themselves to the coming separation by their stiffnecked resistance to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 7:51).

A Lifestyle or Deathstyle? God has amply revealed to both men and angels the way that He regards this ungodly "deathstyle" and He is not about to change. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah should be evidence enough to provoke even the hardest of men to repentance. The scripture says: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy (II Tim. 3:1-2).

The Word of God is the final word in this matter and, as well, on all other matters. All men will be judged accordingly in that great day of judgment. As it is written, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that *every one* may receive the things done *in his body*, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (II Cor. 5:10-11).

All Sin Must Be Abandoned. Death or separation from the body is taught in the Scriptures (cf. I Cor 15:33-36). There is only one way to walk in the Spirit and that is to die to the flesh. Those who "die daily" (I Cor. 15:31) are setting their affection on things above, thus demonstrating that they "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). For a sodomite to "die daily" in this sense, he would have to repent of and abandon the sin of sodomy.

Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. Those who are dead to sin are also alive unto God and they are the only ones who are! And sodomites, religious or not, are not dead to sin. They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.

The truth is that we cannot, at the same time, walk in the flesh and in the Spirit. We must choose for ourselves the "better thing." And choosing the better thing entails abstaining from all appearance of evil, including sodomy. This is the work of faith. God has given us of His Spirit so we may know the things freely given us of God. And it is by walking in view of eternal realities that we are enabled to bring ourselves into com-

portment with "the manner of the kingdom" (I Sam. 10:25).

Sodomites, because they refuse to believe the divine Word, cannot be changed into the divine image. They are presently in the process of casting from themselves the only hope that they have of entering into the world to come. God cannot change them without their repentance and obedience to the truth. It is a blessed thought that we are made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:27) and it is a very great responsibility as well. As sodomy is an abomination to the God of heaven, so it must also be abhorred by those who are created in the image of God.

Let us look ahead to the ages to come, to the blessed time when we will dwell with God forever. Now we are in the anteroom of heaven! God has given all power and authority to Jesus Christ in order that He might bring many sons to Heaven. Now we are inhabited in measure by the Holy Spirit, but then we will be indwelt by the Godhead in much greater measure. We are now workers together with God. Let us then cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in preparation for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

A Change Essential to Salvation. Our submission to His Word is the means by which He has determined to change us. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). Now we see as it were through a glass darkly, but then, praise God, face to face (cf. I Cor 13:12). No sodomite can be changed in this sense, unless the sin is repented of. And no abuser of himself (or herself) with mankind will ever see God face to face as one that is reconciled.

To be "conformed to the image of" God's "Son" means that we are actually changed in the "inward parts" (Jer. 31:33). In other words, the man who was a sodomite is not now a reformed sodomite, but rather he is a new creation (cf. II Cor. 5:17)! As the Apostle declared, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy" (Gal. 6:14-16).

If we are not in the process of being conformed into His image, then we are under the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world. There is no middle ground on issues such as this. Where the word of God speaks, we must preach! It is not good enough to have good intentions. We must stand firm on the written Word of God. It is not merely a better world that we are seeking, but a new and a heavenly one, "wherein dwelleth righteousness". And for certain, no sodomite will be there, for such ones are contrary in nature to the new heavens and the new earth which God shall be revealing. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:7-9).

We, that have obeyed the gospel, have a well of opportunities open to us in Christ Jesus. But God cannot take hold of them for us. We must lay hold of them ourselves. As it is written, "without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6). And we must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us as we give ourselves to seeking Him. This is "the faith of God's elect" (Tit. 1:1).

An Admonition to Ministers of the Word. Preachers are to be about the business of the King!. They are to be holding up the words that the Holy Spirit teacheth. And particularly in this wicked age in which we live, let them make plain the way of salvation, so that a sodomite or any other kind of sinner may without confusion recover themselves from the snare of the devil. The Lord Jesus declared that, "No man can serve two masters" (Mt. 6:24) and no minister of the word of God should have a divided heart as he stands before the people to declare what saith the Scripture. Either he is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ or he has left

(SODOMY, Continued on Page Eight)

his first love. Jude described such ministers with divided affections well when he said, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 11-13).

Truth does not come to us by chance or by accident. It is proclaimed by the servants of the most high God. The days are evil and it is high time that we awake out of our sleep! Let us put on the armor of light and stand fast in the truth that has freely been given us from God! Let us ever make known to men "the way of holiness." "The unclean shall not pass over it; but" "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

The Witness of Moses. Sodomy is the fruit of a heart given over to unbelief. If it is not repented of and forsaken, there remaineth no possible hope for forgiveness. It is written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: *it is abomination*" (Lev. 18:22). And again, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel" (Deut. 23:17).

The Apostolic Perspective. Let us also hear the witness of the Apostles. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, *nor abusers of themselves with mankind*, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10). Jude was also very bold when he declared, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). Incidentally, *strange flesh* is any flesh other than the "honourable" and "undefiled" (Heb. 13:4) husband and wife relationship.

In Conclusion. This, my fellow saints, is the truth. Let us preach it, proclaim it, and shout it from the house tops! Be of good courage, my brethren, for some will believe! And you will know them by their fruit (cf. Mt. 7:16).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). The wonderful message of the word of God is that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" (Mt. 12:31), if only they will repent and obey the gospel.

The Curse of the Light Esteem

"But Jeshurun (i.e. Israel) waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou are covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:15). Truly our God is a Rock, and His salvation is an impregnable bastion to all those who have rendered the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26). But alas, there are myriads in our day also who have lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation. Their light esteem is evidenced by a waning devotion to the things of God. Wherever there is half-heartedness about the assembly of the saints, and regarding attendance upon the Word of God, there men are guilty of the light esteem of which we speak.

Israel had the "shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5) in the tabernacle and was required of God to give the due attendance upon it. The church, on the other hand, gathers together each week to lay hold of the substance of heavenly things, and the things to which those shadows were pointing.

