

The VINE & BRANCHES

The Newsletter of WORKERS TOGETHER WITH HIM, INC.

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Jesus said, "For without Me, ye can do nothing."

The blessings of God be with you in the name of Jesus Christ,

The months since the last newsletter again seem to have flown by, and the fourth anniversary of Workers Together With Him passed by almost unnoticed.

In the first weekend in September, with help from my wife Nelly, and our friend Monica Fuentes, I presented my class "Para que la Iglesia Reciba Edificación" (That the Church May Receive Edifying) in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, México. Our friend Rudolf Illavský was visiting from Austria at the time, and he was part of the class as well. Special thanks once again to Hilario Martinez for his great help in organizing this event.

On September 14, 2003, at the Liberty House of Prayer in Independence, Louisiana, Steve Monahan was duly ordained a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rev. Vince Falcone, pastor of the Liberty House of Prayer; Rev. Evan Pyle, pastor of the Grace and Power Fellowship and also Vice President of Workers Together With Him, and I all took part in performing this Christian ordinance. Rev. Falcone himself ordained four others as well: C.J. Labord, Ruby Labord, Mike Russel and Charles Russel. May the blessing of the Lord be with you all in your continued service.

I had the joy of being with Rev. Jerome Lucas of South Harrow, England, and his congregation during the weekend of October 25 and 26. Jerome, along with Carl Roberts of Swansea, Wales, organized a delightful retreat with the theme, "That I May Know Him." We three shared the teaching pulpit during the weekend, with Jerome and his eldest son Darragh providing the musicianship. Thanks to Bro. Seth Brown, the manager at the Centre for Christ at Burstone Manor in Devon, and all his staff for their wonderful service to us.

The weekend of November 7, 8 and 9, I was in Lansing, Michigan, to present "That the Church May Receive Edifying." Once again, I had a wonderful time with the believers and I look forward to the next visit. Thanks especially to Dr. Shawnee Vickery for her help in organizing this event.

Plans for 2004 are starting to take shape. In February, I will be traveling to Kampala, Uganda, to present The Weapons Of Our Warfare seminar, this time assisted by Rev. Pyle and Rev. Monahan. Details have yet to be finalized, but it seems we will be teaching two classes during our time in Uganda.

During the weekend of March 27-28, I will be returning to England and the Centre For Christ to present a new seminar, expounding upon the six fundamentals of Christianity listed in Hebrews 6: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. I am anticipating a wonderful weekend in the Bible, as we endeavor to be "rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith" (Col. 2:7).

In July, we will be returning to the country of Tanzania, and the cities of Kyela and Tukuyu. Rev. Clement J. Mwaitebele has written me several letters of encouragement, telling me the continued good reports from our past trip in July.

During the week of August 14-21, I will be in England again to teach the Children's Class on the Weapons Of Our Warfare. Teaching children is a very special privilege, and I will do my utmost to teach them "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Special thanks to you who sent in special offerings for Workers Together With Him in Africa. I know the African Christians are greatly appreciative for whatever financial help we can give. Once again, love and thanks to all of you who take part in all the work of Workers Together With Him with your prayers and donations.

Seasons Greetings to you all!

In the service of His Majesty,
the King of kings,

Rev. Tim Sullivan



In The Beginning Was The Word

By Rev. Tim Sullivan

For all who love the truth, the Gospels are a veritable feast of wisdom and spiritual knowledge. The testimony of the life of Jesus Christ – what the book of Hebrews so aptly calls “*the days of his flesh*” (Heb. 5:7) – nourishes the soul and rejoices the heart.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine... (1 Timothy 4:6a)

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart... (Jeremiah 15:16a)

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. “They provide the same general view of the life and teaching of Jesus. They narrate almost the same incidents, often agreeing in the order of events, and use similar phrasing. In many instances they use identical phrasing” (Gospel; Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99).

John’s gospel was penned with a singular purpose: to make known the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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. (John 20:31)

This is the Christ that John was determined to make known: the *Sun of righteousness* (Mal. 4:2); the *Son of the Highest* (Lk. 1:32); the Son of God.

