
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)

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THE RIGHT SPIRIT FOR JUDGMENT

We may find ourselves in a position (as a parent, supervisor, pastor, etc.) to punish or discipline, but with what spirit do we correct? If we want to work with God and God to work with us, we must operate in the same Spirit. Judges chapters 20-21 illustrates how Israel came into the same Spirit so that God could use them for **punishment and restoration**. There are invaluable lessons in these passages for us who are called to rule and reign with Christ.

A horrible offence had taken place in Gibeah, within the tribe of Benjamin, and the wicked needed to be punished. The punishment for raping a married or betrothed woman was death (Deut 22:25). When the whole tribe of Benjamin defended the wicked men of Gibeah, they put themselves in line to receive the same punishment (Compare with Deut 13:12-15).

“Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man. And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, ‘What

wickedness is this that is done among you? Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel.’ But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: but the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel” (Judg 20:1, 11-14).

The men of Israel quickly rose to the occasion to “stand for righteousness.”

“And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, ‘Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?’ And the Lord said, ‘Judah shall go up first’” (Judg 20:18).

When the men of Israel sought God about this grave matter, the only question was, “Who shall go up first?” It seems that everyone was ready to be first (if told) to smite the Benjamites. So maybe, God was called upon to be an arbitrator only. Nevertheless, it was God’s will to punish Benjamin, therefore He answered their question.

The number of men taking part in this battle is important. There were 26,700 men of Benjamin and 400,000 men of Israel.

“And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men” (Judg 20:21).

What a surprise! The Benjamites were outnumbered 15 to 1, yet they killed 22,000 Israelites! Weren't the Benjamites the bad guys and the Israelites the good guys? Didn't God tell the Israelites to fight? Yes, but God was working something into the Israelites.

“And the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?’ And the Lord said, ‘Go up against him’” (Judg 20:23).

Now we can see what God was doing. This time the Israelites **wept** when they sought the Lord. There were no tears the first time. Also, this time they were **asking** if they should go up to battle against Benjamin. When you ask, you know the answer could be “yes” or “no.” Now, the Israelites were not eager to punish; their selfish motives were removed by their loss on the battlefield.

The first time their attitude was, “Who should go up first against these no-good Benjamites, children of the devil?” This time, they asked, *“Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin **my brother?**”*

Now there is some sympathy in their hearts for the Benjamites. The men of Israel had tasted some of the punishment God told them to afflict upon Benjamin. Now, in empathy, they refer to Benjamin as “my brother.” Again, God says, “Go up against him.”

“And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword” (Judg 20:24-25).

Another setback! Not as bad as the first day, but still a great disaster! Yet we can see that God is still working.

“Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?’ And the Lord said, ‘Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand’” (Judg 20:26-28).

In two days of fighting, the Israelites lost 40,000 men. That's more men than the entire tribe of Benjamin! This

God-ordained punishment was hurting the Israelites more than the Benjamites! **This is an illustration of the love of God. If God has to punish His people, it hurts Him too.**

After the second day of loss, the Israelites again sought the Lord with weeping, but this time humbling themselves with fasting too. They also offered burnt offerings and peace offerings after the second day. This time they asked if they should again go out against their brother Benjamin, or if they should cease. This question (“*should I cease?*”) shows that they did not want to punish their brother. They only wanted to do what God wanted, no more and no less. This is what the whole burnt offering represented: doing only what the Lord desires for our lives. Now, they were no longer motivated by pride, anger, hatred, despising, etc. They were at peace with God and their brother. This is what the peace offering represented—peace with God and man. Now they are in the Spirit of Christ and God can use them for punishment; they won’t inflict any more than what God ordains.

In the Book of Revelation, only Jesus Christ the Lamb of God was found worthy to open the book, loose the seals thereof and send great tribulation upon

the earth. He has suffered to take away the sins of the world, proving His love for all mankind. He alone could be trusted by the Father to inflict no more punishment than required.

“And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times” (Judg 20:30).

“So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valour. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to” (Judg 20:46-48).

“And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; and said, ‘O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel?’ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings...

and the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, 'There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?'" (Judg 21:2-7).

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up" (Hos 6:1). God had used the Israelites to smite Benjamin, but now they want to be used to heal them. The Israelites are now weeping, but it's not for themselves; they are weeping for their brother Benjamin, the "enemy." Their entire focus is to lawfully restore the remnant that escaped.

"But them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1Cor 5:13). We don't see any repentance at all by Benjamin anywhere in these chapters. Even if we have to reject a backslider who is actively sinning, and cast him out of the church, God doesn't want to see anything in us except love for that soul.

If Israel had not been humbled, they may have laid siege to the remnant at the rock Rimmon and killed all of Benjamin. Thank God they didn't. The Apostle Paul came from Benjamin.

"And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel" (Judg 21:15).

Even though Benjamin didn't repent, God worked a change, (a repentance) in Israel.

"And they said, 'There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel'" (Judg 21:17).

How beautiful: "There must be an inheritance for them that escaped." This is the hope and faith that Israel had for Benjamin. "Faith which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6).

Chapter 21:6-7 states that the men of Israel "repented" and asked, "How shall we do for wives for them that remain?" Then the men of Israel discovered a way to get wives for 400 of the 600 Benjamites that escaped. In verses 15-16, the Israelites again "repented," and asked, "How shall we do for wives for them that remain?" Then they discovered a way to get wives for the remaining 200 men. Thus, the tribe of Benjamin was torn, but also healed by the men of Israel.

In our lives, let us learn to judge as God judges, with love and compassion, knowing that his purposes for our lives are redemptive in nature, to bring us closer to Him.