We must ask ourselves the question, if God dealt so severely with those who neglected the shadow of heavenly things, what shall be the end of those who lightly esteem the substance?(cf. Heb. 2:1-3). --Editor

The Effectiveness of God's Word

By Fred O. Blakely

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Th. 2:13).

In our day, there is a general need for practical recognition of the sufficiency and effectiveness of God's Word for the accomplishment of His purpose in people. The Scriptures are clear and emphatic on that subject. And we should give diligent heed to and practical recognition of them.

As It Is Written. Hear the Word of the Lord on the subject, and be duly convinced. And, in that conviction, go on to glorify Him by permitting the divine Word to have free course in your heart and life.

"So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is. 55:11; cf. v. 10).

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). "And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so" (Gen. 1:9). See also verses 11; 14; 20; etc.

"He called for a famine upon the land: He brake the whole staff of bread" (Ps. 105:16).

"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

"The entrance of Thy Words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130).

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," declared the Lord Jesus, in citation of Moses' earlier proclamation (Mt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:2-3).

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible--by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," is Peter's representation of the case (I Pet. 1:23).

This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me" (Ps. 119:50; cf. v. 93).

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1:1-3).

"Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your soul" (Jas. 1:21).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, by according to His mercy hath He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour" (Tit. 3:5-6; cf. vv. 3-4, 7).

"Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:25-26; cf. v. 27).

Waiting For God's Salvation

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD" (Gen. 49:18). May each of us continually be in the waiting stance for God's salvation. For it is unto them that look for Him, that He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Waiting means that we are not settling down in this world. We're biding our time, looking for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

Let us then seek to be "like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Lk. 12:36). --Editor

The Power of God's Word

By Timothy McCulfor

"The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is quick to discern thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, ASV; cf. vs. 23).

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The angel of God told Cornelius, the Roman centurion, to send for Peter, who would tell him what he ought to do. That done, Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be "baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 10:48).

When the Lord's angel liberated the Apostles from prison, he told them to "go and speak unto the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20).

"And we are witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts. 5:32).

God's Word also has power to "cut to the heart" those who are set against it (Acts 6:33).

It is written of Jesus, "And His Word was with power" (Lk. 4:32). It still is, having the capacity to accomplish God's will in the hearts and lives of those who give it free course in themselves.

To the Ethiopian eunuch Philip preached Jesus. And when the eunuch believed, he asked to be baptized (Acts 8:35-39).

The Word of God, faithfully proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, will produce the fruit of due submission to It in the hearts and lives of those who hear it. So is the Word of God the power unto salvation to those who properly receive it (Rom. 1:16).

So are we "begotten again unto a living hope," and ultimately saved by the divine Word, as we keep it and bring forth fruit unto God with patience (I Pet. 1:3; cf. v. 4; Jas. 1:21).

Christ took upon Himself "the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). That was so that He might bring to God all who would receive Him (I Pet. 3:18).

To those who receive and continue to cleave to Him will the Savior "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

As Paul received grace for his Apostleship (Rom. 1:5), so have we "believed through grace" (Acts 18:27).

Thus it is that we are saved by grace "through faith," and that not of ourselves; "it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

So did Jesus declare, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:44). Let us praise God, if we have responded to that drawing (Acts 26:9). And let us have grace whereby we may continue to duly respond to God' drawing. --Noted and recorded by Fred O. Blakely

Our Lord scattered His enemies in His resurrection. From this can be seen the great potential of our being raised together with Him. --Fred O. Blakely

God never gets used to beholding evil, but, alas, we have the capacity to do so! --Given O. Blakely

In baptism, we wash away our sins (Acts 22:16), thus clearing the way for the Father and the Son to come and make their abode with us. --Fred O. Blakely

The True Vine

By Mattie Cobb

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (Jn. 15:1-2, NKJV)

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Mt. 7:15, NKJV). The false prophets mentioned in this verse are some of the branches that do not bear good fruit, and that the vinedresser cuts off from the vine and throws them into the fire to be burned.

"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Mt. 7:16-20, NKJV). Here is an important point to consider: Only those who were once part of the vine, can be cut off from the vine and only those who are presently part of the vine can bear fruit. So let us seek to be among those who bear good and lasting fruit unto God that we may glorify His Name.

Sailing into the New Year

God built and launched this year for you;
Upon the bridge you stand;
It's your ship, aye, your own ship,
and you are in command.
Just what the twelve month's trip will do
Rests, wholly, solely, friend, with you.

Your logbook kept from day to day
My friend, what will it show?
Have you on your appointed way
Made progress, yes or no?
The log will tell, like guiding star,
The sort of captain that you are.

For weal or woe this year is yours;
Your ship is on life's sea
Your acts, as captain, must decide
Whichever it will be
So now in starting on your trip,
Ask God to help you sail your ship.

--Author Unknown
(From *The Gospel Trumpeter*)

To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is God-like. --*The Gospel Trumpeter*

Let's have no alliance that forbids us from speaking the truth! --*Source Unknown*

False prophets, from the very beginning, have been motivated by covetousness. --*Fred O. Blakely*

We don't have to please the people; we have to please God! --*Fred O. Blakely*

The Work of Spirituality

By Albert G. Stoner, Jr.

The relations and responsibilities of this life tend to distract our hearts and lives from “those things which are above” (Col. 3:1; cf. 2:12). But God’s will is that we set them thereon, “not on things on the earth” (v. 2). It is true that much spiritual effort is required to do that, but such is the fundamental work that God would have us to do (Jn. 6:28-29).

For there--to the heavenly places--have we been called, and made to sit with Christ. He is now enthroned there, and ruling over all the works of God’s hands. Thus, if we are to “reign in life” by Him, as we are urged to do (Rom. 5:17), we must, by faith and through the Holy Spirit, be spiritually elevated to that heavenly sphere.

That, of course, is something of what the Apostle means in a declaration of his concerning the new life: “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:5-9).