Jesus Christ was and is much more than a perfect man. Begotten of God, He is *divine*. He is the only creature ever born with a dual nature, of man and of God. In His humanity, He was “in all points tempted like as we are.” But in His divinity, He was “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15b). In this definitive way, Jesus is set apart from all of mankind.

From its very onset, John’s gospel commands a special place in the Bible. The Gospel of John and the book of Genesis are the only books in the Bible that commence with the words, “In the beginning.”

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)

From the moment of its Creation, the natural world has been governed by time. However, time will not always be. The book of Revelation tells of a time when “there should be time no longer” (Rev. 10:6).

These words, *in the beginning*, point us beyond the finite world and into the realm of the infinite world, the *spiritual* world. Beyond the reach of time sits He Who *precedes* the beginning. Therefore, to comprehend the things of God, we must think “outside of the box” of the three dimensions, the length and depth and height. Ephesians points us to this *fourth* dimension.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-18)

The *fourth* dimension is time. The creation is governed by time, but the God of Creation is not. He is not subject to a timeline. He sees the future as clearly as He sees the past.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. (Psalms 90:4)

He knows our *going out* as surely as He knows our *coming in*.

The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (Psalms 121:8)

Before time began, God’s plan for the salvation of His people was as good as fulfilled.

...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

Christ lives in that realm that supersedes time. He is the Word that was with God *in the beginning*. That is why the shepherds in the field and the wise men from the east have no part in John’s narrative. The mother of Jesus is mentioned only at the wedding in Capernaum and at the Cross. The singular reference to Jesus’ nativity is that *the Word was made flesh* (Jn. 1:14).

To be sure, there is good reason to celebrate the birth of our Savior in the city of David. His earthly birth was

essential to our salvation. If Christ did not come in the flesh, then mankind is without the possibility of salvation. Praise be to God, he did.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Romans 8:3)

Controversies over the person of Christ have beset the Church throughout the centuries. The Gnostics were among the first to deny the humanity of Jesus. They asserted that "Christ, the divine spirit, inhabited the body of the man Jesus and did not die on the cross but ascended to the divine realm from which he had come. The Gnostics thus rejected the atoning suffering and death of Christ and the resurrection of the body" (*Gnosticism*; Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99).

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

We know that Jesus is come in the flesh. Our salvation depends upon it.

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:17)

However, to truly know Christ is not to know Him *after the flesh*.

... though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. (2 Corinthians 5:16)

We must know Him *beyond* the confines of flesh, and space and time. In order to see Him as He is, we must see Him *in the beginning*.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)

Colossians emphatically declares that *all things were created by Him, and for Him*.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16-17)

Christ's role in the Creation cannot be rightly refuted. ... which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (Ephesians 3:9)

Note the Father's words to the Son:

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. (Hebrews 1:8)

The phrase "God the Son" cannot be found in the Holy Scriptures; however, the implication is plain to all but those who are predisposed against it. The Father refers to His Son as *O God* and then speaks of Himself as *Thy God*. This is reminiscent of David's 110th psalm: *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (v. 9)

In verse 10, it is written that Christ was *in the beginning* with God when the heaven and earth were created, effectually bridging Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1!

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. (v. 10)

When Christ presented Himself to the Jews of that era, they were highly offended. They believed that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, for they believed that a man had made himself God.

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. (John 10:33)

It would be blasphemous indeed for a man to make himself God. But herein lies the fantastic reality of the mystery of godliness: *Jesus did not make Himself God. God made Himself a man.*

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

(1 Timothy 3:16)

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. (Hebrews 2:16)

The Jews knew that if a man were to declare himself begotten of God, he would be making himself equal to God.

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:18)

Christ knew that it did not belittle God to say that the Son is equal to the Father.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery

to be equal with God: (Philippians 2:6)

God and Christ are equal because they are *one*.

I and my Father are one. (John 10:30)

... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ...
(John 14:9b)

For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the
Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9)

Now, the Gospel of John does more than simply state
that Jesus is the Son of God. The Gospel of John is a
book of proofs. These divine proofs come in groups of
seven, seven being the number of spiritual perfection.

