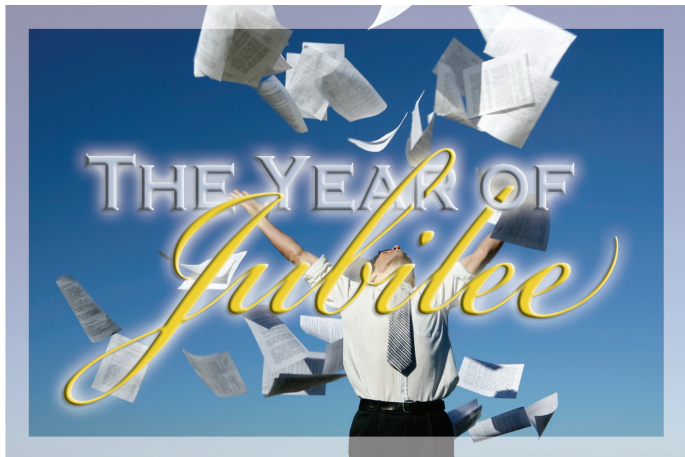

Pilgrims Journal

“They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb 11:13–16)

Number 69

January–February 2008



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THE YEAR OF JUBILEE!

When the Lord Jesus began His public ministry, He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. The book of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him, and He opened the book to the portion where it is written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isa 61:1-2). After He read that passage, He closed the book, gave it again to the minister, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fastened on Him; and He said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears”—or, in other words, “God has come to do this work in your life.”

What was this work that would be done? What was this “acceptable year of the Lord”? The Jews in Jesus’ audience would have understood immediately: it was the Year of Jubilee. In Leviticus chapter twenty-five, all the precepts and principles governing this special year were given. It was to be observed every fifty years, heralded by the blowing of a trumpet throughout the land on the Day of Atonement. That acceptable year of the Lord was a year of liberty and

deliverance. Debts were cancelled, slaves were set free, and all returned to the inheritance of their fathers. We in this New Testament dispensation recognize the spiritual significance of the fiftieth year, for “Pentecost” is related to the number fifty as well: “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Jews were to count their years, and every seventh year they were to have a sabbath year. And after seven of those periods—after forty-nine years, then they would have the Year of Jubilee. One whole year of freedom!

Struggling to Enter into His Rest

During these “seventh year” sabbaths (sabbatical years), the ground would “rest”; that is, the people would not cultivate their fields nor sell their produce. Now you can imagine if you were a farmer, would you like to allow your field to rest every seventh year? You would begin to think, “What will happen to my poor business?” Would you close your business every seventh year? And then for the year of jubilee, you would have already been closed for the 49th year, and then to close for a second consecutive year?

The Jews were very good businessmen, and they realized that closing down every seven years wasn’t good business. So when the seventh year came, they just continued right on working; and when the fiftieth year came they kept right on working—and the land missed seventy years of rest. However, instead of being able to revel in all that

they had accumulated by working an extra seventy years, all that increase was handed over to their enemies, and they were carried away captives into Babylon. And they remained in Babylon for seventy years, until the land got its sabbath rest. They learned the hard way, that God's way is always best.

They had a hard time even learning to keep a sabbath day. The Lord had told them not to gather manna on the seventh day. Well, they thought that was poor business too, so they went out to gather the manna on the sabbath day and it wasn't there. *God has a hard time teaching His people to enter into His rest.*

Whom the Son Sets Free...

But now Jesus has said this is the acceptable year of the Lord, the Year of Jubilee, like a priest blowing the trumpet on the Day of Atonement, declaring liberty for all people. By Christ's atoning sacrifice, man is reconciled to his God; God forgives all of man's sins. You see it's God that blows the trumpet and sets His people free: forgetting sin, canceling debts, releasing captives, and sending great blessings upon His people, through an efficacious atonement. By this 50th Day of Atonement bringing in a Year of Jubilee, the Lord was conveying the message: "For the last 49 years, I have faithfully forgiven your sins; now in this 50th year, forgive one another as freely as I have forgiven you."

You can imagine the amount of problems that could amass in a fifty-year span of time: people indebted to one another, griefs untold through property disputes, inheritances squandered through debts incurred, and some enslaved as a form of payment. In no time the whole kingdom would be destroyed. So God in His wisdom said, "Every fiftieth year, we will just start all over again. We will cancel all debts, release all slaves, and everyone can return to his father's inheritance." Isn't that wonderful? Wouldn't you like to start life all over again?

Homecoming

You see, as time goes by, God's people get into bondage. We get ourselves into all kinds of interpersonal relationships. I grieved him and he grieves me and we hurt each other. We have things against each other and build up all kinds of walls, and we lose the kingdom of God: our righteousness, our peace, our joy in the Holy Ghost. Praise God, though, that He has a time to blow the trumpet, a time to cancel all debts, to forgive all our offences, to make reconciliation, that we might go home to our inheritance, our Father's inheritance, that we might know what are the riches of God's inheritance in the saints.

The Bible teaches that our problem is dual, both between God and man, and between man and man; and so the need for reconciliation is both vertical and hori-

zontal. We need to be reconciled with God and reconciled with one another. The desire of God is to bring us to Christ, where we are new creations, where old things pass away, and all things become new. “Behold, I do a new thing,” saith the Lord. He doesn’t just give us a new year in our jubilee, in His acceptable year: He makes *us* a new creation. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And now God has given unto us the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of Christ. In His name we plead with you, be reconciled to God. How? By forgiving one another. Just like God has forgiven you for Christ sake, so forgive one another, if you have a quarrel one with another. That is the nature of the new creation in Christ Jesus: “Lord, You forgive us, just like we’re forgiving one another.” And if you do not forgive another’s trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses: your Year of Jubilee will not be fulfilled until you cancel all debts. Your God wants to bring you into jubilee, where He heals the land and pours out the former and the latter rain and gives great increase.