That work of receiving and maintaining the spiritual mind is the one to which we are summoned in Christ. The ministry of the church must recognize that, and constantly seek to serve its appointed end.

By God’s grace, therefore, let us seek to be like Mary of Bethany. She “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word” (Lk. 10:39). Thus, our Lord’s pronouncement: “Blessed are they which hear the Word of God, and keep it” (Lk. 11:28).

And again: “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21).

As Samuel said to King Saul, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (I Sam. 15:22). --*Noted and recorded by Fred O. Blakely*

Building for Eternity. In our present lives, we are building for eternity. Let us, therefore, be diligent in our living for Christ. Let us, as God would have us do, sacrifice our love for the perishing things of the present world, replacing it with love for Him and the things of eternity.

If Christ is now our life, we shall see and live with Him in the world to come. When He shall appear in glory, with all things having been made new, the shall we also “appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

In the first fruit sense even now, “all things are become new” for those who have received and are living in the risen and glorified Son (II Cor. 5:17). --*Dean E. Boelt*

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). That is simply because we both come to and fellowship with God by and through that faith. And such fellowship is necessary for us to please God, inasmuch as that is wh He made man--to have fellowship with Him. --*Dan Powers*

Christ is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). Let us so behold and consider Him as we come to the Lord’s table in the weekly assembly of the church to commemorate His death for us. --*Floyd M. Coffman*

God was the One who was offended by sin, not us. Christ appeared to put away sin from the face of God. And it only took one appearing to accomplish that. --*Given O. Blakely*

Heaven is now readied for use and occupancy by those who have been created in the divine image and who have been washed from their sins in Christ’s blood. --*Given O. Blakely*

The more you’re dissociated from earth, the more you’re involved in the purpose of God. --*Given O. Blakely*

The arrows of calamity are aimed at your sins.

The Ministry of Incentive

I thank God for the sufficiency of His promises as the incentives to constrain our conformity to His will for us.

As Peter declares, there are “given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.” The objective in conferring that gift upon us is made clear by the Apostle. It is that “we might be made partakers of the divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Pet. 1:2-4; cf. v. 1).

John makes the same representation of the situation. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:” he says, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (Jn. 20:30-31).

God’s respect for the freedom of will with which He created man is, thus, demonstrated. He, indeed, “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4). But men must submit their minds and hearts to the revelation and power of God’s Word and Spirit, if they are to have the great and eternal salvation which God has graciously provided and offers to them through Jesus Christ, His dear Son. --*E. Timothy Blakely*, Lake Oswego, OR, in remarks to our assembly during a visit with us.

The Victory of Faith

By Robert Cobb

God is “the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). That makes salvation, which is by our faith, sure.

“I come to do Thy will, O. God!” Jesus exclaimed (Heb. 10:7-8; cf. Ps. 40:7-8). That will and purpose of the Father is to bring “many sons unto glory” through His own beloved Son (Heb. 2:10).

That He will certainly do for us, as we get into the Son and abide in Him. It is true that Christ calls us to suffering, as we bear the cross and follow Him. “If we suffer, we shall reign with Him” (II Tim. 2:12; cf. vv. 11, 13).

God’s divine power is available to His people through the Holy Spirit. It is their responsibility to appropriate that power by complete submission to God’s will for them.

We but have to believe God, embrace and cleave to the Son, going “without the camp” of flesh and blood to live with Him (Heb. 13:12-14).

The Word of God’s power and the glory of His might are fully sufficient to enable us to do as He requires of us. Let us believe that, seek His blessing, and so glorify Him by our lives in the world. --*Noted and recorded by Fred O. Blakely*

Israel was an elect nation, but some of the branches were broken off (Rom. 11:17). And our election is presently in the process of demonstration (cf. II Pet. 1:10). --*Fred O. Blakely*

There is not an ingot of silver in heaven’s treasury which has not been in the furnace on earth and been purified seven times. --*Pulpit Commentary*

Actively loving God and keeping His commandments will, by His grace, keep us within the scope of His purpose (cf. Rom. 8:28). --*Given O. Blakely*

Salvation at present is of a tentative nature and consists essentially in the forgiveness of sins. It is not an end in itself but rather the means unto our full realization of God’s purpose at the second coming of Christ. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Our salvation depends upon three appearances of Christ (Heb. 9:24, 26, 28). --*Given O. Blakely*

The Sufferings of Christ

By Fred O. Blakely

“Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when It testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (I Pet. 1:11; cf. vv. 9-10).

It was by our Lord's sufferings that we were redeemed and brought home to God. But the matter of suffering did not end there. We, too, are required by God to suffer, if we are to inherit eternal life, and reign in the everlasting world to come.

So is it written, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (II Tim. 2:12). It “behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Lk. 24:46). That was so that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (v. 47).

It is to behoove us to take up our cross, and to suffer with our blessed Lord, if we are to reign with Him. The purpose of Jesus' suffering was that He might “enter into His glory” (Lk. 24:46). If we are to enter into our glory, we, too, must do the required suffering.

As the hymn writer well asked, “Shall Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free?” His answer: “No, there's a cross for everyone; and there's a cross for me.”

It, thus, is always in order to talk of the sufferings of Christ. That is what necessitates the preaching of the cross. That preaching, though foolishness to those that are perishing, is “the power of God” unto salvation to the penitent believers (I Cor. 1:18).

Thus, “it pleased God” to save people by such preaching (v. 21; vv. 22-31). Let us not, then, tire or relent in that proclamation. It is the means which God has ordained to bring people to faith in and obedience to His dear Son, and so to the salvation which He has provided for them.

Heavenly Sustenance. Christ's flesh is the true nourishment for our souls. It is the heavenly manna. And until men have eaten of this meat, they have not eaten at all from heaven's perspective. Jesus said in the synagogue at Capernaum, “Your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever” (Jn. 6:58). And He is the living bread which came down from heaven.

The blood of Jesus Christ is the true drink, and any other drink may slake men's thirst for the moment, but they shall thirst again. Christ's flesh and blood are life-giving to men who will partake of them. “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.”

