

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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### *LIVING BY FAITH*

It is the testimony of Scripture that at the very moment our relationship with God begins, He makes us a gift. We become related to God by believing the record He has given of His Son, and this same faith which brings us into the family of God also secures for us the gift of God's righteousness. This is, in fact, God giving to us His greatest grace, and no matter what may come to us after this, nothing will ever exceed in importance the gift of his righteousness. And just as the possession of money constitutes a man wealthy, and good health constitutes him as being healthy, even so the gift of righteousness constitutes a man right or just in the sight of God. Those who possess God's gift of righteousness are justified. The justified are the just.

In God's great message recorded in the book of Romans, this righteousness is set forth as being unto all and upon all who believe (3:22); it has no connection with the law, but the law and prophets give witness to it (3:21); it is God's own righteousness and it comes to man solely by faith in order that it might be entirely of grace (4:16). He who lacks this righteousness has no standing whatsoever before God.

The national history of Israel from Sinai to the close of the Acts period is the record of a zealous, devoted, nevertheless futile, attempt to obtain righteousness; that is, to obtain that standing before God which He demanded before giving them the promised blessings. Late in the Acts period, Paul said: "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God." Romans 10:2. This is, in reality, the testimony of the Holy Spirit to their devotion.

The history of other nations (the Gentiles) for the same period shows that no attempts whatsoever were made by them to obtain any standing before God. Nevertheless, it was necessary for Paul to admit that the Gentiles who never pursued righteousness had attained righteousness, even the one which is by faith. However, Israel who zealously pursued righteousness had not attained it. See Romans 9:30-31. In explanation of this strange condition, Paul bluntly declares that it came about because Israel's pursuit of righteousness was not according to faith but by the works of the law. Faith was the sole principle upon which God would deal with them, but they refused to deal with Him in this divinely established way.

Faith must be the starting point in the new life in Christ Jesus. If we would examine our standing before God, if we would judge the reality of our redemption and weigh the genuineness of our forgiveness, let us remember that these things are unto us according to our faith. This faith becomes ours as the result of believing the record that God gave of His Son. It comes by no other means and it is gained in no other way.

The record of the two blind men as set forth in Matthew 9:27-31 is highly instructive in regard to faith. They followed the Lord crying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." They entered into the same house where He was staying, and there Jesus asked them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They answered Him, "Yes, Lord." It is well known that when men are desperate, they will try anything. This could easily have been the case of these two men. They may have reasoned that it would cost them nothing to try it, and even if it did no good it would do them no harm. The Lord's question examined their attitude, and they insisted that they truly believed He was able to heal them. In the Scriptures *belief* and *faith* are the same thing. Upon their assertion and claim of faith in His ability to restore their sight, the Lord touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." The reality of their faith was demonstrated by the results. Their eyes were opened.

That these men needed sight, that they earnestly desired sight, that they sought it from the right One, and that they earnestly prayed for it - all these facts are apparent. But it was not granted according to their need, desire or prayers. It was granted according to their faith.

Even so it is with us in our dealings with God. That we need forgiveness, redemption and righteousness is apparent. The need of these is keenly felt by all who have been convicted by the Spirit. Our God can provide these things, and we may earnestly desire them and seek them with unceasing prayer. But these precious benefits will never be granted according to our need, desire or prayers. They will be given according to our faith. They become ours the moment we believe the record God has given of His Son. This is the great lesson we learn from the Lord's dealing with these two men, but it is not the only lesson.

Following the restoration of these men's sight, the Lord Jesus straightly charged them that no man be told of it. This injunction tested the character of their faith. Was it of such character that it could control their lives and persist and prevail above their zeal, wishes and desires? If they will live by faith, they will take Him at His word and act accordingly. But, though they were able to secure sight by faith, they were not able to live by it. They spread the matter abroad; therefore, they did not take Him at His word and their actions were contrary to it. No one can say what the result may have been if their faith had stood this test. It is my opinion that inasmuch as only five of the disciples had been chosen up to this time, these two men might have been given a place among the twelve. If so, they would have been among that number who out of all mankind shall have the privilege of sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

From this dealing of our Lord with these two men, let us learn that once relationship with God has become a reality, once we are among the just because of God's great act of justification, once we are able to say "whereas I was blind, now I see," then another truth becomes applicable to our lives. This truth was declared first by Habakkuk and repeated by Paul in three of his epistles - "The just shall live by his faith." In these words faith is declared to be the vital principle by which we live from day to day, and the quality of our lives will be according to our faith. Many are able to secure life in Christ by faith but few are able to walk by faith after the gift of God has been obtained. In all foundations those who live by faith will attain to a higher realm of service and blessing in that day when their true service really begins.