In this Gospel, there are seven WITNESSES that
Jesus is the Son of God:

1. The witness of the forerunner, John the Baptist (5:32-33)
2. The witness of the works He did (5:36)
3. The witness of the Father (5:37)
4. The witness of the written Word (5:39)
5. The witness of the Son Himself (8:14)
6. The witness of the Holy Spirit (15:26)
7. The witness of the disciples (15:27)

There are seven INDIVIDUALS who testify that
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God:

1. John the Baptist (1:32-34)
2. Nathaniel (1:47-49)
3. The Woman at the Well (4:25-29)
4. The Samaritans (4:39-42)
5. Simon Peter (6:66-69)
6. Martha (11:25-27)
7. Thomas (20:26-29)

There are seven MIRACLES that testify that Jesus
is the Christ, the Son of God:

1. Jesus turns water to wine (2:1-11)
2. Jesus heals the nobleman's son (4:46-54)
3. Jesus heals the lame man of Bethesda (5:1-16)
4. The miraculous feeding of 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Jesus walks on water (6:19)
6. Jesus heals the man born blind (9:1-41)
7. He raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45)

There are seven DISCOURSES expounding upon
the significance of those miracles (certain miracles are
called signs because of their significance):

1. That a man must be born again (3:1-21)
2. That Christ is the Living Water (4:3-27)

3. That Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (5:19-47)

4. That Christ is the Bread of Life (6:37-71)

5. That Christ offers living water (7:14-39)

6. That Christ is the Light of the World (8:12-59)

7. That the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his
sheep (10:1-18)

When God appeared to Moses in Horeb, Moses
asked, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and
shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent
me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name?
what shall I say unto them?" "I AM THAT I AM," said
God, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I
AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:13-14).

In a manner of speaking, "God the Father" *began*
the sentence, and "God the Son" *finished* it. God said,
"I AM" and Jesus answered SEVENFOLD.

1. I AM the bread of life (6:35)
2. I AM the light of the world (8:12)
3. I AM the door of the sheep (10:7)
4. I AM the good shepherd (10:11)
5. I AM the resurrection, and the life (11:25)
6. I AM the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
7. I AM the true vine (15:1)

Sincere and God-fearing men and women have long
sought to understand the person of Christ, a study widely
known as Christology. Unfortunately, they often suc-
cumb to formulas and dogmatic posturings rather than
Scriptural proofs. Let the Word of God be the bedrock
of our Christology. Let our prayer for understanding be
as that penned by C.S. Lewis, "Not to what I think
Thou art but to what Thou knowest Thyself to be."

He is, he was and he will ever be. *Jesus Christ the
same yesterday, and to day, and for ever* (Heb. 13:8).
He is our Lord, the Son of the Most High God, our
Savior. As you celebrate the festivities of Christmastime,
may you be reminded that even as He came in the flesh
the first time, so will He come again.

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Living Waters

by Rev. Evan Pyle
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Jeremiah 17:8

I have often reflected on this verse when pulling weeds, many of which are unwelcome seedling trees. Perhaps squirrels buried the acorns for winter sustenance, or perhaps the seeds happened to float into the flowerbeds on those neat “helicopter wings.” In either case, by the time I come to pull out the little 3 or 4-inch seedling, it has well rooted itself into the earth. The fragile sprout belies the fat and gnarled root that anchors it. If the ground is dry, the plant will break off long before the root will come out of the ground. In time the sprout will return but with an ever larger root supporting it and resisting my efforts to uproot it. These little seedlings remind me of the man who trusts in the Lord and is depicted as a tree by Jeremiah. He is planted in a good location, just beside the river of living waters. He becomes “rooted and built up in Him” and “rooted and grounded in love” (Colossians 2:7, Ephesians 3:17).

When the drought comes, as it inevitably does, the deeply rooted believer survives and flourishes. In dry times he brings forth fruit even as he does in well-watered times. There is a depth to him that reaches all the way to living waters. Regardless of circumstances his leaf does not wither and he continues to bear good fruit. When adversity strikes, how deep into Christ are my roots? Do I wither in the face of trouble?

