

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

May-August 2012

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:2). I pray that God will abundantly bless you.

Tennessee Camp Meeting: Some brethren in TN are planning a camp meeting at Roan Mountain State Park Conference Center in Roan Mountain, Tennessee, September 11-15, 2012. The meetings will begin Tuesday evening and last through Sabbath evening. You may camp at the park, and cabin rental is available. For more information please call Brother Malcolm McCrillis at 423-772-3161, or contact him by email at John17three@earthlink.net.

Answering Objections – Part 5

by Lynnford Beachy

Matthew 12:31, 32

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

Some people take these verses as an indication that God is a trinity. Some think that we can blaspheme against God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and be forgiven, but that a third person called the Holy Ghost is so highly exalted that if men blaspheme against him, they can never be forgiven. Yet, how many persons are mentioned in this verse?

Two, the Son and the Holy Ghost. To some it is surprising to realize that the Father is not mentioned by name in this text. The same is true in the other two accounts of this conversation. Mark’s account reads, “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that

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shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3:28, 29). Luke wrote, "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10). The Father is not specifically mentioned in any of these texts. After examining all of these accounts we only find two persons mentioned, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is no hint of a trinity here.

Although the Father is not specifically mentioned by name, He is not missing from the text, for Jesus said, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father because it is His own Spirit. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is blaspheming "the Spirit of your Father" (Matthew 10:20), because it is His own Spirit.

Jesus was not talking about a sudden word or action against the Holy Ghost, but a continual rejection of its promptings upon the heart. The blasphemy of the Holy Ghost is when a person has stubbornly ignored the gentle convictions of God's Spirit so long and persistently that God's Spirit can no longer reach him. When a man reaches the point where he has blasphemed the Holy Spirit it is not because God has given up on him, but because he has stopped his ears from hearing God's instruction

so long that no matter how hard God tries to reach him, he can no longer hear God's pleading upon his heart.

The Pharaoh of Moses' day had reached that point. His heart had been so hardened that He refused to do what the Lord instructed (Exodus 8:32). God said, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." (Psalms 95:8) Once a man's heart is hardened against hearing God's Spirit speak to him, he has committed the "sin unto death" spoken of by John. (See 1 John 5:16.)

The Bible says, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30) God's Spirit is what seals us, or prepares us for the day when Christ will come to redeem His people. If we continually reject the only avenue by which God can work in our lives, then there is nothing more that God can do for us. That is why there is no forgiveness for the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Not that God is unwilling to forgive, but that the person who does this is unwilling to repent and be forgiven.

John 14:9

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Some people have seen a hint of the trinity in this verse. They seem to read it this way, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; because I am the Father." Yet, this is an im-

possible interpretation of this verse. Jesus said, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape" (John 5:37). Jesus had said that his hearers had never literally seen the Father, so when He told His disciples that they have "seen the Father" He was not speaking in a literal sense. Instead they had seen the Father's character manifested in His life. Jesus clarified his meaning in the very next verse.

Jesus continued, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). Here Jesus explained that when people saw the works of Jesus and heard His words, they were seeing the Father because the Father was the one doing the works in Jesus.

This is similar to what Paul said when he wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Here Paul claimed that the life people saw in him was not his life, but the life of the Son of God. He was saying, "If there is anything good in me, it is not me doing it, but Jesus who lives in me." Paul also wrote, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

If Christ's life is fully manifested in my life, it would be appropriate

for me to say, "If you have seen me you have seen Christ, because Christ is living in me." This is essentially the same thing Jesus was saying about His Father. He manifested the life of the Father more fully than anyone had done, and since He knew it was His Father doing the works and giving Him the words to say, He was giving credit to whom credit was due. He was not in any way trying to convince His disciples that He is part of a "three in one" God.

John 16:13-15

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

These texts are probably the strongest in the Bible to suggest that the Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Son because it is personified by saying, he shall "speak" what "he shall hear." Yet, these texts do not require a conclusion that contradicts the rest of the testimony of Scripture on the Holy Spirit. In the immediate context of this statement are several statements by Jesus that contradict the idea that the Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Son. Jesus began His discourse on this subject in John 14 at the last supper. When asked to explain Himself regarding

the Comforter Jesus answered, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Jesus explained that the Comforter is the indwelling presence of both the Father and the Son.

Later in this discourse Jesus said, "He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:23, 24). In this discourse Jesus repeatedly spoke of both Himself and His Father. Then, He spoke of the Holy Spirit in this way, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). Here the Comforter is said to proceed from the Father. The word "proceedeth" is in the present tense both in English and in the original Greek, which indicates an action that is ongoing. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father in a continual, ongoing process. This shows that the Father is the source of the Holy Spirit. It is His own personal Spirit, which He gave to His Son who also shares it with us.

The gender of the original Greek words in John 15:26 is interesting. "But when the Comforter [masculine] is come, whom [masculine] I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit [neuter] of truth [feminine], which [neuter] proceedeth from the Father, he [masculine] shall

testify of me" (John 15:26). The phrase, "even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father" is a parenthetical thought included in this verse as an explanation of the identity of the Comforter. This explanation includes a neuter pronoun referring to the Holy Spirit ("which" instead of "whom.") This may seem insignificant since John was just following the rules of Greek grammar that dictate that a pronoun must agree with its antecedent ("Spirit" in this case) in number and gender. Yet, there are times when Bible writers broke the rules of Greek grammar when speaking of actual persons.