We eat His flesh and drink His blood when we obey the gospel. We also partake of them as we continue in the faith, grounded and settled and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Such eaters and drinkers dwell in Him, and Christ dwells in them, as He said. --*Editor*

The Covering for Sins. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His [Christ's] blood” (Rom. 3:25). Christ Jesus is the blessed covering for sins. He is the propitiation. But the covering is made effectual to the individual *through faith in His blood.*

It is not by faith that was once professed, or even once possessed, but rather through faith that is presently had in Christ's blood. The blood of Christ is worthy of our confidence. Our eternal redemption is owing to this blood. Let us hang all of our hopes upon His precious blood. --*Editor*

We desire to exalt Christ's Name now, because we are preparing to exalt Him through all eternity. --*Dean E. Boelt*

Evils are only permitted to visit us, not to find any real resting place in us. --*Harold F. Lohse*

Comfort overthrows the power of circumstance. --*Given O. Blakely*

Christ's earthly ministry was preparatory for His heavenly one. Ours is likewise. Life in the Spirit is a foretaste of and specimen of the glorified life. --*Gleaned from a Men's Fellowship Meeting, 4/19/90.*

As we cultivate God consciousness, which is another expression for “the communion of the Holy Spirit,” we will become increasingly aware of opportunities to serve Him. This is a foretaste of that which is to come. --*Gleaned from a Men's Fellowship Meeting, 4/19/90.*

How To Do It. “How do I escape those tempting thoughts? It requires more than an act of the will. We will not avoid the wrong thought pattern unless we crowd it out with the right thought pattern. Crowd out the evil with the good. Beautiful guests for the rooms of your mind are listed in Philippians 4:8. It is the new life which crowds out the old.” --*Willie W. White, “What the Bible Says About Suffering,”* College Press, 1984, pp. 84, 185. Used by permission.

Salvation has to do with restored interpersonal relations between God and man. --*Editor*

Faith entails living in view of unseen things, simply because God has testified of them. --*Fred O. Blakely*

The Apostles set the second coming of Christ before the church as the great antidote to all their troubles. --*Fred O. Blakely*

We must come to regard all discouragements and backsettings as the trying of our faith. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Our faith and the continuity of our profession of faith is based on the faithfulness of God. “For He is faithful that promised.” --*Fred O. Blakely*

There is nothing in the message of God that caters to flesh and blood. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Since we are not debtors to the flesh (Rom. 8:12), it stands to reason that we are debtors to Christ. --*Floyd M. Coffman*

Sorrow and life are very near kin. --*Harold F. Lohse*

As we rise on the Lord's Day, we must say to ourselves, “Today we break bread with Jesus!” --*Given O. Blakely*

Hope connects us with the future, as memory with the past, and is intended to neutralize the materializing influence of earthly life around us. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Bearing the cross has to do with submitting to and not drawing back from the repercussions that result from living godly. --*Given O. Blakely*

Believers are reckoned as though they had not sinned on the same ground as God is manifested not to have sinned in His forbearance of sin (cf. Rom. 3:25-26). --*Fred O. Blakely*

The more you know of the gospel, the more it nourishes your faith. --*Fred O. Blakely*

God would have to renounce Himself before He could renounce us who are in His Son. --*Fred O. Blakely*

We are spiritually in sympathy with God. His law is written upon our hearts. --*Fred O. Blakely*

We are kept in and through the divine Name, not through denominational affiliation. --*Fred O. Blakely*

We Are Ambassadors!

By Tina Cobb

As sons and daughters of God, we are ambassadors for Christ. He has committed unto us the word of reconciliation, as though Christ were making His appeal through us: "We implore you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." We must not show partiality in sowing the seed for we do not know which are the stony places and which is good soil.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Eccl. 11:6).

There is no guarantee that those who go out sowing the seed will experience untroubled waters ("Blessed are ye who sow beside all waters" (Is. 32:20)). In fact, many times we sow in tears. But be of good cheer! They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:5-6).

As we go forth each day, let us plow and sow in hope. Let us not grow weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Let us be even more diligent to preach the gospel to a world that is in desperate need of living water.

"Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (II Cor. 9:10).

"We Can Love God More"

This will be theme of a series of meetings to be held by Brother Michael Blakely, of Brownsburg, Indiana at West Side Christian Church in Joplin, Missouri. The meetings will continue from April 2nd to the 7th, Lord's Day evening through Friday evening. Brother Gene Hutchcraft is the minister there at West Side.

Under the general heading "We Can Love God More," the first message will be entitled, "Because the Veil Has Been Rent in Twain;" the second, "Because He First Loved Us;" the third, "Because He is Just and the Justifier;" the fourth, "Because He is a Rewarder (Part I);" the fifth, "Because He is a Rewarder (Part II);" and the last will be, "Because He is a Personal Savior." In all of the messages it shall be Brother Blakely's desire and objective to "give people a reason to love God rather than tell them how to or that they ought to" love Him.

We are asking all of our readers to be in prayer for Brother Mike as he makes final preparations for these gatherings, and for the brethren at West Side as well. May he be given grace to speak as the oracles of God, and may the brethren there be prepared to receive the Word of God with all readiness of mind. For more information about these meetings, you may contact Brother Hutchcraft at 417-782-3687.

A Letter to Brother Fred

"Dear Brother Blakely, Please know of my sympathy to you in the loss of your beloved wife, Rubye, after so many years of marriage and partnership in our Lord's service. To be sure I know that you are rejoicing that you will see her again in the resurrection . . . There is a deep sadness and emptiness (however) that those of us who are left behind experience regardless of the faith and hope that we cling to. But God's promise that He will give us songs in the night is soon (to be) realized. (I guess He knew that some of us would be awake).