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. (Proverbs 24:10)

When we lean on the “arm of flesh” and trust in man, our strength indeed is small. Our broken cistern is found to be dry and our leaf withers. In our hearts we want to serve the Lord but we forget it only can be done in His strength. We try harder and harder and harder and it seems all we get in return is a dry arid spiritual life.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. (Psalms 32:4)

Yet in the next verse, the Lord provides the divine remedy. There is nothing so refreshing and energizing as to be washed clean from our sins. The parched places are again flooded with living water and we again enjoy blessed communion with our Lord. We again hear his voice, guiding us in the way we should go.

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalms 32:5,8)

How often I have found myself in a dry season. I can see no way out. No matter what I try I seem to be in a continual funk. Where is that spark of delight in God’s presence, in His Word? Eventually my malaise turns into despair and I cry out to the Lord. I confess my sin and He restores my soul. Suddenly I am enjoying blessed communion with the Lord. That is when I always wonder what took me so long? Why didn’t I cry out to Him in the beginning? In reality I was not waiting for God to change my condition, He was waiting for me.

The woman at the well was lost in sin and dwelling in a parched place. Though she drew physical water from a hallowed well, her soul was like the dry chaff blown by the wind. But then she met the Fountain of Living Waters who proceeded to open her eyes and show her the way.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. (John 4:10)

The living water that Jesus gives has refreshed the parched tongues of God’s people throughout history. The rock that Moses struck was clearly a picture of the Christ to come.

And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:3, 6)

As far back as the Garden of Eden, a spring that parts into four rivers represented the River of Life for humankind. Our Rock, the Fountain of Living Waters has always been God's plan of redemption for lost man. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. (Genesis 2:10)

When the Magi journeyed through the harsh deserts of the Middle East to seek the King of kings, they found the One who became an oasis from all that is dried and fruitless in the world. In this holiday season may we be like the Magi. Yes, we often dwell in a desert country, but the journey to Jesus is worth the effort. In fact, it is the only effort worth making. May we be faithful followers until we reach our heavenly shores.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1)

Meanwhile we walk in this imperfect world. Yet we are chosen of God to fulfill our calling before Him. I have found that one thing that prevents believers from doing this is the chaos of life in the world. It seems we have so many options, so much to do and so many demands that we lose our peace. We become fearful and disturbed. These are the times we most need to seek our Shepherd who will safely lead us to still waters.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:2,3)

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (Isaiah 55:1)

How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. (Psalms 36:7,8)

Be sure to visit our website at:

www.workerstogetherwithhim.org



That They All May Be One

by Rev. Dimitris Pelidis
Thassos, Greece

As we once again gather together to celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, let us reflect on the divine purpose of His coming into the world.

The last prayer of our Lord Jesus epitomizes very dramatically His mission on earth. As we read through it, we cannot easily bypass nor close our ears to His impassioned cry for unity. See how earnestly He pleads with the Father for unity!

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be **one** (emphasis added here and following), as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be **one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be **one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be **one**, even as we are **one**: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in **one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:11,20-23)

As Jesus prays, the word "One" pours out time and time again. Surely a cry for divine oneness!

There was a time when God and man enjoyed this perfect unity in the Garden of Eden and the bliss of walking together in the cool of the day. Yet, if paradise was a place of blessed oneness with God it soon gave way to the hell of separation and estrangement from Him. How craftily did Satan beguile Eve and how tragically did she and Adam fall prey to his cunning lies. Sin and guilt entered, separation and fear followed, cursing was unleashed, darkness descended and death ruled (see Genesis 3:1-24). A single verse of Scripture portrays man's plight in the darkest of colours:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

If it hadn't been for the Lord bearing the cross of our iniquity, we would forever be lost, without God and without hope in the world. A short while before His crucifixion, we see Jesus not in the idyllic Garden of Eden but in the garden of pressure called Gethemane agonizing intensely in prayer. Yet His love was too deep for Him to go back on God's will. He chose to lay down His life for us all, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done" (Lk. 22:42).

While Adam's disobedience resulted in universal death, Jesus Christ's obedience opened to the door to eternal life for all. He drank the bitter cup of the crucifixion and cried out from the depths of His soul, "It is finished." He finished the work of salvation. His precious blood streaming down from the cross made atonement for sin and reconciliation possible for all.