Slaves to Unforgiveness

In the days of Nehemiah and Ezra, many returned from Babylon, and were living in Jerusalem. The land had finally fulfilled its sabbaths, and the people began to work

the land again. However, they also started to get indebted one to another, they began to oppress one another, they began to take away one another’s blessings and they became slaves one to another. This time, their godly leaders said, “Stop this! This is sin, this is how we got into captivity in the first place! Every man give back what was taken, forgive one another, cancel all debts, send everybody home.” They replied, “Yes, yes, we will do that,” and sent them all home. Yet after a little while, they again thought, “This is bad business,” and went and dragged them back again. You know, God’s kingdom is very poor business; you really can’t live like God’s kingdom says unless He is the King. Yet if we don’t live in God’s kingdom, we are going to live in “Babylon”: in confusion, in slavery, under the oppression of the god of this world, and not under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

New Testament Captives in Babylon

When the Lord Jesus was teaching His disciples how to be free from these bondages, Peter came to Him and said, “Master, if my brother sins against me, You told me I have to forgive him. But tell me, Lord, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven?” The Lord said, “No, not seven—seventy times seven.” The Lord was reminding him of what happened in the Babylonian captivity. They should have entered into rest seventy times. Every seventh year,

they should have entered into rest. They should have laid all their burdens down. They should have forgiven one another. They should have returned to their inheritance, but that was poor business and they were not willing to pay the price—and what a great price they ended up paying! They were enslaved themselves, taken captive for refusing to free others.

Now God wants to bring us back out of captivity. He wants us to break the yoke. He wants us to root up all roots of bitterness. He wants to cancel all the debts.

The Father's Tormentors

Christ did warn us about tormentors. He told the story of a servant who was greatly indebted to his master. And the master said, "Pay your debt." He said, "I cannot." So he and his wife and his children were going to be sold as slaves. The servant fell down and said, "Give me time and I'll pay you back everything." His master was moved with compassion and just pardoned that whole debt. Oh, what a wonderful thing that was—just like when you and I got saved! God said, "The debt is cancelled." Praise be to God! When you come to Jesus, He says, "Forget it." And God takes it from you and throws it behind His back, and it sinks like lead to the bottom of the sea of His forgetfulness. He separates us from our sins as far as the east is from the west. Isn't His forgiveness wonderful?

Yet that forgiven servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him, and choked him to get his money back. When the master heard it, he called him back in. "O you wicked servant, I forgave you all that great debt, because you asked me and you ought to have forgiven your fellow man." His master then removed his forgiveness, re-applied the debt, and threw him into prison to be tortured of the tormentors, until he paid the last cent. Jesus concluded this story to His own disciples with these shocking words: "Likewise shall My heavenly Father do with each one of you, My disciples, if you don't forgive each one your brother from the bottom of your heart" (Mat 18:23-35).

This is the tenor of scripture, that God wants His grace to flow into us for our sake; and out through us for the sake of others. That is Kingdom living. If we close up our hearts of compassion, we shut the windows of heaven against ourselves—rain will no longer fall, and our hearts will become dry and hard. We will be delivered over to the tormentors, taken into the howling wilderness, into captivity in Babylon.

Bitterness and Rejection: Enemies of Jubilee

One of mankind's greatest self-destructions is roots of bitterness one toward another. Husbands towards their wives, wives towards their husbands—and like that, the

closest of human bonds are choked by these bitter roots. There will be fights between spouses, between parents and children, and sibling rivalry in God's church family. Whenever we get close to one another, the probability of offense increases exponentially. When I get really close to my brother, it's more likely that I'll step on his toe, that my elbow will jab his face—and that's where the problems come, that's when the seeds of bitterness are planted.

In this acceptable year of the Lord, in this dispensation of grace beginning at Pentecost ("50"), we have been *accepted* in the Beloved. Another plague of fallen man, in addition to that of bitterness and unforgiveness, is the feeling of rejection. Rejection and unforgiveness go hand in hand: when I reject my brother, a spirit of rejection comes upon me. Those who have rejected the voice of God will finally say that they feel God has rejected them. But He has in fact accepted us in the Beloved and longs to receive us to Himself. He has released the captives, proclaimed liberty to all that were bound, and opened the prison doors: and we in turn declare, to the powers of darkness, to Satan and his kingdom, that we are free of his torments, of his bondages, and of every demon spirit. God has set us free. And whom the Son sets free, he is free indeed. We are free indeed from all the wiles of the enemy. So let us not go and pick up that burden again.

Free Indeed...

How wonderful is this jubilee, when bondages are loosed—when we throw all that garbage away, the little junk that we've been collecting and carrying in our hearts—and we return to our inheritance in the Father's house, where everything is provided for us, and that spirit of rejection is lifted off us. We will not die: we will live. We know that we are accepted in the Beloved, and we accept one another also.

One sister had come having a problem with demons and asked for prayer. The pastor in turn asked, "Do you have any bitterness?" She said she was bitter against her father and that she would never forgive him; he had ruined her life. The pastor replied, "Well, you will ruin the rest of your life with your unforgiveness." Her father had died, but even then she wasn't willing to forgive him and turned to walk away. The pastor warned her, "Then the demons will not leave you." She left, but returned after a while, and said, "I don't want these demons to torment me anymore: I will forgive him." All of a sudden, her face broke into a smile, and she said, "I am free!"—and free she was. That is the Year of Jubilee.

One time I was ministering to a boy in a hospital, whose leg was doubled up behind him. The boy had fallen down a long flight of stairs and hurt himself. The doctors had tried

everything they could to get that leg straightened up, and they could not do it. While I was there, they were discussing all the possibilities among themselves. So I was talking to him— not praying for him, but just talking to him about how the Lord forgives. Then he began to tell me his problems: a whole lifelong story of bitterness against his mother and father. Perhaps the parents had reasons for their offensive actions, but from his point of view it had been unjust. As he told his story, he was sweating profusely. Finally I asked him, “What are you going to do about this? Can you forgive them like Jesus forgave you?” He said, “Yes.” I didn’t lay hands on him, and I didn’t pray for him, but when he said, “Yes,” his legs straightened right out. He got up and walked out of the hospital. When he released the burden, then God released him.

Happy New Year!

Haven’t you ever wanted to just start all over again? I was thinking how I wish I could start all over again. The Lord said to me, “Good idea: start all over again from today! You can’t undo the past. But I will pardon it and I will forget it. Start today as a new day, you are a new creation today.” That’s what happened in the Year of Jubilee. Every man went back home, went back to his father’s inheritance, released from slavery to start life all over again. Everybody was equal again. Of course some people went back and got

into the same old problems; but others stood fast in the liberty, wiser than the former days, so they did not fall into the same traps again.