"I want to thank you and Sister Rubye for all that you did to help him (Brother Given) to become the godly man of the Word that he is today. The brethren in Joplin have abundantly benefitted from his unique and refreshing views and teaching of the Word. We have been strengthened and uplifted, and, yes, drawn closer to God as we press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. For Him always" --*Colleen Bennitt, Joplin, MO.*

An Invitation to Visitors

For those of our readers who are travelling through northwest Indiana, we invite you to visit us at our place of assembly. We would very much desire to meet you and to be comforted by the mutual faith, both yours and ours. The types of materials that appear in *the Banner of Truth* are but samplings of the kinds of things that are commonly preached and taught in our assembly. We welcome you in the name of the Lord Jesus!

Our regular meeting times are as follows:

Lord's Day, Bible School - 9:30 a.m.

Lord's Day, Morning Service - 10:30 a.m.

Lord's Day, Evening Service - 6:30 p.m.

Midweek Service (open discussion of a topic of

Scripture and time of prayer) Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

INDEPENDENCE HILL CHRISTIAN CHURCH is located at 2230 W. 78th Avenue (two blocks north of Route 30 and one block west of Rt. 55 [Taft] in Merrillville, Indiana). Our building has a cream-colored stucco finish. The phone numbers are 219-793-9318 (leave message on answering machine at place of assembly, if no one is present) and 219-769-7048 (Editor's home). You may call us for further information.

Every other Sunday we have a carry-in dinner immediately after the morning service. Visitors are cordially invited to join us as we eat together with gladness and singleness of heart.

The Refreshing Waters Renewal

On July 25-27 (Tuesday through Thursday) of this year the sixth annual REFRESHING WATERS RENEWAL is to be held in Hornet, MO, which is next to Joplin. The theme for this year's Renewal will be "THE BLOOD OF CHRIST". There will be several messages spoken by men from around the country focusing on this all important topic.

Here is a list of the subjects that will be ministered there. The Blood of the Covenant, Sanctified by the Blood of Christ, Christ Entered the Holiest by His Blood, Redemption through the Blood, The Church, Purchased by the Blood, Washed from our sins by the Blood, The Communion of the Blood of Christ, The Purging of the Conscience By the Blood, We Enter the Holiest through the Blood, Peace through the Blood of the Cross, Propitiation by the Blood through faith, Justified by the Blood of Christ, and Brought Near by the Blood.

In addition to the messages, there will also be some discussions which will give opportunity for all to participate. We encourage our readers to plan to be in attendance there if they are able. For more information you may write to Given Blakely at: 406 Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801. His telephone number is 417-782-3063.

Festival to Be Held in March

The next spiritual festival sponsored by the Christian Church meeting on West 78th Avenue in Merrillville will be held on Sunday, March 5th, 1995. We shall begin Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. and continue through the evening service. There will be a fellowship dinner in between the morning and afternoon gatherings. We invite all of our readers, who are able, to attend. Video and audio tapes of the messages will also be available. Call 219-793-9318 for more information.

The following is a list of the speakers who shall expound the latter part of the Book of Revelation. We ask you to remember them in your prayers.

First sermon: Overview: Albert G. Stoner, Jr.

Second sermon: Chapters 12-15: Dean E. Boelt

Third sermon: Chapters 16-18: Timothy McCulford

Fourth sermon: Chapters 19-20: Dan Powers

Fifth sermon: Chapters 21-22: Robert Cobb

The Ministry of the Word

By Fred O. Blakely

"Holding forth the Word of life" (Phil. 2:16)

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," declared the Lord Jesus, in citation of Moses' declaration recorded in Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

"Thy Word hath quickened me," said the Psalmist to God (Ps. 119:50). Thus, he exclaimed, "O how love I Thy law. It is my meditation all the day" (v. 97).

Through Thy precepts I get understanding. Therefore, I hate every false way," it was continued (v. 104).

"The Word of the Lord is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword; and piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: for all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12-13, ASV).

"From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

"The preacher sought to find acceptable words, and that which was written was acceptable, even words of truth" (Eccl. 12:10).

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse His way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word."

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet. 1:23).

"The entrance of Thy Words give light; it giveth understanding to the simple. (Ps. 119: 130).

The State of Lostness. "For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost" (Mt. 18:11). As the Son of man, Jesus Christ is the best suited to find and save the lost ones. These were lost with regards to the life of God, and from the fellowship and service of God. They were certainly not lost from the view of God's all-seeing eye. To be alienated from the God of heaven in any sense of the word entails lostness. These individuals were as sheep gone astray, and the Son of man is calling them to return to Himself, who is the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. --*Editor*

The Son of Man. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of Himself as the Son of man with regard to all aspects and relations in heaven and in earth. When speaking of His coming into this world the first time, He said, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk. 9:56). As He spoke of the days of His flesh, He said, "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Mt. 8:20). Foreseeing His death to be near at hand, He said, "The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (Lk. 9:44). Of His coming on the day of Pentecost, He declared, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Mt. 16:28).

And when speaking of His coming in glory, Jesus said, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30). And of the day of judgment, He observed that the Father "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (Jn. 5:27). --*Editor*

God Manifest In The Flesh. What a glorious potential for us for mercy, and grace, and truth that God was manifest in the flesh. And what a prospect for glory for us, because the One who was manifest in the flesh has been now received up into glory (cf. I Tim. 3:16). When He was manifest in the flesh, Christ removed every moral obstacle that stood between heaven and earth, because He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. --*Editor*

Our High Priest and Advocate. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Prior to the Word being made flesh, heaven had only been a witness to men being tempted to sin. No one in heaven, up to that point, had been tempted, for God cannot be so tempted (Jas. 1:13). But this is not the case any more. The Lord Jesus Christ is now gone into heaven, and He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

We now have a Representative in heaven who is able to sympathize with the temptation to sin and He is able and willing to succor us when we are tempted. This same Jesus is also our Advocate (I Jn. 2:1-2) with the Father if we do sin. Let us continually avail ourselves of the blessed provision that He has made for us who are yet fighting the good fight of faith. --*Editor*

The Scope of Christ's Experience. The Son of man tasted of the lowest of life's experiences and yet it is He that ascended to the throne of glory. And you and I presently happen to be somewhere in between within the scope of His experience. He has been lower than us, and now He has been exalted to the highest station. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). --*Editor*

Who is the Son of Man? "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Mt. 16:13). As the Son of man there is a divinely imposed question mark associated with His identity. And sooner or later every man will have to give an answer to this question and confess who the Son of man is. It is a question that must answered and confessed from the heart. Many have confessed it with joy unto salvation, while others who reject God's salvation shall confess it to their grief and condemnation. Let each of us always be ready to answer as Peter did in verse 16. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." --*Editor*

The Logic of Hebrews Six. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6). The ones spoken of hear tasted of the best that heaven had to offer and turned back to their own vomit. What else could God offer them as an incentive to return to Him?