For we were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.
(1 Peter 2:25)

Look at this lovely portrait of God's flock gathered again in His fold after the Holy Spirit was poured out on them on the day of Pentecost.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common. . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God and having favour with all the people.
(Acts 2:44,46-47)

Isn't that a beautiful picture of togetherness, oneness of purpose and singleness of heart among God's people? Doesn't that qualify as a state of perfect harmony, as heaven on earth?

In such a place of brotherly togetherness and unity will God appoint the blessing to His people.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!.. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.
(Psalms 133:1,3)

Only As We Stand United Will The Lord Bless Us!

There is tremendous power in unity and agreement. As the Lord Jesus stressed, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.18:19). How much power is given to only two who stand in agreement! Imagine the immensity of power if the entire Church would come

to agree.

The enemy of our soul, the devil, is fully aware of this and has been craftily conspiring ever since the foundation of the Church to divide us. He knows that if he achieves this, he will rob us of our blessing; he will disarm and overcome us. In fact, when Jesus was slandered as Beelzebub, He answered by making this very point.

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand.
(Matthew 12:25-26)

While the devil is smart enough to avoid division and self-destruction, he himself orchestrates the continuous dividing of the Church in order to rob her of her blessing and power. He managed to steal the blessing from Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. He is fighting with all his vengeance to snatch the blessing from the Church today.

The embarrassing thing is that there is nothing original in his tactics. Just like he did in Paradise, he will divert our attention from the source of life, God, and turn it upon ourselves. He will crown man and endeavour to dethrone God.

In the Church today this is evident in how ministries are getting more credit than Jesus Christ who was crucified for us. It happened in the Corinthian church and it is still going on in our days. Men, even men of God, are receiving the worship that is due only to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what Paul had to say to the Corinthian believers who were following men rather than the Lord Jesus.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:12,13)

Paul, being aware of the enemy's devices, wrote to the Corinthian church that he "determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Understanding man's tendency to worship men, he also wrote:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any

thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one... For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

The Building is ONE, and it is God's, not Man's

No ministry is greater than God. No church is more important than its head, the Lord Jesus Christ. No individual member of the Body of Christ is better than any other member of that same body.

So why are we allowing this cutting up of the Body of Christ to continue? Can't we see that we are turning against ourselves and actually becoming suicidal? Why are we permitting so much suspicion to brood within the ranks of the Church from one group against another, from one brother against another? Is it because of our need to maintain our dogmas, rites and creeds? And while it is vital to guard against heresies, should we not also guard against unloving segregation? After all, isn't brotherly love still the Royal Law? Isn't it still the badge by which Christians should be known and recognised? Why also are we harbouring feelings of resentment, animosity and bitter jealousy against our brother or sister? Is his sin greater than God's love?

As the Bible so strongly exhorts, let us strive for unity for only through it are we blessed and powerful.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering forbearing one another in love. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

There is a magnificent record in the book of 1 Kings that I feel is a fitting conclusion to this plea for unity. Although it is primarily quoted to illustrate Solomon's wisdom there is also a wealth of wisdom to be drawn for the benefit of the church today.

Here was the dilemma: Two women each had given birth. One of the mothers accidentally killed her baby in her sleep. Now there was only one baby alive whom both mothers claimed as their own. Who was the true mother of the baby? Here was the test: Solomon or-

dered his men to divide the baby. One mother voiced her approval while the other mother begged the king to spare her baby's life -- even if that meant he would go to the other mother. Solomon immediately recognized the second mother as the true mother of the child and gave her the child.

There is a beautiful parallel in this story related to our love for God and His church. If we are genuine Christians with the heart of a true father or mother, we will sacrifice any rights, claims or privileges in order that the Church of God remain intact. Just like the true mother, we would rather allow the Church to live on than divide it in pieces, even if that meant that it would go to somebody else.

Brothers and sisters, allow the Church to live united. Let it grow strong and prevail over all the forces of darkness. Meditate on this as you commemorate the birth of baby Jesus in Bethlehem.