John wrote, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [ἀρνιον - neuter] stood on the mount Sion, and with him [αυτου - masculine] an hundred forty and four thousand, having his [αυτου - masculine] Father's name written in their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). Here John broke the rules of Greek grammar and referred to the Lamb using masculine pronouns even though the word "Lamb" is neuter in Greek.

John was not the only Bible writer to break the rules of Greek grammar to demonstrate the literal personality of the one represented by a pronoun. Mark wrote, "And he took the damsel [παιδιου - neuter] by the hand, and said unto her [αυτη - feminine], Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise" (Mark 5:41). For more examples like these, read Matthew 2:13, 14, 20, 21; Luke 1:59, 80; 2:21.

There was biblical precedent for John to have broken the rules of Greek grammar when referring to the Holy Spirit to give it personality by using masculine pronouns in reference to it. But he never did this! (There are places where it may appear that masculine pronouns refer to the neuter word Spirit, but in every case they actually refer to the masculine word 'Comforter.') In all places where John was actually using pronouns to refer to the Spirit, he used neuter pronouns even when masculine pronouns were used for the masculine word Comforter in the immediate context. The same is true for all of the other NT Bible writers. It would appear that none of these men understood the Holy Spirit to be an actual separate person from the Father and Son.

A few verses later Jesus said, "And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:3). Again, Jesus reinforced the truth that those who rebel against God rebel against both the Father and the Son. Jesus spoke as if He had no knowledge of any third divine person.

A couple verses later Jesus said, "But now I go my way to him that sent me;... I go to my Father" (John 16:5, 10). Jesus knew that He would be leaving soon and would be reunited with His Father who sent Him. He did not expect to be reunited with any third divine person called the Holy Spirit. Christ's words while He was here indicate that He did not believe God to be a trinity of persons.

In the immediate context before John 16:13, Jesus explained that the Comforter is the indwelling presence of both the Father and the Son (John 14:23). He later said, "my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), a truth incompatible with the trinity doctrine. In this discourse Jesus repeatedly spoke of both Himself and His Father (John 15:23, 24; 16:3, 5). Then, He spoke of the Holy Spirit in this way, "the Comforter... proceedeth from the Father" (John 15:26). Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the personal possession of God the Father (His own Spirit), which He gave to His Son who also shares it with us. Because the Spirit is the spiritual presence of both the Father and Son apart from their physical presence, it is natural for it to be personified. This can be done to demonstrate that the Spirit is more than just an impersonal force. Jesus referred to Himself as "he," "him," etc. (John 5:19, 20). It is reasonable that in John 16:13 Jesus was emphasizing the personality of the Holy Spirit as opposed to an impersonal force, rather than trying to convince His hearers that the Holy Spirit is a literal third divine person. This understanding harmonizes with the large amount of non-trinitarian statements Jesus made in the immediate context of John 16:13. It is dangerous to come to a conclusion that disagrees with the context. Context is king!

A few verses later, Jesus said, "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am

come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God” (John 16:27-30).

Here Jesus informed His disciples that He was sent by His Father and soon would return to His Father. He did not mention returning to a third person. It may be argued that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit being that is in every place at once, and therefore wherever Jesus would go He would be with the Holy Spirit. Yet, the following verse disqualifies that argument. Jesus said, “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” (John 16:32). Here Jesus claimed that even when He was left alone by humans there was someone with Him, and the one with Him was His Father. Jesus knew that His Father was physically in heaven (Matthew 7:21; 10:32), yet He claimed that His Father was with Him and even living inside of Him (John 14:10). Jesus claimed that the Spirit living in Him and dwelling with Him was not some third divine person but rather His Father.

Right after saying these words, Jesus “lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father... this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). This verse is

completely incompatible with the idea that God is made up of a trinity of persons. Jesus said that life eternal is dependent upon knowing only two persons, the Father and His Son. If the Holy Spirit is a third divine person, it is not necessary to know him, and Jesus spoke as if even He did not know him.

In His closing prayer after this discourse Jesus said, “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, as we are... 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, 21-23).

Here Jesus spoke of the oneness we can have with Him and His Father, and He left out any mention of the Holy Spirit as a third person participating in this oneness.

The immediate context of Christ’s words in John 16:13 demonstrate over and over again that Jesus did not believe that the Holy Spirit is a third separate person. This fact demands that we must understand John 16:13 in a way that harmonizes with the truth that the Father and the Son are the only divine persons involved

in our salvation. Throughout His ministry Jesus taught that God is His Father and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father rather than a separate individual. As an example, when Jesus was accused of casting out devils by the prince of the devils, He said, "if I cast out devils *by the Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). Luke recorded this statement, "if I *with the finger of God* cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

Here we find that Jesus used the term "the Spirit of God" interchangeably with "the finger of God." Jesus understood the Spirit of God to be an extension of the Father that "proceedeth from the Father" (John 15:26).