Thus we see the extreme jeopardy of men "playing around" with religion. Hebrews chapter six affirms that there is a state into which men may fall, from which there is no possible recovery. We are speaking of men who, at one time, were walking by faith and thus were accounted to be "heirs of salvation." Let us then cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart, and avoid that irrecoverable state with all of our beings' ransomed powers. --*Editor*

The Remaining Ones. "We which are alive and remain" (I Th. 4:15, 17). The Apostle uses this phrase two times. Many who are alive today may be among the number who shall be "alive and remain" unto the coming of the Lord. For "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). If the brethren in the first century, under the direct tutelage of the Apostles, earnestly expected the Lord Jesus to return in their day, how much more ought we, who are living in the last of the last times, to live in momentary expectancy of His blessed appearing in our day?

The fact that we are living at the close of the sixth millennium coupled with the unparalleled rise of wickedness (II Tim. 3:1-5) and the great scarcity of faith (Lk. 18:8), all indicate that we are living in the end time. These things coming together at once are all pointing to an imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. Therefore "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

An Effective Assignment

By Fred O. Blakely

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (II Cor. 13:11).

The Presence of God with His people is the source of their wisdom and power. The above exhortations of Paul show the way to realization by the individual of the divine Presence.

“Be perfect,” he urges. Now, if what he has in mind by that exhortation is not possible of attainment by the believer, the Apostle would not have called upon him to attain it.

Obviously, absolute sinlessness is not what is intended, for Paul himself had not attained that, as Romans and other assertions of his reveal. What was meant was the spiritual maturity that is set before us as a goal toward which we by grace are to strive. We are to adopt as the goal for ourselves God’s good and perfect will.

The “good comfort” which we are called upon to realize for ourselves is a precious boon of the Scriptures available to God’s people. Thus, we read of “the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:31). Again, it is declared that we, “through comfort of the Scriptures” are to “have hope” (Rom. 1:4).

The call upon us to be of “one heart” has been demonstrated to be possible of realization. It is written of the Jerusalem church in the first century that they were “of one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). That was a demonstration of “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” which we are urged to keep (Eph. 4:3).

The recompense for such attainments in divine grace, as set forth by the Apostle, is to be duly noted. “And the God of peace will be with you,” it is declared (II Cor. 13:11). That Presence of God will make fully worthwhile all the striving by grace and through the Spirit that is required to achieve and maintain the desired unity.

The Birth of Christ. The entrance of Christ into the world was a most blessed event in earth’s history. It signaled a new era of hope for mankind. Solomon’s assessment of all being vanity (Eccl. 1:2; 12:8) became obsolete when the Word was made flesh, and began to dwell among us. We don’t even think like Solomon any more! And the grave is no longer viewed as merely the end of life’s tedious and burdensome journey, but rather it is now seen as a door of hope, yea, it is the doorway into the presence of God!

With this in mind, let us add that the consideration of Christ’s birth will only profit us if we consider the vital bearing and implications that it most certainly has on our present situation. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. God was manifest in the flesh. Christ took on Him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!* If we fail to carry out the implications of His birth to their logical conclusions, then the truth will not profit us. And for men to year after year remember the Babe in Bethlehem without a substantial and steady increase in the faith, will most likely result in their making shipwreck of the faith.

The annual remembrance of the Savior’s birth is, perhaps, a step upward for someone that is yet outside of Christ. But for those in Christ, such a practice would definitely constitute a backward and a downward step. The yearly gravitation to the infant of Bethlehem among those in the church is not spiritually natural. This is something that even nature ought to teach us. As we consider those who are dear to us among the sons of men, our preference is not to think of them as they were when they were infants. We would rather consider them as they are now. They are able to comfort and encourage us when we consider them *in their present state*.

Let us, then, give diligence to remember the Savior as He is now. Having put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, He is now risen, exalted at the right hand of God, interceding, reigning, henceforth expect-

ing till His enemies be made His footstool, and coming again in the clouds of heaven! --*Editor*

A Threefold Address. “As ye know how we *exhorted and comforted and charged* every one of you, as a father doth his children” (I Th. 2:11). This speaks well of the brethren that were at Thessalonica in that they were of such a spirit, being willing to be addressed in this manner.

There are many individuals in the church that welcome words of comfort, but who do not find exhortation to be very palatable. Such ought not to be the case. And there are fewer still who would be able to receive a solemn charge to live godly as that mentioned above. But because we are in the domain of the “prince of the power of the air” and because of the many jeopardies that beset us on the way to heaven, we stand continually in need of all three of these kinds of ministrations. Let us see that we are of a ready mind to receive them as the Thessalonians were. --*Editor*

Suffering With Christ. The truth is that when our faith incurs the indignation and abuse of unbelievers, we are suffering “with Christ.” In fact, we are participating in the sufferings of Christ. This is not punishment, it is the means of qualifying you to reign with Christ. But if you lose this perspective, doubt and misery will cover you like a shroud. Trial is painful, but do not be surprised! It is the result of your faith, and is equipping you to more fully enjoy the glory that is to come. Rejoice! --*Given O. Blakely*

When you look into heaven as John did, the first thing that you see is a throne (cf. Rev. 4:1-2). God rules both heaven and earth from heaven. On one occasion, it will be recalled, Jesus prayed, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Mt. 11:25). --*Given O. Blakely*

The Matter of Indwelling. There is no question in God’s Word about the possibility of Deity indwelling mankind. God clearly affirms that He dwells with the humble and contrite heart, even though the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.