God is going to help us in this year. He has a great work for us to do. You and I who have failed so many times, God has success for us this year.

We who have been barren and fruitless, God has a fruitful year for us this year. We have been so foolish, God has wisdom for us this year. We have been so weak, God has strength for us this year. We who have not been able to do anything, God has a great work for us to do this year.

Jesus read from Isaiah 61 in preaching about the fulfillment of the Year of Jubilee; and that text about those who are set free in the acceptable year of the Lord continues: *“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.”* You can find similar promises in Jeremiah 1 and Isaiah 58, showing that when God restores us, when God gives us a new lease on life and we start all over, we are going to do great things for God. We are going to build up all those waste places and raise up those former desolations. We are going to repair those waste cities and the desolations of many generations. All the former foundations that had fallen—the foundational truths of being born again, baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit; the gifts

of the Holy Spirit, holiness, perfection and all these wonderful things will be restored. We see that God is enabling this generation to build all these things. And we have great hope, if we can continue to live in the acceptable year of the Lord.

The Bible says we will be a crown of glory to the Lord and He will be married to us. He will clothe Himself with us and He will be our glory, our joy, our inheritance, and our portion. He will be our everlasting salvation. All we have to do is live in the Year of Jubilee. God will do all of this and more. God is going to do wonderful things that we cannot even begin to understand, things He cannot even tell us. We will stand amazed when we see what God is going to do in this acceptable year of the Lord! □

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“The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God...” (Psa 87:2-3).

We are studying in this series about the glorious **Mount Zion**, the perfection of beauty. Currently our focus is on the eternal Zion, God’s chosen dwelling place. *“The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it”* (Psa 132:13-14).

An age-old question in scripture inquires about who else would dwell with God in Zion (Psa 15; Psa 24:3). In the New Testament, the answer is given in Revelation 14:1-5. We will consider here this marvelous passage, and its implications for our lives.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Rev 14:1).

The Lord Shall Count...to 144,000!

An interesting thing about those in Zion is that their number is given to us as 144,000. We are not given the

overall number of the saved in eternity, nor the still lesser number that will be in the rapture! Yet, this numbering of the inhabitants of eternal Zion was foretold thousands of years ago. *“And of Zion it shall be said, ‘This and that man was born in her...’ The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there”* (Psa 87:5-6). Perhaps in the Book of Life, there may be a special entry beside the names of all of those who are to be with the Lord in eternal Zion.

One may wonder why there are not 144,001 with Christ on Mount Zion? Isn’t there room for one more in that glorious place? Apparently this number is preordained and settled by God Himself and is important to His eternal purposes. Perhaps only in eternity will we fully comprehend God’s choosing of this unique and symmetrical number! Those on Zion with Christ are a very elite group of servants of God. If we presume that there are 2000 years in the Church Age, from Pentecost until the Rapture, then on average there would have been added only about 72 each year to this number in Zion. That is a very small number, considering the great number of the saved who may pass yearly into eternity.

Lord, I Want to Be in That Number...

Notably the number 12 is often considered by Bible students as the **number of the church**. There were 12 original

apostles (Mat 10:1-4). There were 120 present at Pentecost when the New Testament Church was founded (Acts 1:15). The eternal New Jerusalem, which is the perfected Church, is notable with the multiple occurrences of the number 12: we see 12 gates (Rev 21:12), 12 foundations (Rev 21:14), and its length, breadth, and height are equally 12,000 furlongs (Rev 21:16). Not only is the number 12 in 144,000, but also twelve squared (12²). Perhaps this may allude to the ministers who are foundation stones in the New Jerusalem. “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone*” (Eph 2:20).

In a certain way, those in Zion are like a church within a church. They are at the same time part of the New Testament Church, and yet they themselves are builders of the church, being co-laborers with Christ (see 1Cor 3).

Errors Exposed

A very common but erroneous teaching is that the 144,000 in Revelation 14:1-5 are identical to the 144,000 seen in Revelation 7:1-8. However, these are two entirely different groups. In Revelation chapter 7, the group is entirely comprised of Jews, sealed on their foreheads. They are very much mortal, and dwell upon the earth **during** the Great Tribulation period. They are sealed in order to be supernaturally protected from the destruction of the Great Tribulation period (Rev 9:4). The 144,000 seen in

Revelation 14, on the other hand, are a part of the Bride of Christ, and are resurrected **before** the Great Tribulation even begins (Rev 12:1-5). Therefore, they are seen standing with the risen Christ, Who ascended far above all heavens to be the great King in Zion (Eph 1:20-23; Psa 2:6; 1Pet 2:6).

Another erroneous teaching is that the 144,000 seen in Revelation 14:1-5 are the **only ones saved** in the eternal heaven! Mount Zion is only one of the many dwelling places of the redeemed in eternity (Jn 14:2). Throughout the eternal kingdom there will be redeemed ones in New Earth, New Heaven, and New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-2). So the 144,000 of Revelation 14 is a subset of the raptured Church of the New Testament Age that dwells in the eternal New Jerusalem, which are also in turn a subset of the vast number of redeemed, who will be in the other heavenly dwelling places.

Personalized Persons

We see in Revelation 14:1 that the 144,000 have the “*Father’s name written in their foreheads.*” Later in the book of Revelation, God repeats this thought and specifies that it applies to servants of God: “*...and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads*” (Rev 22:3-4). From this we may learn a number of important truths about those in Zion. Nowadays it is quite common to see people piercing their bodies (ears, lips, etc.) or writing upon their bodies with tattoos. In the Old

Testament we find that this was expressly forbidden by God (Lev 19:28) and that commandment is still an expression of God's will for us today. On the other hand, in eternity, this writing of the Father's name on the 144,000 is a great honor that they enjoy. Apparently this writing of the Father's name is done by God Himself (Rev 3:12).