If the only testimony we had from the Bible was John 16:13 it could possibly be concluded that Jesus was teaching that the Holy Spirit is a third separate individual from the Father and the Son. But, we have the benefit of the immediate context of these words, and we are forced to interpret these words in a way that is in harmony with the rest of Scripture, which clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is the personal spiritual presence of the Father and Son.

Acts 5:3, 4

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou

hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

Many Trinitarians use these verses as conclusive evidence that the Holy Spirit is a third separate person, or being, called God the Holy Spirit, but that is not what these verses say. According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit is called, "the Spirit of your Father." Please compare the following verses as evidence of this fact: "For it is not ye that speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20). Mark wrote, "for it is not ye that speak, but *the Holy Ghost*" (Mark 13:11). "The Holy Ghost" is "the Spirit of your Father."

Jesus said as much when He explained, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Father, which proceeds from Him, through His Son Jesus Christ, to us. Paul wrote, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5, 6). When we receive the Spirit of the Father coming to us through His Son, we receive the added benefit of receiving the Spirit of His Son as well. "And be-

cause ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

On the day of Pentecost Peter taught the same truth when he preached, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:32, 33). Jesus said, “your heavenly Father [shall] give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (Luke 11:13).

When we realize that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father coming to us through His Son, Acts 5:3, 4 makes perfect sense. Please read it again and see for yourself.

The word holy is an adjective, providing us with a description of God’s Spirit. God has a Spirit, and His Spirit is holy. To lie to God’s Spirit is to lie to God. That is because His Spirit is Himself, not another person. If I were to lie to your spirit, you would not suppose that I lied to someone other than yourself. Let us be just as reasonable with the Scriptures when they refer to God’s Spirit.

Acts 13:2

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”

Some have argued that since the Holy Spirit can speak to people, it proves it is a third separate individual. Yet, since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, then certainly He can speak to His people by His own Spirit. Bible texts that demonstrate the personality of the Holy Spirit do not prove the Holy Spirit to be a separate individual, but rather demonstrate that it is more than just a force; it is the actual personal Spirit of God.

I have seen many trinitarian presentations where much time and energy are expended to prove the personality of the Holy Spirit by showing instances where it is grieved, where it can speak, forbid, etc. The presenters triumphantly proclaim that because of this, the Holy Spirit must be a distinct and separate person from the Father and Son. Yet, what about Daniel 7:15, which says, “I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.” Daniel’s spirit was grieved. Does that mean that someone separate and distinct from Daniel was grieved? Certainly not! When Daniel’s spirit was grieved, Daniel was grieved. There is no reason to conclude that when God’s Spirit is grieved, speaks, forbids, is lied to, etc., that His Spirit must be someone other than Himself.

God has the unique ability to project His Spirit to be in all places at the same time. David wrote, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven,

thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalms 139:7-10). In this way He can live in me and in a man in China at the same time. Because of this unique ability God’s Spirit is sometimes spoken of in a way that could be misinterpreted to mean that His Spirit is separate from Himself. Just because God’s Spirit is omnipresent does not mean that it is a separate individual.

Paul said, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers” (Acts 28:25). Peter wrote, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). The apostles understood that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, which spoke to and through the prophets. Yet, they did not understand the Spirit to be a separate individual. Notice what Peter wrote: “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” (1 Peter 1:11). Here we find that Peter used the terms “Holy Ghost” and “the Spirit of Christ” interchangeably.

Paul wrote in a similar manner when he wrote, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of

Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:9-11). Paul interchanged the terms “Spirit of God,” “Spirit of Christ,” “Christ,” “Spirit of him,” and “his Spirit.” Paul understood that when Christ is in you, the Spirit of His Father is in you, just as Jesus said to His Father, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:23).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father in Christ living in us. This is why the terms can be interchanged. The ability of the Spirit to speak, guide and direct His church does not indicate that the Spirit is a separate individual, but rather it demonstrates the mode in which God Himself directs the affairs of His church by His Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Some maintain that since the Holy Spirit of God can be grieved that it must be a separate person. Yet, this is not a necessary, nor logical conclusion. Daniel wrote, “I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me” (Daniel 7:15). Daniel’s spirit was grieved, yet I doubt anyone would be willing to suggest that

Daniel's spirit was a person separate and distinct from Daniel.

Ephesians 4:30 actually demonstrates that the Holy Spirit belongs to a Person. The text says, "the holy Spirit of God." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, it is God's own Spirit. The translators chose to render πνεῦμα το ἁγίου in this verse as "holy Spirit" with a lowercase "holy," even though this exact Greek phrase is used 18 other times in the NT and was always translated, "the Holy Ghost." This verse demonstrates that the term "Holy Ghost" is not a name of a person, but a description of the Spirit of God. The English word "Ghost" is a poor translation of the Greek word πνεῦμα. "Spirit" is a much better translation that avoids the unbiblical idea of a disembodied ghost of a dead person. The Bible says, "The dead know not any thing" (Ecclesiastes 9:6). The word "holy" is an adjective to describe God's Spirit.

Just as the troubled spirit of Daniel was not a separate person, the holy Spirit of God is not a separate person from God.

The Miracles of Jesus

When Jesus was here He raised the dead, healed the sick, controlled the weather, etc. Jesus pointed to these miracles as evidence that He was sent by God. When John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to find out if He is the Messiah, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead

are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:4, 5).