There is so much misunderstanding concerning faith that we will need to again consider its meaning. We must bring our views upon faith up to the level of God's Word and get away from the shallow thinking of the world upon this subject. The word *faith* has a popular meaning which is foreign to the Scripture.

In the Bible faith is seen in action and in demonstration many times, and without exception it is always set forth to be the act of taking God at His word and thinking, acting or responding accordingly. In the Word of God this alone is faith, and in our lives nothing but this can ever be regarded as faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is nothing more and nothing less than believing the record that God has given of Him. This must be the initial

act of faith in the Christian life. The result of this will be that the believer will immediately possess a good deposit of faith. This will set him up so that he can do business with God and for God. From this beginning, every time we believe God and respond according to that belief we add faith to faith. A man can have much faith or little faith. He can be weak in faith or strong in faith. Faith is accumulative and a man's esteem in the sight of God will be according to his faith. Faith comes by hearing, but the hearing must be, of the Word of God. Only those who possess faith can live by faith.

A majestic statement such as "The just shall live by his faith," is apt to be memorized and quoted on many occasions without any serious thought being given to its meaning or any sincere attempt made to express the truth it declares in the daily life. The fact that we are familiar with the words of a verse does not mean that we understand its meaning or that its truth has been incorporated into our lives. We need to give the most serious thought to the Scriptural meaning of "The just shall live by faith."

Since the call to live by faith is made to every child of God (the just) it is a serious error to think that this call is limited to or applicable only to certain individuals who have no visible or regular source of income, as most people seem to so limit it. Furthermore, it is nothing more than carnal pride for those individuals to claim that they are living by faith just because they receive no stated remuneration for their services. This idea has been so overemphasized that the majority appear to believe that if a man has a settled income, if he has a trade at which he works regularly to earn support for himself and his family, then he can never be among those who live by faith. Such ideas make the life of faith to be nothing more than trusting God for food and raiment, putting it on the lowest possible material plane. Furthermore, if this is the meaning of living by faith, then such a life is impossible for the majority of believers.

Consider this concrete example. The writer ministers the Word of God to one group consisting of about forty families. Without exception, all of these have regular salaries and incomes. They have skills, trades and businesses from which they earn incomes that supply their needs. Now, according to the popular theory of the life of faith, not one of these "bread-winners" are living by faith; for in order to do so they would need to quit their work, dispose of their businesses, then go forth to preach the gospel, trusting only in the goodness of God and the charity of the people for support. And, most tragic of all is the idea that one is not living by faith unless his clothes are ill-fitting and of the cheapest of cloth, and his food as plain as John the Baptist's. Such ideas are unscriptural for it would seem that if God cares for a man, he will not be meagerly and poorly cared for.

The Apostle Paul lived by his skill as a tent maker; nevertheless, he lived by faith. He provided for his fellow laborers who lacked such skill, but these also lived by faith. In view of these examples, we can arrive at no other conclusion than that trusting God for food and raiment is not the meaning of "living by faith."

There are men in this world who live by their wits. They give much thought to being more clever than their fellows, outsmarting them when they deal with them. Their ability to do this gives them a certain amount of worldly assurance and confidence.

Many men live by their money. They have amassed great sums, and this gives them a feeling of superiority, power and confidence. In fact, they so fully live by their money that if it is lost, they will often commit suicide. They so live by money that they cannot live without it.