One thing that immediately comes to mind is that these 144,000 are a **special possession of God Himself**. It is common for us to put our names on certain of our possessions **to indicate ownership**. Even today some animals are **branded** or **marked** in order to indicate who their owner is. Like that, these 144,000 will have an eternal honor of being openly seen by all in eternity as being the special possession of the Father. We also should have that attitude while in this world. Paul openly proclaimed that he was the possession of God: "*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ...*" (Rom 1:1); "*...Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ...*" (Eph 3:1); "*...God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve...*" (Acts 27:23). If someone's name is written in your forehead, it would be immediately seen by everyone who encounters you. Some people may be ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38; 2Tim 1:8) because they fear ridicule or persecution. In work or school or in their neighborhood they may *never* show forth their allegiance to Christ. But, Paul on the other hand, boldly proclaimed that he was not ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16). May God give us such a fearless spirit to let the whole world know that we belong to the Father!

Purchased Possessions

Now we know that all things in the universe, in a general sense, are the possessions of God: "*...all things were created by Him and for Him*" (Col 1:16). After creating the holy angels, some of them misused their free will to rebel against God, their Creator. Later, Adam and Eve themselves resisted the plan of their Creator and brought upon themselves, and this earth, "the Fall." But God, in His great love and compassion for His fallen creation, stepped into this sin-sick world, in the second person of the God-head, Jesus Christ, to abundantly provide for our redemption. This word redeem means "*to purchase something back again*" or "*to deliver through the payment of a ransom.*" Through the redemptive work of Jesus at Calvary, God has "*purchased (us) with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). All of those in heaven will be those redeemed from different dispensations in earth's history.

Out of This World

Those in Zion are a small part of those redeemed in this New Testament age, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Beyond this general redemption that all in eternity possess, those in Zion possess **two other unique redemptions** that the Word of God speaks of. A second redemption that the 144,000 possess is that they "*were redeemed from the earth*" (Rev 14:3).

In order to understand this we need to contemplate the wondrous mind of God revealed to His church. In the Old Testament, God made a special covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's children. This group alone entered into an exclusive covenant relationship with God. The Old Testament covenants and laws made clear separations between the Jews and all other people of the earth, also known as the Gentiles (Eph 2:11-12). We can see, however, in Christ's redemptive work of the New Testament age, that God loves all people and nations of this earth equally. He shows this by redeeming through the one sacrifice of Calvary both Jews and Gentiles equally. His purpose now is to transform the redeemed of this age into one united and holy body called the Church. The Church is to no longer distinguish between Jews, Gentiles, other races and social categories (see 1Cor 12:12-13; Col 3:10-11; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:13-22).

Skin-deep Christianity

Sad to say, not all members of the church have grown to this oneness. In the USA, we commonly find churches that are based on racial or ethnic divisions. For example one church for whites, another for blacks, another for Chinese. (This also may be the case in some of our own churches.) Some might say, "We are not wanting it that way; it just works out that way!" However, in many cases, **very little** is done in those churches to encourage other races or social

groups to join. That is human nature, but it is NOT divine nature! It is an attitude that is at best very immature spiritually, and at worse prejudicial and sinful. It is especially the **responsibility** of the servants of God to teach the church by both word and example that we must "*grow up into Him in all things*" (Eph 4:11-16). Our love and fellowship **MUST** NOT be restricted to a given ethnic group, but should reach out to all of mankind.

My Father's House...For All Nations

Jesus surprised people, because He manifested that divine love towards Samaritans, Gentiles, and a host of 'unworthy' people. "The Pharisees...said, 'Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?'" (Mat 9:11) "And upon this came His disciples, and marvelled that He talked with the [Samaritan] woman..." (Jn 4:27). When the Bible says that the 144,000 are redeemed from the earth, one meaning is that these 144,000 show NO distinction between the ethnic, national, or social groups. They have grown to the place of loving all peoples and nations equally. The Apostle Paul, who was also called to Zion, said, "I am debtor, both to the Greeks, and the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (Rom 1:14). Paul had a tremendous revelation of the unity of the Church, and at least in one case openly rebuked the 'older' Apostle Peter for not walking according to the truth of the Gospel (see Galatians 2). Clearly Paul had

been **redeemed from the earth!** May God put this vision and burden in His servants. May the ministers of God help all of the churches to grow **up** in the Lord, and grow **out** of national, ethnic, language, and social distinctions.

Although each of these 144,000 on Mount Zion was born into some nation and ethnic group, yet they have been redeemed from the earth to live the heavenly life here and now. Now they both belong to no nation, and yet belong to all! They co-labor with Christ to present the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, perfect in love like her Bridegroom Jesus! That glorious perfected Church will be derived from all nations, tongues, ethnic and social groups to dwell as one eternally with Jesus! **MARANATHA—COME LORD JESUS!** □

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The workmanship of His hands

Apart from a few extreme atheists, many people in this day would agree that this world and its life did not arise simply by some cosmic accident. The evidence pointing to a Creator is really too great (and too obvious) for any honest person to ignore. Nonetheless, the issue does still rage on. If the world is created, Who is the Creator, and how did He create? Should we believe in a god who simply fills in the gaps that evolution can't seem to explain? Should we believe in a cosmic clock-maker who somehow wound everything up at the start of the universe and then went away, leaving man to get on with his own life? If we prefer a more "hands-on" god, will the god of the Muslims or of the Jehovah's Witnesses do? Even for those who accept that this universe is created, as opposed to merely a chance accident, the options seem to be almost limitless in allowing them to ignore the God of the Bible.

In Revelation we read that God is worthy to receive honor, glory and power—because He has *created* all things. Paul condemns those who have abandoned the worship of the Creator in favor of the creation itself. In consistent evolu-

tionary thinking, it is "nature" (the creation) which gets the glory for creation.

This is the overriding issue—the authority of God's Word versus man's opinions. First, we need to establish that God's Word really does contradict man's opinion in the case of creation versus evolution.

God's Word claims that in the order of appearance, the earth was formed before the sun, and fruit trees were formed before fish in the sea. Man's opinion claims, on the other hand, that the sun was formed before the earth, and fish came before fruit trees. Again, God's Word claims that the first man was formed directly from the dust, whereas man's opinion purports that he ascended from the apes. God's Word also states that the first woman was made from man's rib, whereas man's opinion suggests that she too has apes in her ancestry. Looking to the time frame for creation, God's Word declares that all things were created in six days, but man suggests that all things gradually appeared over vast millions of years. God's Word says that death, violence, suffering and bloodshed only started after Adam's fall as the results of rebellion. Man's opinion, on the other hand, claims that creation was already "groaning in bondage to decay" for billions of years before man even appeared on Earth.