Some have concluded that since Jesus was able to perform miracles that He possessed almighty power when He was on earth as a human. There is no doubt that Jesus possesses all power now, for He said after His resurrection, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). But the time-period in question is during Christ's life on earth as a human. If He had almighty power as a human, the reality of His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross would be in question. (Please see the chapters on the death of Christ in our book, *Understanding the Personality of God*, for a thorough explanation of this point.)

Does the ability to work miracles prove that a person possesses almighty power? Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Here Peter said that the working of miracles proved that God was with Him rather than proving that He had almighty power. Jesus verified this when He said, "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

If the ability to perform miracles proves that a person is almighty, we would have to conclude that many people in the Bible were almighty. God healed lepers through Jesus. He did the same through Elisha (2 Kings

5:9-14). God raised the dead through Jesus. He did the same through Elisha (2 Kings 4:32). God opened the eyes of the blind through Jesus. God closed and opened the eyes of a whole army through Elisha (2 Kings 6:18-20). God controlled the weather through Jesus. God stopped it from raining for 3 ½ years, and then started the rain through Elijah (James 5:17, 18). These are just a few examples of God working miracles through others. Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). Jesus was not promising to convey almighty power on His disciples, but rather to work miracles through them.

The working of miracles does not prove that the one who physically spoke or performed the miracle is almighty. It is certainly true that Jesus had more authority than any human while He was here. The Father had commanded the angels to worship Him while He was on this earth (Hebrews 1:6). He could command that something was done, and they would obey His command (Matthew 8:5-10; 4:3). Yet, Jesus acknowledged that this authority was contingent upon His Father’s approval. When Peter began to fight for Him, Jesus said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53).

All the miracles Jesus performed while He was on earth were performed by the power of God through His angels.

“Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Some have used this verse in an attempt to prove that Jesus is “the most High.” But, that is not what the text says. It says that Christ is blessed by God over all. God blessed Him more than He blessed anyone else. It is true that the location of the commas in this text lend support to the idea that Christ is the most High God. Yet, there were no commas in the original Greek manuscripts, and this interpretation would put this text in opposition to many other Bible verses. The Bible says that there is “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6). The Father is called, “the highest” (Luke 1:32), and “the most High God” (Mark 5:7). Jesus said, “My Father,... is greater than all” (John 10:29), and “my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). God, the Father is above all, including the Son of God. Any interpretation of Romans 9:5 must be in harmony with these other texts.

Jesus is above all except for His Father. Paul wrote, “Then cometh the end, when he [Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under

him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

God, the Father has put all things under the feet of His Son. Yet, the Father did not put Himself under His Son. A similar thing happened when Pharaoh put all of his kingdom under Joseph, and said to him, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Genesis 41:40). The Father is above all in the absolute sense, because He is even above His Son. Jesus is next in authority to His Father, and is above everything else.

Paul wrote, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,... set [Jesus] at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:17-22). Truly, God blessed His Son over all others. Jesus Christ is "over all God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5 without the commas that were added by men).

There is no reason to read Romans 9:5 and arrive at a conclusion that contradicts the rest of Scripture.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

This text is sometimes called "the apostolic benediction," and is used in an attempt to prove that God is made up of three persons. However, let's examine the facts. Who is God in this verse? Most would agree that the only Person referred to as God in this verse is God the Father. Paul obviously did not write this to promote the idea that God is made up of three persons but, instead, that God is only one Person. This agrees with Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians, when he wrote, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Corinthians 8:6) According to Paul, the "one God" of the Bible is God the Father alone. The "one Lord" is Jesus Christ. If the "one God" is the Father, and the "one Lord" is Jesus Christ in this verse, who is the Holy Spirit? Jesus said it is the Spirit of the Father (Matthew 10:20; Luke 11:13; John 15:26).

Some say that the term "the communion of the Holy Ghost" proves that the Holy Ghost must be a separate individual from the Father and Son. The argument has been made that you cannot have communion with anyone but a person. You cannot have communion with a table, or with a chair, etc. This is true, but the text does not say, "communion with the Holy Ghost," but rather, "the communion of the Holy Ghost."

Paul also wrote, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship [κοινωνία - koinonia - ‘communion’] of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). Here Paul used the very same Greek word that he used in 2 Corinthians 13:14. He said that he wished to know the fellowship or the communion of Christ’s sufferings. To have fellowship means we partake of something. We are to partake of God’s Spirit and the sufferings of Christ.

There is a difference between having fellowship “of” and fellowship “with” something or someone. You can have the fellowship “of” His sufferings, even though His sufferings is not a person, but you cannot have fellowship “with” His sufferings.

John explains to us who we are to have fellowship “with.” He says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [κοινωνία - koinonia - ‘communion’] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Surely, if John had been acquainted with a third god, he would want us to have fellowship with him as well, but there is no mention of another person. John further states, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9) “Both” means two, and only two.

So, we are to have the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and be

partakers of the Holy Spirit of God. There is only one God in this verse, the Father, and there are only two persons mentioned, the Father and Son. There is no trinity in 1 Corinthians 13:14. If we want to find evidence for the trinity in the Bible, we must look elsewhere.