The character of the new life in Christ Jesus is of such glory that when it is fully expressed it will bring forth the questions: How does that man live, and by what does he live? What is the source of his assurance, confidence and peace? How can he have such settled joy in the face of such adverse circumstances? How can he have trouble on every side, yet never be distressed; be perplexed, but never in despair; be persecuted and rejected, but know he is not forsaken? How can a man go on faithfully doing the work the Lord gave him to do, no matter what the results may be? How can he so joyfully continue to proclaim the Word, when that Word is never accepted? How can he refuse to turn to fables, when men demand fables of those to whom they listen?

Is such a life sustained by the service men perform, the prayers they offer, or the laws that they keep? Is a God honoring daily life sustained by the works one does or by the faith he possesses? These questions have already been answered. If the just live for the glory of God, if their lives are well pleasing to Him, if their lives are of such character that God can enter into fellowship with them, then they are living by their faith; they are walking by their faith. To attempt to live a God-honoring daily life by any other means than faith is as impossible as trying to live in this world without food and water.

In the Habakkuk passage it is declared that the just shall live by *his* faith. The word *his* makes this an intensely personal matter. This needs to be emphasized since very few have any beliefs that can be honestly called their personal faith. Even in regard to the so-called major doctrines, their faith is only that of a church, group or denomination. Beyond any doubt it can be said of many professing Christians that they have no personal faith in regard to such important truths as the Deity of Christ or the virgin birth. While they confess that they believe in both of these, they do so merely because their church or denomination holds that these things are true. If their church taught otherwise, then they would gladly concur and believe that He was only a man and the illegitimate son of a fallen woman.

A man may assent to doctrines that are true, but this cannot be called faith. Nothing can be truly called faith except those divine convictions that are based upon having heard the Word of God, being impressed by the Spirit of God as to its veracity, then believing it in such a way that God's message becomes our very thoughts in regard to it. As stated before, faith comes by hearing and not in any other way. The hearing is of the Word of God and not anything else. The one who is lacking convictions that have come in this way is devoid of faith. To live by faith is impossible for such, for man cannot live by what he does not possess.

The popular conception of faith which is prevalent today is one wherein faith is attributed to those who in times of great distress or tragedy are able to close their eyes to every adverse fact, their minds to every reality, then think that everything is going to "turn out all right." Take for example the case of one whose child is dangerously ill of some humanly incurable disease. Disregarding altogether the hopelessness of the case, she insists that the child is going to recover. Such an attitude is usually spoken of as "great faith," and none will question the right of any to call such an attitude "faith." However, in the Scriptural meaning of the term, such an attitude will never be recognized by God as being faith. It may qualify as hope or trust but not as faith. Faith comes by hearing, that is, by hearing the message of God, and this woman's belief that her child is going to recover is not founded upon any declaration of God.

We must realize that it is very easy to believe to be true a thing which we earnestly desire to be true. The human mind is such that it will almost automatically shut out every adverse fact, then believe a thing to be true when there is no basis for such belief whatsoever. It is almost impossible for us to believe a report to be false, if we anxiously desire it to be true.

"But," someone will ask, "did not Abraham believe that he would have a son by Sarah when there was no basis for his faith whatsoever? Did not he disregard altogether the fact that his own body was dead and that Sarah's womb was dead?"

Positively not. Never did any man have a surer basis for his faith than did Abraham when he believed he would have a son by Sarah. He had received a specific message from God that told him this was to be. He faced the facts of his own and Sarah's advanced age, but refused to let these discredit the promise of God. He had every right to believe in the impossible, the improbable and the miraculous, inasmuch as he had a declaration from God. He believed God and thought and planned accordingly. His faith was put to his account for righteousness.

Before one determines to live by faith, it would be well to examine the books and see if he has faith to live on. Abraham was not weak in faith. He had made a practice of taking God at His word and acting accordingly. When he was called to go out into a place which should later become his own possession, he obeyed and went out not knowing where he was going. Lot went along with him but obtained no faith, for he was not acting upon a message from God. In view of these things it would be well for all to check up and see

when and where in our lives we took God at His word and so responded that it could be counted to us as faith. Have we believed so-called "major truths" simply because they were held by groups with whom we desired to fellowship, but refused to act upon some so-called "minor truth" because it was considered controversial. If so, then all our contending for essentials or fundamentals is not faith at all but merely service in self will. We may think it an easy matter to take God at His word and respond according to what the Word demands, but if many will examine themselves they would discover that they have failed again and again when tested by God concerning some "minor truths." Let us consider certain examples. It may be that the reader will find points in which he failed.