When Christians are confronted with these contradictions, they must make a choice to: 1) abandon the popular world view; 2) abandon belief in Scripture; or 3) attempt to

harmonize. In practice, one often sees a blend of #'s 2 and 3, which brings the “blenders” to say that the Bible may be right on some things, but wrong on others. Yet if the Bible contains some truth and some error, who is to judge which is which? How may we know anything reliably about God or Christianity or Jesus? Then even simple theological statements such as “God is love” could be called into question.

Some Christians attempt to artificially split the Bible into “religious” and “scientific” areas, saying that the Bible is right in “religious” matters, but may be wrong in “scientific” matters. But to attempt to say this often violates the basic laws of logic, where “A” cannot be non-“A.” Jesus either rose bodily from the dead, or He did not. Bloodshed was either in the world before Adam, or it was not. Christ does not enter the stage of human history in a ghostly vacuum, but in a carefully laid out framework of history, part of a long line of descent from Adam. Jesus said that if His hearers did not believe when He told them of earthly things, how could they believe when He told them of heavenly things? (Jn 3:12)

But let us consider the very “Nature of God.” Could God have created by evolution? Is the God Who reveals Himself in the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ a God Who would use death and struggle to create, the strong wiping out the weak over agonized eons before sin entered the world? Would He call a bloodstained world, the result of such a violence and disease-ridden process, “very good”? Would

He, Who is supposed to be “truthful,” so mislead people in His Bible by giving a completely contrary impression to virtually all readers that He had created the world out of nothing and in six actual days?

The simple truth is that evolution corrupts the logical foundations of the Gospel. The very reason and the very need of the cross is predicated upon the Fall. It was by the first Adam that death came and by the Last Adam comes resurrection from the dead. Without Adam’s fall into sin and death, why did Christ have to die? Without the historical event which caused a great gulf between God and man, why is there any need for the atoning blood?

“For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” We might say that these are beautiful words, but what can they possibly mean to a culture that is raised on the belief that death always existed and therefore cannot be the wages of sin; that man is not a fallen image but a risen ape; that the Bible contains such obviously mythical statements as Exodus 20:11 (all things created in six days); that sinful behaviour is the result of animal ancestry; and that the Bible which contains these words cannot be trusted to be error-free?

Peter exhorts us to be ready to give a “reason for the hope,” that is to say, defend the faith. One of the areas of greatest attack from the world is upon the Book of Genesis. As the book of origins, Genesis contains the structural base

of all Christian doctrine, directly or indirectly. Destroy this logical base, this foundation, and the structure is seriously weakened.

Sin is the root cause of human problems, but evolution has given a scientific justification for rejecting the absolutes of God's Word in Western society. Increasing lawlessness (no one owns me, there are no rules); abortion (we're all just animals anyway); marriage breakdown (Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce always went back to the historical basis in Genesis) and ever more open homosexual practices are just some of the fruits being reaped by a society rearing its young in this anti-biblical world view.

Our God is worthy to receive all glory and honor because He created all things; and as the pinnacle of His creation, we above all should honor the Creator, and not let vain philosophies of men take away the glory due to Him. May the Lord help us to be faithful unto Him and to His holy Word. In the issues to come we will examine the wonders of God's creation in order to see that we truly are the workmanship of His hands! □

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Have you ever thought about how much the Lord will do to bring one person to salvation? It amazes me, how the Lord brought me to Himself...

I am the third of nine children, and was brought up Catholic, attending Catholic schools until 10th grade. At an early age I became dissatisfied with the Roman Catholic church because they were constantly changing the rules. One day it was a sin not to cover your head in church and the next day it didn't matter anymore. It was a sin to eat meat on Friday, but some had received special permission from the priest to eat meat. In the month of May we were made to kneel down before statues and pictures of Mary and say the rosary. Who or what was right? In the midst of this confusion I still believed in God and attended church regularly; yet I didn't want to live my whole life believing one way to find out at the end that I was wrong. As I grew older and began college, I met classmates who were from different faiths, and would go with them visiting other churches. I had a hunger for the truth and wanted to find a church that taught it.

In 1972 a new employee, Grace, was hired at my summer job. She was from Sri Lanka (and was a member of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission). She would always speak to me about the Lord. I enjoyed those conversations, and since we had much in

common we always kept in touch. Before graduating from college in 1975, I was offered a permanent position at that summer job. I was thrilled that all my plans and desires were being fulfilled and I decided to travel to Europe before taking up my permanent position. When I mentioned my plans to my friend Grace, she said; "Oh, I wish you could go to Sri Lanka and visit my sisters." Although I didn't know where Sri Lanka was and I had no intention of going there, those words always stuck in my mind.

While in Europe, I visited the Vatican in Rome. All around the outside, vendors were selling statues and pictures of the Catholic saints, holy water, rosaries, etc. A Catholic visiting the Vatican is like a Muslim making a pilgrimage to Mecca. I really felt that I had accomplished something great, and I was happily going around buying souvenirs for family and friends.

Upon returning to Canada, I was now ready to take up my permanent position, but when I reported for work they said, "We don't need you!" Although I wasn't saved, somehow I knew in my heart that the Lord had shut the door. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." From that point on, I knew the Lord was guiding me because this was not the way I had planned my life. I would constantly be asking the Lord wherever I visited, "What am I doing here? Why did You bring me here?"

In 1976-77, the Lord led me to Alberta in western Canada where I took up a temporary job at a famous hotel in Jasper National Park. To my surprise my roommate was a born-again Christian. I told her I was a Catholic and I believed in God; yet she would always challenge me with this one question, “Where are you going when you die?” For years those words haunted me. I thought: “How can anyone know where they are going when they die?” But she seemed quite confident about herself, and I didn’t have that assurance.

In 1977-78, I traveled to New Zealand and Australia, and there I met up with more born-again Christians. Little by little I was beginning to understand this “salvation.” In August 1979, I left Australia to return home through southeast Asia. While looking over the map, I saw the small island of Sri Lanka and I remembered my friend Grace’s words: “Oh, I wish you could go to Sri Lanka and visit my sisters!” I quickly sent her a letter asking for the address.