Ironically, this text is held up as “the apostolic benediction” as if this was the commonly used ending of a letter from the apostles. But it is only used once. There is a much more commonly used phrase by the apostles, and it reads like this, “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:3). A phrase very similar to this is used to begin 15 out of the 21 apostolic letters. In each of these greetings only two persons are mentioned, the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The fact that the trinity must be supported by grasping at such flimsy straws as 1 Corinthians 13:14 does not recommend it very highly. If God wanted us to believe that He is a trinity of three persons, He could have easily explained it in the Bible, but He never did. Instead, men have formulated theories and creeds to define God by using language that is foreign to the Bible. It would be far better for us to let God’s word speak for itself, and leave the definition of “God” the way God left it in His word.

“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:6). »

Kendra's Sidenotes



by Kendra Beachy

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for all your encouragement and prayers. I want to thank those of you who have written with ideas to help my eye heal. Thank you for taking the time to write or call with your suggestions. I want you to know I really appreciate it. Thank the Lord, my eye is stable at this time. It has been one year since I began my current program and it seems to be effective. I have no symptoms of inflammation or active infection. I am continuing to support my immune system so that it can keep the disease dormant.

I apologize for the long delay in newsletters. We had hoped to be able to be up and running without delay, but best laid plans do go awry and delay did happen with the move from Florida. If you are reading this give thanks and please continue to keep us in prayer. *Present Truth* is now completely published in Oklahoma. All correspondence to us now needs to be sent to the Oklahoma office. Jim and Jerri Raymond have now joined us here and there is no longer anyone in Florida to forward the mail. Jim is working on a health article for an upcoming issue and has asked me

to let you know he is sorry for his lapse in articles, he plans to write more regularly in the future.

We are working toward setting up a greenhouse. Our diets consist largely of greens these days and we would like to have easy access to good food year round.

Currently we are printing from a small, temporary print shop in Oklahoma. We are looking forward to setting up a more permanent print shop/chapel/office building. We want to host camp meetings, local evangelism, ministry training sessions and health and agriculture classes just to name a few.

Recently we heard from Evangelist Paul Agyeman, who has a cable television station in Ghana broadcasting all over Africa. He requested as many DVD presentations as we could send because he wants to constantly run these messages over the air. We were so excited by this opportunity to get the good news of God's love before many people. You may remember in the December 2011 issue of *Present Truth* we printed an appeal to help with the cost of printing 20,000 copies of the book, *God's Love on Trial*. Paul had recently begun his cable channel and subsequently received many requests for the book. God provided, and our friends in Ghana were able to print all of those books in their print shop. Please pray that God will continue to bless this missionary outreach.

God is so good and He has been faithful to us. We recognize that time is short and want to make the best use of time possible. Please continue to keep us in prayers, we do covet them incredibly much.

Smiles and Prayers, Kendra

Present Truth
**God is Real and
He Answers Prayers**

by Kyle W. Smith

After 10 months in prison I arrived at my final facility where I would spend the remainder of my three-year prison term. I was just about finished reading the Bible to decide if God was real when He showed to me that He is real.

My first day at my facility I finished unpacking and saw someone with a lot of candy and cookies. I became jealous because I had nothing. I brought my issue to God and asked Him why this unbeliever had all this stuff and I had nothing. I said to God "I wish I had some cookies." I went out to the day-room, set up all my books and began to study, when a man came over and dropped an envelope in front of me. He left it without saying a word. I looked down at the envelope and it said on it "A gift from God." I opened it up and it was filled with cookies. Did God really answer me?

Soon after, I went to the mess hall and the only thing I liked was the brownie (not realizing at the time the rest of the food was a blessing). So I said "Okay, God, let's see you do it again." I asked God for another brownie. Of course, nobody gave me one. Now, walking back to my dorm I was talking to God saying, "God I'm going to be hungry tonight, I wish I had a sandwich." I went back to the day-room and began reading and studying again when the same man walked over to me and said, "Would

you like a brownie and a sandwich?" I went with him to his locker and thanked him for the food. He replied, "I didn't give it to you." I said, "Of course you did, it's coming out of your locker." He turned to me and said, "I didn't give it to you, God did. God told me to give it to you." Normally I would not have believed it except I had asked God for the cookies, then later the brownie and the sandwich.

This was no coincidence! God heard, and God answered! God tells us to pray continually about everything, big and small. God showed me He is real and the message from God was, "If I answer the small things, then certainly I will answer the big things you pray for." God showed Himself to me that day and it made a believer out of me one-hundred percent. »