1. In Genesis 2:7 the Maker of man tells us how man was made and what he is. It tells us that God formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. The man of faith, when impressed by the Spirit in regard to this passage will take God at His word and think accordingly. He will believe that man IS a living soul. The one who does not live by faith will reject this plain declaration. He will insist that it was a body God made, not a man, and he will further insist that man has soul, not that he is a soul. When we insist that this is not what God said, we will be pointed to the complimentary close of an epistle (1 Thess. 5:23) where man's nature is NOT the subject. Thus God's statement concerning the matter will be confused and contradicted by a statement that has no bearing on the matter. When we further insist that God's declaration concerning the subject be received and believed, we will be told that the matter is unimportant. When men reach, this point we cease to insist or discuss the matter, fully realizing that they are not inclined to take God at His word and think accordingly.

2. Many will insist that the passage used as our first example is open to debate; therefore, we have no right to insist that men believe "our interpretation" of it. But let us take a passage which is so plain that it is not open to question. In Joshua 1:2 we have a most positive statement made by God wherein He said, "Moses My servant is dead." Words could not be more plain, but few there are who can take God at His word here and think accordingly. They think of Moses as being alive; therefore, they do not believe the record God has given of Moses. The man of the flesh will say "unimportant." The man of faith will say "God's revelation," and think in harmony with it. By so doing he obtains faith in the sight of God.

3. In Acts 2:34 we read, "David is not ascended into the heavens." This is most surely an unorthodox" declaration since all "good orthodox people" believe that David is in heaven. Those who have committed themselves to "orthodoxy" cannot be free to live by faith. Those who have irrevocably committed their lives to the truth, whatever the truth may be, are free to live and walk by faith.

4. As a final example take Paul's declaration in Acts 17:24 that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Men are so prone to think that every building where men meet for worship is a house of God that only by a supreme effort can they rise up to believe what God has declared in this passage. Nevertheless, since God has declared that he does not dwell in man-made temples, the man of faith will refuse to think of any building as being "the house of God."

Some who read these lines will insist that the examples given are so insignificant that they are unworthy of consideration. They will insist that in God's sight a man's standing will not be affected in any way by what he believes about Moses being dead or alive. It is granted that these things are "insignificant." They were selected because they seemed so unimportant. A million such "unimportant" things can be found in the Word of God, and the one who believes them all and thinks accordingly has gained a good and precious deposit of faith. Furthermore, God, as a rule, does not test men in regard to the so-called great and important matters.

**He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Luke 16:10.**

Faith has no foundation except God's declaration. It is of such power that by it men are weaned from the world and all its attractions. The conquest that overcomes the world is that of our faith. Faith makes it possible for men to hold in contempt the praise, the blame and the scorn of those who little know or love the truth. It takes the eyes of men off the temporary honors of this world and sets their thoughts and desires upon God's eternal honors and glories.

Many that are first shall be last is the declaration of our Lord. He who lives by faith can rest assured that he will be among the first. Again He said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Those of faith can feel confident of their place among the chosen. The citations of every man in that day will be according to their faith. Even those who have valiantly served will have no reward unless their service was the outcome of taking God at His word and serving accordingly.

**Hear again the declarations of our God:**

**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17.**

**But without faith it is impossible to please Him. Hebrews 11:6.**

**Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23.**

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## ***THE WORD BECAME FLESH***

(Continued from Vol. IX - No.2)

### **An Exposition of John 1:1-14**

The transcendent statements that are found in John 1:9-13 are, by most expositors, usually applied to the Lord Jesus during the thirty-three years He was upon the earth. They take these passages, apply them to the earthly sojourn of the Lord Jesus, and finding that they fit perfectly, are quite well satisfied that this is the full extent of their application and interpretation. However, these same declarations can be taken and fitted into the revealed truth of the times before His appearance as a man upon the earth and they will be found to fit without wresting or shaping them in the least. Furthermore, since John 1:14 speaks of the Expression of God being made flesh, then it is only logical to think that the things which are said previous to this must apply to that period of time before His earthly sojourn. That they also apply to the time after He became flesh is readily admitted, for the truth stated in John 1:9-12 are not based upon His incarnation; therefore, they are in no way altered by it. These things will be more fully set forth as the passage is examined.