From Indonesia I traveled north to Thailand, then to Nepal and India, reaching Allahabad in January 1980. In each place I would ask the Lord, “Why did You bring me here? Why did I have to come here?” My plan was to graduate, work for a year, get married, and eventually stay home and take care of my family. But when the job didn’t work out, I had no peace about marriage either. I kept moving from place to place to avoid making a decision. Somehow I knew the Lord was trying to tell me something and I didn’t want to make any commit-

ments until I found the truth and why I was being led halfway around the world.

In Allahabad I visited a large Hindu temple. Being a tourist, and because I was searching for the truth, I was curious to go inside; but the guards at the door said, “You cannot enter inside because you were not born a Hindu—you can only walk around the outside!” So I proceeded to walk around the outside of the temple, and began to think: “If God is fair then there must be one way to heaven for all men regardless of race, color, creed or nationality. Hinduism cannot be the way because it is restricted like this.” Have you ever heard of a church refusing entrance to people of other faiths? As I continued walking, I had the strangest feeling that I had done this before, a sense of “*déjà vu*,” but I knew I had never been to Allahabad before nor to this temple. I looked at the vendors selling statues and pictures of the Hindu gods, holy water, and beads, when all of a sudden it hit me—this was just like my experience in the Vatican, two years earlier! It was as if a light went on inside my head. I had been taught as a Catholic that idol worship was wrong, but when Hindus look at Catholics they see the exact same thing: worshiping idols.

I had always thought that, as a Catholic, I had my foot in the door to heaven; and that even though I was searching for the truth, at the end of all my searching, I would find out that the Catholic church was right. That day I knew I was wrong, and the Catholic church was wrong, too. I could hear a voice echoing in my head; “Where, where are you going when you die?” I

knew if I died that day I was going straight to hell! There, outside that Hindu temple I felt like I was flat on my face before a holy God. I knew I was a sinner: all my sins flashed before me and I realized that all my righteousness was as filthy rags before God. I returned to my room and wept, crying, “Lord, why did You bring me here?” All my friends thought I was having a wonderful time traveling around the world, but truthfully, I was miserable, exhausted and alone.

What to do next? I didn’t want to return to Canada in the winter—then I remembered, “Sri Lanka, yes, go to Sri Lanka and visit Grace’s sisters.” With my heart in this condition I traveled to Sri Lanka. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51: 17). As I met Grace’s sister Kunju, she immediately said, “I always pray for souls, that the Lord would send people to my door that need to be saved. So I know the Lord didn’t bring you by accident or by chance. I know the Lord brought you here because He wants you to be saved.” I could feel my hard heart breaking in pieces. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was why the Lord led me halfway around the world, going from place to place for two and a half years; this was why I had no peace. This was what the Lord wanted to show me. It took eight years for me to come to this point, to bring me to salvation. I knew the Lord was leading me, but now I knew where: He was leading me to Himself. Kunju led me in the sinner’s prayer, and I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior. A peace that passes all

understanding filled my heart. I lost all desire to travel; I was just grateful to be saved.

I knew that my infant baptism was not valid and I needed to be re-baptized, but in my heart I still wanted to remain a Catholic. So another of Grace’s sisters (a full time minister) prepared me for water baptism and I was baptized on March 12, 1980 in Sri Lanka. After my water baptism, all the notions I had about remaining a Catholic left me. All the worries I had about my future left me also. I had a new goal in life and that was to get to know this Jesus Who had led me to Himself.

Two weeks after my water baptism I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. I was also able to attend a few services in the Mattakkulia faith home. One day I asked: “Why are all these people dressed in white?” It was such a contrast from other Pentecostal churches that I had visited before. I was told that the people were there to worship God, and so not to be a distraction and not to turn the church into a fashion show, this was the simplest way to dress for everyone. This all made so much sense to me, and even though I was visiting and wasn’t dressed in white, I didn’t feel at all uncomfortable being there. I knew I had found the truth, and my heart was saying ‘Amen’ to everything that I saw and heard.

The Lord spoke many prophecies to me through the servants of God before I left Sri Lanka: “I’ve known you from your mother’s womb...Forsake all, take up your cross and follow Me.” I didn’t understand anything at the beginning, but as time

went by the Lord began to reveal His perfect will for my life. I returned to Canada and attended our church in Toronto for three years, and taught for one year in our Christian school in Washington, D.C. The Lord continued to speak to me through His Word and through prophecies, and according to the counsel of the elders, I stepped out to serve the Lord in July, 1985. I'm very happy to be serving the Lord, and to be doing His will and not my own. Over these past years, the Lord has been good, He has been faithful, He's kept my body, my soul and my spirit. There have been trials, but God is kind and loving and He gives grace when we need it. If you feel the Lord is leading you where you don't want to go, realize that He has a purpose, He knows what is best for you. He wants to bring you to an expected end (Jer 29:11). For His thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are His ways your ways.

*Sis. Giselle Poirier
Vancouver, Canada*

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PART 2 — GETTING TO KNOW HIM BETTER

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col 2:1,2).

The apostle Paul expresses here a great inner struggle, **a burden in prayer that the church would come to a full knowledge of God the Father and of Christ.** Everyone has different kinds of conflicts or struggles within himself, and Paul’s conflict was this—that the Colossian believers would come to a fuller knowledge of the Father. How he must have cried out in prayer for them!

This conflict, this spiritual battle of Paul’s was a fight against the devil, who really does not want us to know God. Have you considered that there is indeed a spiritual battle being waged to this very end? God wants to reveal Himself to the church in a fuller and deeper way, yet the god of this world is working to blind the minds of all men so

we won’t know the Father or Christ. Thankfully, there is much in our favor: the Holy Spirit is always working to reveal the things of Christ to us; saints are praying everywhere that the church would know the Father; Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father to us; and the Father Himself certainly wants to make Himself known to us! 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” (Jn 14:23). If the Father makes His abode with us we will surely have the opportunity to know Him.