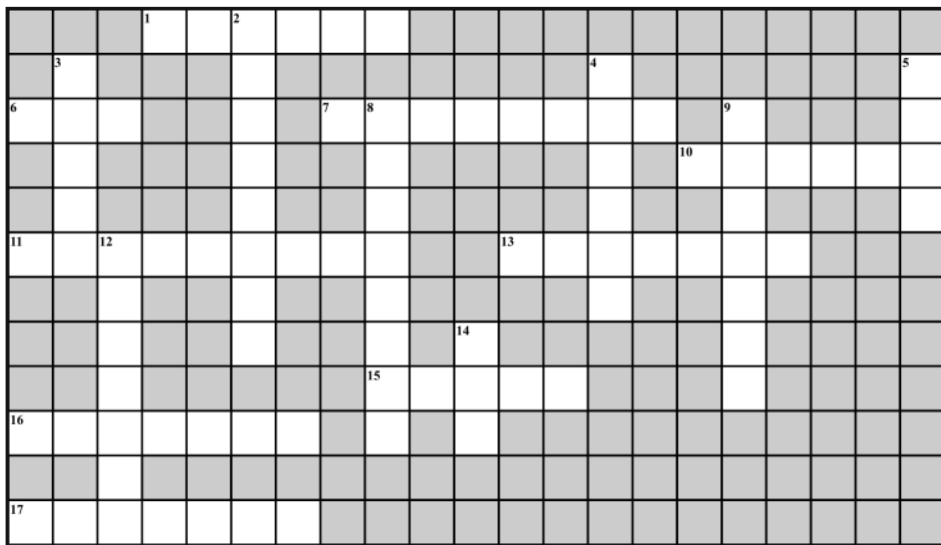
(Brother Kyle W. Smith has been incarcerated for a few years, but is now out of prison and busy spreading the good news of God's love to whomever will listen. He has many ongoing Bible studies with people in an out of prison. Please pray that the Lord will continue to use him for His glory. You may contact Kyle by email at: preachersmith10@yahoo.com. *Editor*)

*Study to shew thyself approved unto
God, a workman that needeth not to
be ashamed, rightly dividing the word
of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)*

Present Truth
Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of crossword Bible studies based on the book, *Bible Handbook*, by Stephen Haskell. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line. (The KJV is required.)

Christ's Coming and His Wedding



Answers will be printed on the back page of next month's issue.

➤ Jesus said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a _____, and to return." Luke 19:12—**16 Across**

➤ "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having _____ the kingdom,..." Luke 19:15—**7 Across**

Note: In this parable Jesus used a nobleman to represent Himself. He planned to leave, receive a kingdom, and then return. For context read the entire passage, vs. 12-27.

➤ "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the _____..." Luke 12:36—**17 Across**

➤ When Christ returns He will have "on his vesture and on his _____ a

name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:16—**15 Across**

➤ When Christ returns "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the _____." 1 Thessalonians 4:17—**14 Down**

Note: His feet will not touch the earth at this time.

➤ Then the righteous "lived and _____ with Christ a thousand years." Revelation 20:4—**12 Down**

➤ The wicked who die when the Lord returns "...lived not again until the _____ years were finished..." Revelation 20:5—**2 Down**

- Afterward, the wicked will come back to life, surround the beloved city, “and ____ came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” Revelation 20:9—**5 Down**
- “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall ____ out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;...” Matthew 13:41—**1 Across**
- They shall be cast “into a ____ of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:42—**9 Down**
- “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the ____ shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:10—**8 Down**
- Note:** The same fire that destroys the wicked purifies the earth.
- “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for ____ heavens and a ____ earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13 (1 word)—**6 Across**
- After God destroys sin and sinners He promises, “...he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the ____ time.” Nahum 1:9—**4 Down**
- After God makes a new earth, John saw “that great city, the holy ____, descending out of heaven from God.” Revelation 21:10—**11 Across**
- An angel told John, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage ____ of the Lamb.” Revelation 19:9—**10 Across**
- Then Jesus “shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and ____ them.” Luke 12:37—**3 Down**
- “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with ____.” Zephaniah 3:17—**13 Across**
- Note:** I pray that you will be there to participate in this joyous occasion. ➤

In the Last Days

by Alonzo T. Jones

Undoubtedly the one text of Scripture that is oftenest referred to as proof of the millenium and the conversion of the world, is that one which speaks of the nations beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. There are two places in the Bible where these words are used, Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5. These are almost precisely alike, except that where one uses the word “nations” the other uses “people,” and the statement in Micah is a little longer than that in Isaiah. That the reader may have the full benefit of the text and this discussion of it, we here print it in full.

“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they

learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

Now let us examine this closely and see what it teaches. When is this scripture to apply? “In the last days.” Who is it that shall say these things? “Many nations [Isaiah, “Many people”] shall come and say;” etc. Exactly! In the last days then many people shall say that “the law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” In the last days many people shall say, The nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.” In the last days many people shall say that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” In the last days many people shall say, “Peace and safety,” because “they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid.” And, too, they will say that “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” All these things many people will say in the last days.

But what saith the Lord? “In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.” Verses 6, 7. This shows that at the very time—in that day—when “many people” are saying all those things, there will be some who will be “driven out,” “afflicted,” and “cast off,” and that these will be a “remnant.” And it is this “remnant” which the Lord says he will gather and over whom he will reign in Mount Zion forever.

This is clearly against the idea of the conversion and gathering of all the world, for if that were true then there would be no “remnant” at all, nor would there be any

that were “cast off” or “driven out” or “afflicted.” How could there be any afflicted or driven out when every man could sit under his vine and under his fig-tree, with none to make afraid, and when none should ever learn war any more? Plainly there could not be. Therefore the text does not at all teach that there shall be a millennium of peace and safety and the conversion of the world. It only teaches that in the last days many nations or people will say so, and will say that the Lord has said it; while the Lord himself says that “in that day” there will be a remnant, who will be cast off, driven out, and afflicted, and that this remnant he will gather, and will reign over them in Mount Zion forever.