**That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.** There has been much difference of opinion among devout students as to the meaning *of* this passage. The problem centers in the word "cometh," as to whether it refers to "the true Light" or to "every man." As it reads in the *King James Version* it refers to "every man." Most expositors retranslate the verse making it to read: "The true light which, coming into the word, lighteth every man." I do not profess to be able to judge the merits of the two sides of this dispute; but, I do feel that a translation must be true to the truth. The phrase "every man that cometh into the world" seems to be superfluous, since men were never out of this world, and when born they are always born into the world and nowhere else. However, I do not believe that "coming into the world" in reference to the Expression of God necessarily refers to the incarnation. More on this later, this being only a preliminary statement.

In spite of differences of opinion on this point, all are agreed that this passage declares that the true Light lights every man. Here we have one of the most far-reaching statements to be found in the Word of God. We may never be able to fully comprehend it, neither can we demonstrate it by judging from individual cases and experiences. Nevertheless it is the emphatic declaration of God, and we will have faith to our credit if we take God at His word and think accordingly. Let us not say we believe this and then think of any man as being without light. There is the true Light that sheds its light upon every man without distinction or exception. And, being a true Light, it is no phantom. It does not move away as men seek to come near to it.

## **God's word, God's light, and God's truth are one and the same.**

These are all personalized in Christ. Apart from any special revelation, like that given to Israel, all men have truth concerning God thrust upon them. God makes it manifest to them; it is the clear witness in Romans 1:19. This light is permanent, a fact that robs men of any hope that they can plead ignorance in the day when they shall be required to give an account to God.

He was in the world. A fundamental rule in studying any portion of Scripture is to ask, "What is the subject of this passage?" If this is done here, the answer will necessarily be "the Expression (or Word) of God." Then if we ask the second fundamental question, "What does the statement under consideration have to say about the subject?" The answer will be that it declares that the Expression of God was in the world. The truth of this is quickly realized by all who know the Old Testament.

In Genesis 3:4 He is seen to be walking in the garden, and in the following chapter He speaks personally to Cain. Enoch walked with Him for 300 years, and His invitation to Noah reveals that He was in the ark. He examined the work of the builders of Babel, and appeared to Abraham in the Ur of Chaldees. Later Abraham entertained Him in his tent. He wrestled with Jacob at Haran, and spoke to Moses out of the burning bush 400 years later. This same Moses met Him on Mount Sinai, and He fought beside Joshua as Captain of the Lord's hosts. Manoah and his wife saw Him ascending in the flame and smoke of sacrifice. Truly from Adam to John the Baptist, the Expression of God was in the world. The fact that He came into the world in a far different manner when He was made flesh does not change in the least the fact that He was in the world in Old Testament times expressing, revealing and declaring the Absolute God.

**The world was made by Him.** This repeats what has already been declared in verse three, but it centers our attention specifically upon the *world*, as having been created by Him. The *world* is not the *earth*. When God created the heavens and the earth, He created more than these two realms. He created and established an order, a system, a world. This order was perfect, and it satisfied God. The heavens and earth in the beginning were like the two great main gears in an elaborate piece of machinery. The teeth of these gears (the heavens and earth) meshed perfectly and moved together harmoniously. This was the divine order, system or arrangement that originally existed, the overthrow of which resulted in the present disrupted order or world. The Expression of God was the Creator of the world in which He is seen throughout the Old Testament, doing- that work which will some day result in the restoration of the world to its original perfection.

**The world knew Him not.** He was the Creator of the world, He came into the world, He was in the world, and He shed light upon every man. Nevertheless, the world knew Him not. The Old Testament gives ample witness to the truth of this. He was expressing, revealing and declaring, but men willfully refused the truth and plunged into idolatry. Romans 1:19-32 gives the Scriptural record of this. The world had no opportunity to receive or know the incarnate Expression during the thirty-three years He was upon the earth. But all men had equal opportunity to know Him before He limited His ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

**He came unto His own.** The words "His own" appear twice in I this verse. In the Greek the first occurrence is neuter plural and I the second is masculine plural. The first should read, "He" came to His own things or possessions." This is exactly what He did when He came into the world. He was

coming to the things He had created, things upon which no one could have a prior claim or who could show a later claim. The "all things" that were made by Him were and are His possessions.