How can we know the invisible God? The answer to this is to know Jesus Christ. He, the eternal Word of God, took on flesh and blood and came into this world to make the Father known to us. In the gospel of John we read, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (Jn 1:18). The word “declared” can be rendered, “made known.” The only begotten Son of God Who was and is in the bosom of the Father, made the Father known to us. He manifested the Father to the world. ***He that was unseen could now be seen in Christ: “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”*** (Jn 14:9).

One reason Jesus could declare the Father to the world was that He had seen the Father. “Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen

the Father” (Jn 6:46). As for us, we can only come to know the Father through Christ. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Mat 11:27). It is impossible to know God without knowing Christ.

While revealing the Father to the world, *Jesus maintained a zeal for the things that belonged to His Father*. He was zealous for His Father’s house. When He found merchants selling oxen and sheep and doves in the temple, along with the money changers, He made a whip of small cords and drove them out. His Father’s house was intended to be a house of prayer. Jesus wanted to keep it that way. We can see that He, as a Son, was faithful in the house of God. *Those of us who want to grow in our fellowship with our heavenly Father should also be zealous for God and for His house*. We should put off all complacency and indifference in our involvement in personal prayer, and in our participation in the church, whether it be in meetings or other aspects of the ministry.

“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto

you” (Mal 1:6). *We honor our earthly fathers; how much more we need to honor our Father Who is in heaven*. Jesus taught us to pray, beginning with the words, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” First of all His name is holy and to be revered. Jesus honored His Father, and His Father honored Him. “I honour My Father....It is My Father that honoureth Me” (Jn 8:49,54). Even today the Lord is calling His people to serve Him, with the good news, “If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour” (Jn 12:26).

If the Father makes His abode with us, we will surely have the opportunity to know Him

Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that *the Father is seeking those who will worship Him*. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (Jn 4:23). Worship is such a great experience for us as children of God. So much happens as we worship Him: heaven comes down and glory fills our soul, the devil’s power is broken, the sick are healed, there is deliverance for the captives—our lives are transformed! God inhabits the praises of His people; and when God is in our midst, great things happen. “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psa 95:6). When such an invitation is given to us to take part in this glorious privilege, how can we refuse to answer the call?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, maintained a perfect and unbroken relationship with God His Father. **Jesus did nothing that was motivated by His own will or desires. He did the perfect will of the Father.** As a testimony to this, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (Jn 5:19). Jesus kept His eyes upon the Father and did what He saw the Father do. We are called to do the same. *Every day we can look to God and ask Him to guide us by His Spirit. Those who are led by His Spirit are the sons of God.* Jesus was able to see what the Father was doing because the Father loved the Son and showed Him whatever He was doing. “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth” (Jn 5:20). Jesus continued in that love, walking in the will of the Father. We too can walk in the love of God and expect that God will show us what He is doing, so we can do our part.

We may think it is a tall order to walk in the perfect will of God. We may ask, “Who can really live according to the perfect will of God?” But one thing we may overlook is the fact that **Jesus always sought the will of the Father.** He actively sought to know and to do the will of the Father. “I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the

*We know what the Father is like,
as we see His glory reflected in
the face of Jesus Christ*

Father which hath sent Me” (Jn 5:30). *Do we actively seek to know the will of God? Do we actively seek to do the will of God?* When Jesus came into the world, He said, “I come to do Thy will, O God.” If we are active in our seeking and doing, God, our Father, will surely assist us.

The Father gave Jesus certain works to accomplish while He was on the earth. “The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me” (Jn 5:36). The greatest work of all was accomplished through His death on the cross at Calvary where He took our sins and destroyed the power of the devil. Just before His death, Jesus said, “It is finished.” “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, ‘It is finished’: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost” (Jn 19:30). *God has given all of us works to accomplish during our lifetime.* We are His workmanship. We have been created for good works which God has planned in advance for us to do. Our life of service to God has great meaning and significance.

One of the outstanding works that the Father gave Jesus to do was to give life to the dead. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.” Jesus literally raised the dead, and He also gives life to

those who were dead in sin. As His followers we are also given power to raise the dead, and also through preaching, to impart life to those who will believe the word of the gospel. This is a work we are called to be involved in. *We have been entrusted with the word of life. We have the cure for death.* Jesus Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality into view for all to see. We have the life-giving message which the world so badly needs. The Father has given us the true Bread from heaven. The Son came down from heaven as the Bread of God to give life to the world. He said, “I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst” (Jn 6:35). ***While Jesus was in the world, He drew life from the Father.*** Jesus said, “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (Jn 6:57). Now, this life is life abundant, not a mere existence. In Him is life, and that life is the light of men. There is life eternal in Jesus. He said, “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (Jn 5:26). *He that has the Son has life; and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

In our troubled world, many children grow up never seeing their fathers. As children of God also, we have a Father that we have never seen—yet we do know what He is like, as we see His glory reflected in the face of Jesus

Christ. And this world is to know what He is like as they see Him reflected in us His children. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). □

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Charles Thomas Studd, commonly known as C.T. Studd, was born into a wealthy family in the year 1860, and grew up living a luxurious life in England. He attended Cambridge University; and by the time he was nineteen years old he was captain of the cricket team at Eton College, and considered by many to be “England’s greatest cricketer.” He had acquired sufficient wealth, that he was left with no need to pursue financial security; and his cricket playing brought international acclaim for his great skills. However, the Lord had another purpose for his life.

When C.T. Studd was eighteen years old, a visiting minister asked him, “Are you a Christian?” That caused him to consider his life and thereafter he surrendered his heart to the Lord. His heart was filled with joy and peace that day, yet what followed was six years in a backslidden state. He later recognized his mistake: *“Instead of going and telling others of the love of Christ, I was selfish and kept the knowledge to myself. The result was that gradually my love began to grow cold, and the love of the world began to come in.”*

Yet the Lord had mercy on Studd and restored him to the joy of salvation. His brother became seriously ill and this caused Studd to examine the hard questions of life. *“What is all the fame and flattery worth...when a man comes to face eternity?”* He realized that everything in this life is just temporary and he concluded, *“I know that cricket will not last, honor will not last, and nothing in this world will last, but it is worthwhile living for the world to come.”* After attending a D.L. Moody campaign, Studd was restored back to fellowship with the Lord—as he dedicated his life anew and afresh.