One Soldier Speaks

What is Christmas About?

By F. Jay Pearson
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful,
Counsellor, The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6)

Jesus Christ is who Christmas is about. His Father had this to say about Him.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Hebrews 1:8-9)

An angel speaking to the shepherds in the same country where the new birth took place had this to say.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all

people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

(Luke 2:10-11)

Why did Jesus come? Here is part of the reason.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (Isaiah 61:1)

Jesus came to save man and make him whole.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

(1 Peter 2:24)

No one can talk us out of our salvation, of knowing that we are saved and forgiven of our sins. No one should be able to talk us out of our healing in Christ either. It is just as certain.

We have discerned the Lord's blood, knowing that we have been saved and have forgiveness of our sins, but we need to discern the Lord's body also.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Ephesians 1:7)

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (1 Corinthians 11:29-30)

We need to discern the Lord's blood and His body. As surely as we are thankful for the forgiveness of our sins, we should be thankful for the healing of our bodies. By His blood we are cleansed, and by His stripes we were healed. Praise God what a Christmas gift! It is easier to be thankful when we have our heads and hearts in His Word and not in our imperfection.

Why did Jesus come? Jesus came to make us whole. There is not much doubt in Christianity that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, and that when we confess and believe Romans 10:9 and 10, we are saved. No one can talk us out of that. It just as true that by His stripes we were healed. Just as certain as we are saved spiritually by His perfect blood and cleansed of all unrighteousness, we are saved by His striped body and healed of sickness and disease.

After we are saved, do we sin? Yes. Do we get sick? Yes. Is it God's will for us to sin? No. Is it God's will for us to be sick? No. Will we sin in heaven? No. Will we be sick in heaven? No. It is God's will for us to live here on earth as we will live with Him in heaven: whole, sin free, and sickness free. God made all this available in Christ Jesus our Lord, our perfect substitute and savior.

The very first thing to do when you have any need is to go to the Father through Jesus Christ. God also gave us the Body, our brothers and sisters in Christ, to minister to our need. God's children are everywhere. They are doctors, nurses, and next door neighbors. First go to God and trust in Him. God wants you healed and he has provided the answer to sickness and sin, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Jesus Christ gave instruction to the seventy.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. (Luke 10:8-9)

God doesn't want us to suffer sickness or sinfulness.

He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. (Psalms 107:20)

Thank God for his wonderful Christmas present, the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. Have a healthy Christmas. Let's remind ourselves and others who Christmas is about.



Joseph: The Unappreciated Man of the Nativity

By Rev. Tim Sullivan

Each year at Christmastime, the birth of Jesus is re-enacted on stages around the world. So familiar are we with the Nativity story, we scarcely need reminding of the key roles needed for such a dramatization: the angels of the Lord, the wise men from the east, the shepherds, the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus, the animals – the sheep, the cattle, the donkey – and finally Joseph.

Many Christmas hymns are sung about those who shared in the glorious events surrounding Christ's birth. The angels are found in such songs as "Hark! The Her-

ald Angels Sing,” and “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear.” The wise men are sung of in “We Three Kings of Orient Are” and “The March of the Kings.” The shepherds are remembered in “While Shepherds Watched Their Fields” and “The First Noel.” And of course, the Virgin Mary and Jesus are the subject of countless songs, including “Away In A Manger” and “Silent Night”. Why, even the animals are remembered in “What Child is This,” and sometimes, imaginary characters as well, such as “The Little Drummer Boy.”

As if to emphasize the validity of this message, in my favorite book of Carols, I found only two songs that mention Joseph. He is mentioned in the last verse of “Angels We Have Heard On High,” and in the whimsical “Cherry-Tree Carol” that begins, “*When Joseph was an old man, An old man was he: He married sweet Mary, The Queen of Galilee.*”

Clearly, Joseph has not received the “honour to whom honour” is due. To begin to appreciate the significance of Joseph, one must look no further than the sixteenth verse in Matthew:

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (Matthew 1:16)

Matthew, “The Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ” begins with the genealogy of none other than Joseph. For the second time in the history of God’s dealings with His people, a man named Joseph, born of a man named Jacob, played a critical role in the fulfilling of God’s plan.