**His own received Him not.** This, being the masculine plural should read, "His own people (or men) received Him not." I prefer to read it, "**those who were His own received Him not.**" Inanimate things could not receive Him, and brute creatures could not be expected to recognize their Creator, but the world of intelligent men should certainly have given Him the reverence and gratitude that He desired from them. They belonged to Him for He created them, but they refused to receive Him. They glorified Him not as God and were not thankful. As Daniel said to Belshazzar: "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

This great drama was reenacted on a smaller scale when Christ was born in Bethlehem. He came to His own possessions for the land was certainly His. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is Mine." Leviticus 25:23. He came to His own people Israel. His own people as a unit refused to receive Him. But the fact that this was reenacted in Palestine must not close our eyes to the wider truth it reveals. The great drama set forth in John 1:9-13 was acted out on a stage no smaller than this world.

**But as many as received Him.** In the first four thousand years of human history, acting in response to the true light that was shining upon them, some men did that which is here described as receiving the Expression of God. Divine faith becomes the possession of man as the result of his response to divine light, truth or word. These three are the same, but since Scripture uses all three, we will do well to do the same. Men had light and truth before they had the written word of God. Their response to light and truth was equal to receiving the Expression of God.

Many will desire to know just how these men who lived in the time between Adam and Christ received the One who was God's Expression. There are so many that think that receiving Christ can be reduced to some ritual that they feel those who received Him had to perform some religious act in order to do it. But as there is no ritual today by which a man receives Christ, neither was there one in times before He became flesh. We receive Him by responding to the *word* of God concerning Him, they received Him by responding to the *light* of God concerning Him. In response to their light they received the Expression of God. In response to our light, we receive the Expression who was made flesh. Their light revealed to them the same Expression that our light reveals to us. Their response to their light was equivalent to receiving Him. Our response to our light is the equivalent of receiving Him. Our light is fuller and we have it in written form; nevertheless, their light was the true light and many in response to it received the Expression of God.

**To them gave He power to become the sons of God.** The word translated "power" means *right* or *authority*, and the word translated "sons" means *children*. The gift of God to those who receive His Expression has always been a new relationship to Him. They are made God's children. Their *right* is to be such. He gave them this right.

**Even to them that believe on His Name.** Up to this point the only designations or names have been the Expression and the Light. These terms are a revelation of Christ in His person and nature. Those who receive Him are the ones who believe on His name.

**Which were born.** The revelation we have been considering tells us how God dealt with the human race as a whole before the birth of Christ. Men from Adam on had been given a true Light to which they were expected to respond. This was true also of the Israelite, even though his light was greater than that possessed by the Gentiles. The words "which were born" tells us of the relationship into which all men of faith were brought. They were born of God.

The primary and fundamental meaning of the word *birth* is the act or fact of coming into life. A positive example of this is found in John 9:1 where we read of one who was blind from his birth. Inasmuch as this is the primary meaning, all other meanings must be derived or figurative. When the Lord said, "Except a man be born again," He was not using the word *born* in its primary or literal meaning. Nicodemus used it in its literal meaning in John 3:4, but the Lord made it plain that He was speaking of coming into possession of life from above, or more specifically, to come into relationship. When a man is born into this world, the only relationship he bears to God is that of creature to Creator. When he is born from above, he becomes related to God as a child to the Father.

In view of these obvious truths it is necessary for us to see in John 1:13 the truth that the men and women of Old Testament times who received the Expression of God entered into possession of life and became related to God as His children. This happened to many outside of Israel and, of course, a great multitude in Israel. It was necessary for every man from Adam to receive the Expression of God. This is still the one great essential today, and man's destiny depends upon it.

**Not of blood.** The exalted and blessed relationship into which men were brought when they received the Expression of God was in no way related to nationality, ancestry or inheritance.