The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are each set forth as dwelling within the redeemed. Although this is challenging to our faith, we must have the courage to honor God in our acceptance of the truth. That is the unique prerogative of faith. --*Given O. Blakely*

The Divine Counsel. “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Ps. 73:24). The receiving of which He speaks here was preceded by divine guiding. He has guided us with His eye, He has led us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. And according to His word, He has led us in a plain path, the path of life. It was not always an easy path to traverse, but we thank Him that it is and has been a plain path. It is the path that leads to glory. --*Editor*

How does a person become more like God? What, if any, is the secret? Is conformity to the divine image the result of human discipline? Is it accomplished by means of the law principle? The answer is found in the promises of God (cf. II Pet. 1:4). --*Given O. Blakely*

Satan knows how to come against men who are merely in their fleshly capacities. --*Robert Cobb*

The thing that we need to accord to God is “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:26). --*Fred O. Blakely*

Instead of lusting after the flesh, we should lust or earnestly desire after God. --*Fred O. Blakely*

When heaven is cut out of the picture, earth takes over. You’ve got to be dominated by heaven or you’ll be dominated by earth. --*Fred O. Blakely*

God Has Demonstrated His Mind To Men Some Admonitory Examples

By Fred O. Blakely

*“These things happened unto them by way of example;
and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the
ends of the ages are come” (I Cor. 10:11, ASV).*

Many persons miss the lessons intended for us in the supernatural judgments and approbations of God recorded in the Scriptures. Because He does not so express Himself today, it is concluded by some that there actually is no God, or at least that He is not deeply concerned about their lives, as He was with those of old.

Thus, the infidel Robert Ingersoll interpreted his continuing to live as evidence of the nonexistence of God, when he held a watch on God for a minute, and dared Him to strike Ingersoll dead. Similarly, some professing believers today, because such divine visitations do not now occur, are insufficiently impressed with God’s judgments of the past. The terrible emphasis of His abhorrence of sin, given by the miraculous manifestations of the past associated with His wrath, seems to escape them.

The Continuing Ministry. But the Apostle Paul, in the text from Corinthinans cited above, proclaims the operations for succeeding generations of these functions by God. Indeed, the record of what was previously done was written “for our admonition.”

That is, when God dealt publicly with His people, either in chastisement or favor, His ultimate purposes in the incidents were not at the time fully achieved. In addition to the immediate situation, He meant to so reveal Himself as to instruct and influence those who followed as in our day, when there is “no open vision,” the Word of God is to be especially precious (I Sam. 3:1). We are expected to heed its every applicable statement and implication.

Scriptural Demonstrations. The Scriptures abound with these examples of God’s displeasure with sin, and His unfailing delight in and reward for righteousness. The curse against Adam and Eve serves as a divine demonstration of the alienating power of sin, and of its final result -- death. See Isaiah 59:1-2; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23.

The terrible punishment for the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16) becomes an object lesson of warning against insubordination and presumption in the kingdom of God. The extreme penalty suffered by the errant “man of God” (I Kgs. 13) testifies eloquently of the necessity of obeying the commands of God (cf. Gal. 1:8-9). That obedience is obligatory, regardless of the opposition of the philosophies and contradictions of men (Col. 2:8-10).

Likewise, Uzzah’s tragic death (II Sam. 6) speaks forcefully of God’s attitude toward the flagrant disregard for His Word. Certainly, it should constrain us to diligently hearken to “Him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12:25; cf. 1:2; Mt. 17:5).

In the first century, the spectacular deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), as J. W. McGarvey observes, are held up as a warning to all generations for vain glory and against hypocrisy and avarice. God there demonstrated His mind against such sins.

Those in the church today who seek undeserved credit for consecration to our Lord should take due note of that demonstration. The judgment should convince them that they, quite as certainly as Ananias and Sapphira, are under God’s condemnation until they repent.

“The lie told by Ananias consisted in misrepresenting his gift as being more liberal in proportion to his ability than it really was,” McGarvey comments, in clarification of the incident. In application of the supernatural occurrence to the modern church, he well adds:

“Every time a member of the church in the present day makes exaggerated representations of his giving or understates the amount of His wealth, in order to make out a degree of liberality which is not real, he is guilty of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. And if such were to drop dead in their tracks, there would be a thinning of the ranks in some places.

All who are tempted to act thus should be faithfully notified that God will surely smite them, except they repent. Such persons include the religious “modernists,” the “Christian Scientists,” the outright atheists, and all others who seek to “pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10).

The Faithful’s Reward. It is heartening, however, to consider that not all of the demonstrations have been in adverse judgment. God is equally ready to recognize and exalt those who love and serve Him. He daily shows “mercy unto thousands” of such (Ex. 20:5-6). Thus, the favor enjoyed by Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and, of course--above all--the Lord Jesus, His own dear Son (Phil. 2:1-11).

The important consideration for us is to remember and properly use these scriptural demonstrations of God’s will (Lk. 17:32). Let us take note of the particular revelation in each instance. Let us consider them, together with all the express statements relating to the Mind of God toward us. Then let us earnestly endeavor, by His grace, to know what He would have us to do, and do it.

So shall the Scriptures make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. 3:15).

Sustained Efforts. How can the people of God sustain their efforts to lay hold on eternal life? Those with a propensity for Law imagine that the threat of being rejected by God will provide the needed incentive. But is this really the case?

Throughout divine history, God has provided incentives for His people. There is a remarkable consistency in the offering of rewards as an incentive. Effort is never considered an end of itself. It is always a means to an end. The “end” is obtaining the prize, and the means is our personal involvement.