That this is the true explanation of the text we have the whole Bible on this subject in proof.

1. Let us follow this “remnant” and see what further is said about it. In Joel 2:30, 31, the Lord says: “I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” And in verse 32 he says that “there shall be deliverance” “in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” And in Zephaniah 3:8 we read: “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.” Can it be possible that the Lord is going to assemble a converted world to pour upon such a people all his fierce anger? Not at all. The word of God knows no such thing as the conversion of the world, that is all. The prophet proceeds (verse 12): “I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” This is precisely what the Lord says in Micah 4, while many

people are saying "Peace and safety," and that the world shall be converted. This is further shown by the next verse. It speaks of this afflicted and poor people as the "remnant of Israel," saying, "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." This whole connection shows that the time here spoken of is the same as that in Micah 4, and that the remnant here referred to is the same as the remnant there referred to, and that this remnant will be poor and afflicted, cast off and driven out.

This is confirmed by another reference to this remnant. Revelation 12:17, says: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The dragon is said, in verse 9, to be "the devil," "Satan." The "woman" is the church of God. The devil is wroth with the church of God, and goes to make war with the remnant of her seed. The devil works through earthly powers and agencies. In stirring up kings, and people, and nations to oppress the church he has ever endeavored to destroy her. This is continued even to the end, in a war with the remnant of Israel, the last of the church of God. Says the Lord by Daniel, speaking of that great power that so long wore out the saints of the Most High. "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21, 22).

Here, then, is the story of the remnant. It is the last of the church. The people who compose it keep "the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The devil, through the powers of earth, makes war upon them. By this they are "cast off" "driven out," and become an

afflicted, and poor people. But there is deliverance in the remnant who the Lord calls, for, "In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever." "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Revelation 15:2). Those who got this victory are they who kept "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;" and these are the remnant, who are driven out and afflicted, but whom the Lord gathers, and over whom he reigns in Mount Zion forever.

Yet at the very time when the devil is thus making war upon the poor, afflicted, but loyal remnant of the church of Christ, the popular pulpit, and the worldly church, will sing of peace and safety and the conversion of the world, and will think that because the world finds it to its interest to ally itself with the already too willing church, therefore the world is becoming converted, and a millennium of peace will reign on the earth! Right here the reader may with profit read carefully the whole of the second chapter of Isaiah. It is too long to quote here.

There is another line of scriptures that also prove positively that this promise of peace and safety, and of beating swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, is only the saying of "many people" and not of the Lord at all. Notice, the time at which the prophet says that many people will say these things, is "in the last days." Now what does the Lord say shall be the condition of things in the last days?

"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, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

This is what God says there will be, in the last days; and this is exactly what now is, as any one can see who will look. Nor is there promise of these bad men growing better and better, until all shall be converted and there be left none wicked on the earth. On the contrary, this word says "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). And in the face of these plain positive declarations of the word of God, pulpit and platform, priests and people, will declare that the world is growing better, that everything prospers and is on the highway to the millennium. It is too, but not such a millennium as they are looking for and preaching, but one of destruction and devastation.

Again, Says the Lord by the prophet Joel, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:13). When is the harvest? "The harvest is the end of the world" (Matthew 13:39).

Who holds the sickle to reap withal? "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Revelation 14:14-16).

This is the time, and the event, that is spoken of by Joel, "Put ye in the sickle, for

the harvest is ripe"—the end of the world is come. And when that time comes, the word of God says, "Their wickedness is great." Therefore any preaching that promises a reign of righteousness on this earth before the end of the world, is contrary to the word of God. What further says the Lord, of this time?

"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles [nations]; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about; thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord" (Joel 3:9-11).

Then he continues in verse 13, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe," etc. Therefore the word of God is plain that the promises of peace and of the increase of righteousness, that will be heard in the last days, are only the words of many people, and not the word of God; of a people too, who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; and from whom it is the duty of all who fear God, to turn away.

When this people say, Peace and safety, God says there shall be "fear, and the pit, and the snare," and "sudden destruction" upon the inhabitants of the earth. When they say, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," the Lord says, "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up." When they say that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks," the word of God says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears." When they shall say that the world is growing better and better, know of a surety that God says, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." When they speak of the time when the world shall be con-

verted, God says that at that time, “their wickedness is great.”

We are now living in the last days, in the very time when many people are saying all these things that are directly contrary to the word of God; and not only that, but are said contrary to that word, in the very presence of the evil times and events that the word of God shows shall be. From such turn away, for whoever trusts in such promises of peace and safety, and follows in the way of such words

shall not know peace. For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Joel 2:12, 13). »

(Signs of the Times, December 28, 1891.)

Let No Man Deceive You

by Alonzo T. Jones

THE second coming of the Saviour is the most important event that awaits the world. And although the word of God is explicit in regard to it, and the signs are abundant which show it to be near, yet there will be more people deceived in regard to it than upon any other point the world has ever heard of. The Saviour’s words, and also those of the apostles, in relation to this subject, show that it will be made a subject of fearful deception; and they have given clear and definite warning upon this one thought, probably more than upon any other one connected with the whole subject of his coming.