**Nor the will of the flesh.** It had nothing to do with human efforts

**Nor the will of man.** It had nothing to do with the acts and deeds of others, such as one man performing an ordinance or ritual upon another man.

**But of God.** The great work of bringing men into relationship with Himself was due exclusively to the work of God. It arose from God alone as to its source, and was effected by the direct agency of God alone. Therefore, if any difficulty arises in the mind of the reader in regard to men like Abimelech, Jethro, and Melchizedek concerning how they were brought into such close relationship with God, let it be remembered that this was entirely of God.

**And the Word was made flesh.** In harmony with what has been set forth, I would translate this, "And the Expression became flesh." In this statement the pre-existence of Christ is clearly set forth. He existed before He was born in Bethlehem. He existed in the beginning of time; therefore, He existed in eternity before time began. He did not exist in secret, waiting for that time when He would appear at Bethlehem. He is seen in action upon every page of the Old Testament. He assumed a human form in times before He became flesh, but in becoming flesh, He became a human being. He became a man in this world.

When the Expression became flesh, He was still the Expression of God. The invisible Deity was then expressing, revealing and declaring Himself in the Son of God upon the earth. Those who would consider and analyze the character of the man Christ Jesus should always keep before them the following Biblical facts. The Expression was in the beginning. The Expression was toward God. The Expression was God. The Expression was the Creator of all things. The Expression was in the world before He became flesh. The Expression became flesh. He who was rich became poor. He emptied Himself. He humbled Himself. He took the form of a slave.

**The End**

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# ***QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS***

QUESTION: Who comprises: (1) the bride of Christ, (2) the body of Christ or the Church which is His body, (3) the wife of Jehovah, (4) the dust, sand and star seed?

## **The Bride of Christ**

ANSWER: In regard to "the bride of Christ," I must say that after the most careful study of this subject I am convinced that there is no such thing. The term is never found in Scripture and the idea is foreign to it. It will inject a mixture into our faith and result in confusion if we give it any place. It is impossible to determine from Scripture the composition of something of which the Scripture never speaks. The idea of "the bride of Christ" finds support in certain illustrations in Scripture, but this comes from building a truth out of the illustration rather than seeing more clearly the truth that the illustration was supposed to clarify.

Suppose I say, "That man is like an elephant, he never forgets." All I desire is to emphasize the remarkable memory of the man to whom I refer, but if my hearer becomes intrigued with the elephant, my illustration is of no value. Furthermore, if he pushes the illustration too far and begins to look for a short tail, a thick skin and a long trunk on the man, the illustration becomes ludicrous. True, I said the man was like an elephant, but the subject was memory, and no other characteristic is involved.

In John 3:29, John the Baptist, desiring to illustrate his relationship to the Lord Jesus made use of a clear illustration. He declared that the bride belonged to the bridegroom, and that this fact brought the bridegroom's friend great joy. But, it seems that all who read this become intrigued with the illustration and forget altogether the truth that was being illustrated. They try to make someone the bride, someone else the groom, and also decide who is the friend of the bridegroom. Then they finish up by giving them these names. Jesus Christ was no bridegroom, and Israel was no bride, and John was no "friend of the bridegroom." However, this common situation did illustrate the relationship that John bore to the Lord Jesus. The fact that these things were used to illustrate relationship does not make those illustrated to be these things. No more than a man is an elephant, because that animal has been used as an illustration of him.

We find the same thing in 2 Corinthians 11:3 where Paul deals with the Corinthians yielding allegiance to anyone but Christ. He did not want them to divide this among a number of men. To enforce this truth he uses the figure of a virgin who is engaged to be married. She is no longer free to receive attentions from any man but must keep herself for her prospective husband. This illustration must not be overstretched or made to be a revelation of truth in itself. Its purpose is to illustrate a truth, and not to reveal a new one.

## **The Church Which is His Body**

Concerning the church which is His body, it is my conviction that it is composed of those saints whom God has called into it and who by their faith have responded to His call. Our course begins with God's call to Christ. Simple faith in the record God gave of His Son will relate a man to God, give him a place in God's present foundation and bring to Him the guarantee of eternal (eonian) life. I do not believe that this gives anyone the right to "raise the check" and claim that this gives them a place in the outcalling which is His body. No more than a man who enlists in the army can claim that this gives him a place among the officers. Men obtain eternal life by responding to a message in the Word of God to which they have been quickened by the Spirit. This message is the record that God has given of His Son. His faith in this brings him into relationship with God.