God does not ask men to leave the cursed order without promising them something that is “better.” It is on the part of wisdom for spiritual leaders to provide excellent reasons for believers to engage in zealous efforts. --*Given O. Blakely*

Christ’s Coming. “For the Lord Himself shall *descend* from heaven with a shout” (I Th. 4:16). He shall descend, but He shall never again condescend. He condescended once when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and when He made Himself of no reputation. He condescended when He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but now He is crowned with glory and honor. When He comes “the second time,” He shall “come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Lk. 9:26). --*Editor*

The Path of Life. “The path of life” (Ps. 16:11) is the path that leads to the everlasting presence of God. And in that blessed presence there is fulness of joy and pleasures forever more. The Lord and the Apostles identified that path for men so that even a wayfaring man could not miss it. Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” The Apostle Peter declared, “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). --*Editor*

We have fellowship with God in the moral arena of hatred for iniquity and love for righteousness, not merely in our orthodoxy. --*Editor*

“Come out from among them.” This is a moral separation, not necessarily a physical separation. --*Fred O. Blakely*

You can’t have Christ in you and, at the same time, operate in the flesh. --*Robert Cobb*

The heavenly places have been prepared for us and, by His grace, we are there now (cf. Eph. 2:1-6). --*Editor*

Our pure minds need to be stirred up lest they slip back into impurity. --*Fred O. Blakely*

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Sister Rubye Called Home

By Fred O. Blakely

Early on Saturday morning, January 7, Sister Rubye W. Blakely, the former Banner editor's wife, answered God's call to "come up hither," and went to be with Him and the blessed Son (Rev. 11:12).

She had been ill for almost four years, being all but completely paralyzed. God's summons of her out of the earthly body, thus, was a favor by Him, and it is so considered by her husband, although the pain caused by her complete separation from us is sore.

The sorrow caused by my dear wife's death, however, is made bearable by a blessed realization and recognition. It is that our loss is her eternal gain, and that the separation which we must endure is "but for a moment" (II Cor. 4:7). Soon it will end, and we shall go to her, as David said regarding himself in relation to his child whom God had taken (II Sam. 12:23).

In light of the blessed gospel of Christ, death thus is a blessing from God. As it is written, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15). We must acquire the Spirit and Mind of the Lord in order to perceive that precious nature of the saints' death.

After all, the world is not to be our abiding home. We are en route through it to the blessed eternal home which Jesus went to prepare for us. Sister Rubye has arrived there, with the ardor and suffering of the journey forever behind her.

Rubye obeyed the gospel in her late teens, sometime prior to our marriage. For 60 years after our marriage, and previous to her paralytic stroke, she served God in the church by her singing and teaching of others. She sang God's praises in six different states, and was our minister of music in the Merrillville congregation at the time of her stroke in 1991.

As a co-laborer in the gospel, my dear wife heartily and steadfastly supported her husband in his class-room, pulpit, and writing ministry. That was so all the years of our married life, until her affliction. In consequence of that devotion, whatever reward the Lord has for that ministry will be shared by her. Of a truth, we were "workers together" in the blessed service of God (II Cor. 6:1).

The marriage of Sister Rubye and me was blessed by God with three children, each of whom, with their children, are now serving Him. There are 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Our oldest son, Brother Given O. Blakely, is Director of Church Relations / Coordinator of College Advancement at Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO, and serves as an evangelist in a four-state area in that part of the country.

Our second son, E. Timothy Blakely, lives in Lake Oswego, OR. He is an elder in the church there, and with his family is active in its services and work.

Our daughter, Nelda A. Powers, with her husband, Brother Dan, and children, live in Crown Point, IN. They, too, are active in the church. Danny is an elder and Nelda serves as a pianist and as a teacher in the primary department.

It will be recalled that the blessed Savior held out to the church a powerful incentive for full devotion to Himself. "Behold, I come quickly," He said. "And My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

In view of that situation, it seems certain that my dearly beloved wife shall, indeed, receive "a full reward," as the Apostle urges us all to seek to obtain (II Jn. 8).

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

In Memorium. The following individuals have made contributions to the Banner of Truth in memory of Sister Rubye, who departed to be with Christ on January 7 of this year: Flanoy and Joy Alexander of Delight, Arkansas, \$50.00; Helen L. Edmundson of Bridgeport, Illinois, \$20.00. In addition, a gift in Sister Rubye's memory was donated to Ozark Christian College in Joplin, Missouri by Colleen Bennitt of that same city. We would expression our deep appreciation to these gracious individuals.

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season" (Lu. 4:13). If the devil departs from us for a season, as he did from the Saviour, we should make use of those times to build up our faith in preparation for the next assault by the tempter. --*Robert Cobb*

Scripture is clear about our God. He accomplishes what He sets out to do. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

If, in this life, we are faithful stewards over the Lord's goods, in the world to come God will give us that which is our own (cf. Lk. 16:11-12). --*Given O. Blakely*

"My lord delayeth his coming" (Mt. 24:48). This is an evil attitude of the heart. --*Given O. Blakely*

Sin is no longer the problem. It has been thoroughly dealt with at the Cross. Whether it be iniquity, transgression, moral weakness, or whatever form it may take, let us glory in the Cross of Christ and wash our garments white in the blood of the Lamb. --*Fred O. Blakely*

The two witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven were more effective after they were overcome than before. This is a great principle of Scripture. --*Given O. Blakely*

In the world to come we will see that Judas' transgression was infinitely more terrible than is now imaginable. --*Given O. Blakely*

Let the Lord be your first love, not the condition of other people. If He is our first love, then and only then will we be a benefit to others. --*Given O. Blakely*

We are never right till, by repentance, we take God's side against ourselves. --*Harold F. Lohse*

(Continued From Column One)

Meanwhile, she now rests from her earthly labors, and her good works in the Lord "do follow" her, continuing to glorify God (Rev. 14:13).

How blessed and comforting the consideration that my dear wife is now where the joys supernal and unending abound, and where such pleasures as I could share with her, by contrast, are but dust and weightless motes upon the balances.