When the disciples asked the Saviour, “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world,” the very first thing that he said in reply was, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). And when Paul wrote upon the same subject, he said, “Let no man deceive you by any means” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The deception referred to by both Paul and the Saviour is not entirely unbelief in the coming of the Saviour, but it is in accepting that as the coming of Christ which is not his coming at all. This is shown by quoting another verse with the one already referred to in Matthew 24, “Take heed that no man deceive. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive

many.” This shows that the deception will not be upon the question as to whether he will come, but that it will be upon the question as to whether it is really he who does come. This view also appears in Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

This was written to those who in Paul’s own time were about to be deceived as to the time of the Lord’s coming, and he assured them that all this must come to pass before the coming of the Lord; and that when this man of sin should be revealed he would continue until the Lord does come. “For,” said he, “the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” But before that coming Satan will work “with

all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." This love of the truth which must be received to be saved, is of course the love of the whole word of God; but, as it is upon the point of the coming of the Lord that Satan is going to use his greatest deceptions, it becomes of particular importance to know what is the truth upon this special subject. It is only unto them that look for him, that he appears unto salvation. But they must not only be looking for him, they must be looking for him in the right way, lest they be deceived by some of the false christs that are to arise and deceive many.

What, then, is the truth about the coming of the Lord? What will then occur? The Bible answers these questions so clearly, and makes this matter so plain, that no one who will receive the love of that word, need to be deceived in the least by any pretended christ or false prophet. Suppose that Satan should "materialize," and, "transformed into an angel of light," should present himself to the world as Christ, come in glory. Suppose he should come thus and do great miracles and wonders, healing the sick, making the lame to walk, preaching the spiritualistic idea of love and beauty, and by this means should draw all men unto him: how should people be expected to know that that would not be the coming of Christ? They must know by the Scriptures. Let us see what must happen at the coming of the Lord.

1. The Saviour comes in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and in the glory of the angels. His own glory is "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26:13). The glory of the Father is so also, because the city of God has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, because the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Revelation 21:23). The

face of an angel is like the lightning (Daniel 10:6; Matthew 28:3). But when he comes all the holy angels come with him (Matthew 25:31). And of the angels there are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands,—an innumerable company. An innumerable company of angels with their faces like the lightning, and their raiment white as snow, reflecting the glory of Him who is greater than all, and in the midst of this glorious host, Him whose glory is above the brightness of the sun, surrounded also with the added glory of the Father—all this will fulfill the scripture, "His glory covered the heavens" (Habakkuk 3:3), and also the scripture, "As the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day" (Luke 17:24). That is the glory of the coming of the Saviour, and Satan and all his angels of light, can never equal it. But that is not all.

2. When he comes, the voice of God is heard saying, "It is done" (Revelation 16:17). That voice shakes both heaven and earth (Hebrews 12:26, 27; Luke 21:26). This shaking of the heaven causes it to split completely open, and part as a scroll when it is rolled together (Revelation 6:14). The shaking of the earth is with such an earthquake as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great; the cities of the nations fall; and every mountain and island are moved out of their places (Revelation 16:18, 20, 6:14). At the same time there falls a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent (Revelation 16:21). In the midst of this mighty tumult "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman," run hither and thither to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the tops of the ragged rocks, to hide themselves in the dens and rocks of the moun-

tains, and call to the fleeing islands and tumbling mountains, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand” (Revelation 6:15-17; Isaiah 2:19-21).

Satan cannot speak with a voice that will rend the heavens and shake the earth so as to move every mountain and island out of their places. Nor will his appearance to wicked men ever cause them to wish for a mountain to fall on them rather than to have him look upon them.

3. At the coming of the Saviour he will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. At the sound of his voice and that trumpet, all the righteous dead arise, and the righteous living are changed, and all are caught up together to meet him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). At the same time all the wicked are slain upon the earth (Revelation 19:11-21; Jeremiah 25:30-33), and there will not be a man left to dwell therein (Jeremiah 4:29). Then the whole earth will be made utterly empty and utterly desolate (Isaiah 24:1-3, 18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18).

All these things are the accompaniments to the second coming of the Lord. Whoever comes pretending to be Christ, and is not accompanied with all these things, is a false christ. And whoever preaches a coming of Christ that is not accompanied by all these things, is a false teacher. These things are the truth, and he who receives the love of this truth and looks for the coming of the Lord accord-

ingly, will not be deceived by any false christs or false prophets. Anything that pretends to be the second coming of Christ that is not accompanied by a voice that splits the heavens and shakes the earth so that every mountain and island are moved out of their places; that is not accompanied with a glory that covers the heavens, and which is above the brightness of the sun, and as piercing as lightning; that is not accompanied by the beating hail, every stone about fifty-seven pounds in weight, and by the terror of men calling to mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; that is not accompanied by the shout, and the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, by the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the translation of the righteous living, and their being caught up together to meet him in the air, and that does not leave the earth utterly desolate—anything pretending to be the second coming of Christ that is not accompanied by all this, is a deception of Satan. Receive thou the love of the truth, and “take heed that no man deceive you.”

(Signs of the Times, July 27, 1888.)



Answers to Last Issue's Crossword Puzzle

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