There is something in the Word of God called Truth. This is not truth concerning baptism or the truth concerning future punishment. It is Truth as a principle, personified in Jesus Christ who said I am the Truth. God's people are called to deal with this principle by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and it is then that we see how important Truth is to a multitude of God's people. However, our response to Truth is an indication of our faith, and a sincere response will guarantee unto us a place among those who are destined for the highest possible service to God during the coming eons.

## The Wife of Jehovah

The "wife of God" or the "wife of Jehovah" are both unscriptural terms. Once we abandon them we are rid of a confusing and misleading idea. This idea arises from a figure of speech used in the Old Testament to illustrate and emphasize the relationship that existed between Jehovah and Israel. Men take these figures and turn them into facts - a thing that should never be done.

Among men who devote their lives to the study of "humor," such as radio script writers, it is well known that every funny story, joke or incident can be classified under one of about ten different categories. In other words, there are only ten jokes in existence, all others being variations of these. One of these classifications of humorous stories is described as "turning a figure into a fact." When this is done it results in foolishness, causing some people to laugh. Here is an example of this type:

First Man: I met a tramp on the road today who told me he had not had a bite for two weeks.

Second Man: Is that so? What did you do?

First Man: I bit him.

I trust no one will accuse me of presuming to explain this, but for the sake of my own illustration I must point out that *bite* is a figure of speech meaning a small amount of food. But when a figure is turned into a fact, the result is foolishness.

In the Old Testament we find the record of Jehovah entering into relationship with Israel. It was a covenant relationship, and the covenant was one of love. This relationship was of such nature that it could best be illustrated by the marriage relationship, a thing familiar to very Israelite. Therefore, we find this figure used throughout the Old Testament. Jehovah calls Himself the husband of Israel, and speaks of Israel as His wife. When Israel worshipped Idols, the sin was called adultery. If these figures are turned into facts, the result will be foolishness.

## Sand, Dust and Star Seed

The terms sand, dust and star seed also arise from figures of speech. In Scripture they are preceded by the word *like* which immediately identifies the figure as *simile*. Abraham was to have a seed like the sand of the sea, like the gust of the earth, like the stars of the heaven. In all occurrences of these terms it is plain from the context that God was illustrating the great number or the innumerable character of Abraham's seed. See Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 22:17. I do not believe that we have the right to push these illustrations one bit beyond the truth God was emphasizing. However, I see in them and use them as follows: Dust seed, Abraham's natural descendants. Sand seed, Abraham's descendants who will be upon the earth in the kingdom eon. Star seed, Abraham's descendants of the heavenly calling. But, this is not the use that Scripture makes of these figures.

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## ***THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS***

The interest of our friends in the personal affairs of the Editor and his family is deeply appreciated. It would be most discourteous to ignore it, and since it is impossible to write letters to our many friends, a few purely personal items are not out of place in these pages.

\*\*\*\* The vacation which we had so carefully planned was interrupted on its first day, when a long-distance telephone call informed us that my father had suffered a severe paralytic stroke. We went at once to Cincinnati, Ohio, where my family resides and after a few days there, his condition seemed to be stationary, so we resumed our trip; but he suffered a relapse, so we cut our trip short and returned to Grand Rapids in order not to be too far away in case we were needed. Since then he has lived from hour to hour, and we have made a second trip to Cincinnati to see him. No hope whatsoever is held out by the physicians for his recovery, and since he has exceeded by three years the "three score and ten" that is the normal expectation of man, we have committed his case to the wisdom of our great God, making no request except that His will be done.

\*\*\*\* Since I wrote the paragraph above, my father suffered a cerebral hemorrhage which brought an end to his life on September 29. It is my desire to write something about his relationship to the Lord whom he loved, but I am unable to prepare it for this issue which has already been delayed too long. He possessed a faith that is rarely seen. I believe that an account of the Lord's dealings with him will be of help to many.

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