The genealogies of the Bible are linked by seed, fathers to sons. But Jesus was not the son of Joseph by seed. Joseph was His father by divine appointment, hence the peculiar language of Luke:

And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, (Luke 3:23)

Luke’s account is the natural genealogy of Christ. In order to emphasize that this is an unusual genealogy, this family tree is stated backwards, son to father rather than father to son. The closest patriarch in Jesus’ heritage was his grandfather Heli, the father of Mary and father-in-law to Joseph. (Jesus, of course, did not have two sets of grandparents like the rest of us!)

It is in the line of Joseph that Jesus is connected to the Throne of David. God had made a specific covenant concerning Solomon.

And king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. (1 Kings 2:45-46b)

In order for Jesus to reign as king, He had to rightfully inherit the throne. This is not a privilege that he inherited from Mary, but from Joseph. Joseph was a descendent of Solomon, Mary was not (compare Mt. 1:6 and Lk 3:31). This fact alone brings new understanding to why Joseph was chosen to be the earthly father to God’s Son.

Joseph was a carpenter by trade, a man who worked with his hands. It is evident that Joseph taught his adopted son the skills of carpentry, for people not only called Jesus “the carpenter’s son” (Mt. 13:55a), but also “the carpenter” (Mk 6:3a). As Joseph tutored Jesus in the skills of carpentry, he would most assuredly teach Him these valuable lessons as well:

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 2:24)

We can further appreciate the man hand-picked by God to raise His Son by looking at the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18)

Joseph and Mary were espoused to be married. Considering the times they lived in, it is more likely that this agreement was made by their parents rather than the result of a budding romance. Suddenly, Joseph’s life plan took an unexpected turn when he learned that Mary was pregnant. Since he obviously did not at first believe her story of a heavenly visitation, there was only one remedy in his mind. Joseph well knew what Levitical Law had to say concerning such matters.

And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10)

We see Joseph’s compassion in that he would not allow Mary or her family to be scandalized.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. (Matthew 1:19)

Other men in the Bible heard the unexpected news that their wives would become pregnant. Abraham, the father of Isaac, and Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, are two who come to mind. Their initial reaction is quite revealing:

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? (Genesis 17:17)

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. (Luke 1:18)

These two men were told by angels that their wives would bear them a son. As hard as this was for them to fathom, the fact remained that these were their wives, and the son would be the result of their seed! Now consider the predicament of Joseph. Not only was Mary not yet officially his wife, this birth would not be the result of his seed! Yet upon the declaration of the angel, the Bible records no protesting, no unbelief, only obedience. One might ask, "Where did God find such a man as this man Joseph?"

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:24-25)

Joseph's unquestioning obedience to God saved the life of God's Son on more than one occasion. After the visit of the wise men of the east, the angel of the Lord brought more news to Joseph.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. (Matthew 2:13)

Until God's people learn to take responsibility of heeding God's warnings, they will find no one but themselves to blame for falling into predicaments that could have been avoided. Thank God for a man like Joseph who heeded God's warnings, and for a woman like Mary who stood with him. After all, there is no record of Mary sharing this angelic visitation.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was

spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. (Matthew 2:14-15)

Later, the angel appeared to Joseph again.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:19-21)

The next Biblical reference to Joseph occurs when Jesus was twelve years old. Joseph led his family on their yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When the feast concluded, Joseph and Mary began their trek home. They must have traveled in a large caravan, because a full day passed before they realized that Jesus was not with them.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. (Luke 2:46-51)

Yes, Joseph and Mary were amazed by this young boy. And here, with Jesus being subject unto Mary and her husband, the record of Joseph ends. Except for disparaging remarks made by scoffers about "the carpenter's son," he is not again mentioned. Yet to minimize Joseph's importance in the life of Jesus Christ is to clearly miss the mark. His gift to Jesus was access to the throne of David via Solomon. In Joseph, the husband of Mary, we see a sterling example of faith, love, obedience, and courage under the most trying of circumstances. Certainly we can see that Joseph is the Unappreciated Man of the Nativity.

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