This time he didn’t make the same mistake he made six years before. He started witnessing to his friends and team members and soon led many to the saving grace of Christ. He had found his passion: to lead others to Christ. After hearing a missionary speak about the need of the Gospel in China, Studd became burdened for foreign missions. One of his most famous quotes relates this burden: *“Some want to live within the sound of a church or a chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”* Studd’s great wealth, cricketering fame, and intellectual ability seemed to guarantee success in this world. Therefore, his family and friends tried their best to change his mind about serving the Lord on the mission field. Yet he was determined: *“How could I spend the best years of my life in living for the honors of this world, when thousands of souls are perishing everyday?”* He

sought for an interview with Hudson Taylor, the founder and director of the China Inland Mission, and was accepted for mission work in China. Following Studd's decision, six other students in Cambridge decided to give their lives for the Gospel of Christ, and for the lost and perishing souls. They were called the "Cambridge Seven" and to this day are still remembered for their great sacrifice and work in China.

In China, Studd dressed like the Chinese, ate the Chinese food, and learned their language in hopes of sharing the gospel with them. Shortly after reaching China, Studd turned 25 and it was at this age that he was entitled to inherit his portion of his father's wealth as dictated by his father's will. By this time Studd had learned to live by faith and to trust God for all of his needs. He had already determined that he would give away his inheritance for the cause of Christ. Even before finding out the exact amount of his inheritance, he wrote checks for large amounts to D.L. Moody (which were used to start the Moody Bible Institute), George Mueller (who also lived by faith and opened orphanages), George Holland (who helped the poor in London), and Commissioner Booth Tucker (for the Salvation Army in India). After a few months, when he determined the exact amount of his inheritance, he gave away several more thousands of pounds to worthy ministries. He was left with 3,400 pounds which he saved for his

marriage day. He believed that the word of God was the truest thing on earth and that the Lord would provide for all his needs as he trusted Him alone.

In China, Studd married Priscilla Livingstone Stewart. Before their marriage, he gave her the money he saved, and she replied, "Charlie, what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do?" Studd replied, "Sell all!" They thus decided to start their married life trusting the Lord completely, and gave the marriage savings to the work of the Lord.

The Studds had four daughters in China and labored there for almost 10 years. Due to ill health, they were forced to return to England. During this time C.T. Studd was invited to America to speak in American universities about the needs of the mission field and the calling of Christ to the ripe harvest. Studd traveled for two years sharing his burden, and many dedicated their lives for full-time service.

Shortly thereafter, the Studd's moved to South India where C.T. pastored a church for six years. Studd had always felt a burden to take the gospel to India, and was now able to do so. As any true missionary, his heart was always stirred to see souls saved and the burden of the harvest fields never left his heart.

Upon returning to England, a new mission, a new order, and a new inspiration was laid upon Him by the Lord: take the gospel to Africa! At around 50 years of

age, C.T. Studd faced many obstacles including his poor health. Many again tried to convince him not to go, but Studd knew that the Lord had called him to go and he had to obey even if it cost him his life. He responded to the critics with the following statement: *“Gentleman, God has called me to go, and I will go. I will blaze the trail, though my grave may only become a stepping stone that younger men may follow!”* Contrary to the advice of his family, friends and even his doctor, he left his wife and daughters in England and stepped out in faith to obey the call of God. What seemed to be a ludicrous decision contrary to natural wisdom turned out to be a tremendous blessing to thousands in Africa as Studd sought out the largest unevangelized region in Africa at the time. He confessed, *“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”*

In Africa, Studd suffered much for his Lord. He endured many sicknesses, weakness, disease, asthma, recurring malaria, dysentery, chills, and suffered many heart attacks. Yet he kept pressing forward, preaching for 8 to 18 hours per day to thousands about the gospel of Christ. He remained in Africa till the day of his death. Before his work on earth was finished, he wrote a letter home reflecting on his life:

“As I believe I am now nearing my departure from this world, I have but a few things to rejoice in; they are these:

1. That God called me to China and I went in spite of utmost opposition from all my loved ones.

2. That I joyfully acted as Christ told that rich young man to act.

3. That I deliberately at the call of God, went alone on the Bibby Liner in 1910, gave up my life for this work [in Africa], which was to be henceforth not for Sudan only, but for the whole unevangelized world.

My only joys therefore are that when God has given me a work to do, I have not refused it.”

C.T. Studd entered the loving arms of his Savior whom he joyfully served on July 16, 1931, at the age of 70. In the midst of all the trials and hardships in Africa, he stayed faithful to the very end in the service of his Master. His triumphant last word was “Hallelujah!” ◻

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A man was sleeping one night in a cabin, when suddenly his room filled with light and the Savior appeared. The Lord told the man that He had work for him to do and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might—and this the man did, day after day. For many years, he toiled from sun up to sun down, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmovable rock, pushing with all his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Seeing the man's increasing discouragement, Satan began placing thoughts in his mind: "You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't budged. Why kill yourself over this? You're never going to move it!"

The man felt the task was impossible, and that he was a failure. "Yes, why kill myself over this?" he thought. "Why not just give minimum effort, for that would accomplish no less?"

However, he first decided to take his troubled thoughts to the Lord in prayer. "Lord," he said, "I have labored long and hard in Your service, putting all my strength to do that which You have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock at all. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

To this the Lord responded compassionately, "My son, when I asked you to serve Me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength—and what I had asked, you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to Me, with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed."

"But, is that really so? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewed and brown, your hands are calloused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. You haven't moved the rock; but that wasn't your calling. You were to be obedient, to push, to exercise your faith, to trust in My wisdom. This you have done...and now, My son, I will move the rock."

At times when we hear a word from God, we use our own intellect to "decipher" what He wants, when actually what God wants is just simple obedience and faith in Him. By all means, exercise the faith that moves mountains, but it is still God Who moves the mountains.

God, You call us to obedience everyday. Sometimes, I want to see beyond obedience. I want to know why, how, and when. Yet, it is usually long after the obedience that I begin to realize what Your plan was back then. So help me just to be obedient for today. I am learning, Lord, that by being obedient today, I am stronger for tomorrow. In Jesus' Name, Amen! □

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