No chastening, correction, or rebuke is easy to take, but if we realize that it is coming from a heart of love, from our heavenly Father, we can take it in the right spirit and bring forth the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11). Let us also remember, as we are in positions of responsibility over others (be it parents, teachers, pastors, or in the work place) we must learn to see everything through the eyes of the Lord who has good thoughts towards us to bring us to an expected end (Jer 29:11). *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal 6:1-2 NIV). □

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She peered out at the crowd as she always did, from behind a market stall or crouching by some shrubbery. This time she was obscured by some oxen still yoked to their cart, but close enough to hear Him. She just wanted to hear His voice, not always making out the words, but ever able to distinguish the authority of it, even when He spoke with compassion. She had been to so many gatherings like this—always distant from Him, always wishing she could be in the center where He was, but that could never be.

It was twelve years ago that her battle with this affliction first began, but she could have never imagined then the toll it would take on her. Being from a well-to-do family, she sought out a reputable physician for his diagnosis. Initially, he thought it was a minor issue and told her to see him again after some time if the bleeding continued. She attempted to comfort herself with his words, yet she found herself having to return to him within a week. The second diagnosis was not so positive, and with it, the doctor reminded her

of Jewish law: if she was bleeding like this, she would need to come at the end of the day, for his office would have to close down for ceremonial cleansing once she visited, and he himself would be unavailable to his own family until he was properly cleansed. Those words made her heart race with desperation: until she was cured, she would have to avoid contact with everyone lest she defile them as well!

That initial shock twelve years ago had long since subsided. After that horrible pronouncement, she mastered the skill of crafting excuses to avoid social functions: but it wasn't long before her townspeople began to exercise their own creativity, in imagining all the reasons why she might be avoiding people. Her primary physician tried for the first twelve months to be of help, but in the end, his concern fell prey to his business sense: "If you keep coming here, I will lose my other patients. Every one here knows something is wrong with you, and they will be afraid of 'catching it' here. And the process of cleansing my whole clinic after you come is a bit much to do by myself, and my staff doesn't want to help, because they become unclean until evening as well. You'll have to find another doctor."

So the search began: first from doctor to doctor within the area, and then well outside her area. She had to move from place to place, just to avoid the whispers and rumors

about her condition. In those first few years, she would just be a loner in each new place, not explaining much to her new neighbors, trying to maintain obscurity as long as she could. But sooner or later the word would get out and she would have to pack up and leave again. After a few years, she couldn't move faster than the word could spread. Her condition would already be known before she reached her new location. Being shunned by people was hard enough, however the eventual guile of the physicians hurt her the most. They had "already heard about her," "were familiar with her case"—so she would have to come back after hours. Her affiliation with any doctor would never last long; though her finances were holding up, the physicians couldn't keep their regular patients if they saw her. Yet doctors from around the country would send word, that they had heard of her, and had "the cure" for her. Excitedly she would allow her hopes to be built up and would venture out in search of her miracle. It was too late when she realized that all these doctors had heard of her wealth, and wanted to be able to cash in at least once before telling her not to come back again.

Now more than a decade had passed and her resources had finally been drained. She was no longer searching for a cure (and the medical profession seemed to have run out of

"solutions" around the same time that her money ran out). Now she was searching for more basic things, like food—yet, she couldn't help but ask herself, "Why?" Why eat to live if this is life? She could live with the sickness, she could live with poverty, but she found it hard to live with herself. Who could blame her? No one else wanted to be around her much less live with her. How do you live without a friend? How do you live without love? Her despair grew each day, and her thoughts became darker and darker.

Then she heard about Him. He was a miracle worker, they said. (And never charged for His miracles either!) Blind saw; deaf heard; lame walked—they even said the dead had been raised. Of course, she could never witness those things—He was always surrounded by people, and no one would ever let her get near Him. Her presence would crash the party—it would send everyone running from her uncleanness. So she would watch from her hiding places. She would peep through windows and hide behind carts. Oh, if she could just hear exactly what He was saying! Every now and then, someone would interrupt Him. Then that Voice would utter a brief command, and there would be gasps of astonishment from the crowd, then a chorus of ecstatic, "Hosannas," as another miracle had been performed. She could feel the electricity of what was happening. Time and time again, she would see

the dust rise on the road announcing His arrival. Throngs of people would follow Him and hang on His every word.

“If only...” she would think, and think no further. What was the use of imagining? She would never be as good as everyone around Him; she would never be accepted in that group. Yet, there was a longing that would well up in her every time she heard that Voice. Power must just emanate from someone like Him. He wouldn’t even have to acknowledge her; if she could just get close enough to touch Him, that would be more than enough. But how could she ever get through the crowd? Even if one were willing to escort her, the rest of the crowd would never allow an unclean person like her to pass through. And what about Him? Would His day be ruined by coming into contact with a defiling person like her, just as the clinics which had to close? Would the rest of the day’s events have to be cancelled? These questions incessantly troubled her mind, yet every time she heard that Voice, something was growing inside of her—something called faith, something called hope.

So there she was standing behind the oxen, when inspiration seized her. She dared not to believe, but it seemed like such a flash of brilliance, she found herself unable to ignore it. There was this idea firmly planting itself in her mind, defying the doubts and the questions, and her trampled

sense of self-esteem. “His hand doesn’t need to touch me; I just need to touch Him. He doesn’t need to even see me—and no one else would have to see me—if I just crawl on the ground!” In that crowd you would notice the people next to you, but you never paid attention to things on the ground. There were always a few stray dogs, a goat on a leash, and other things caught in the crowd.

She dropped to her knees as the crowd began to come by the ox cart. And before fear could make her change her mind, she darted in between the moving forest of legs and limbs. If these people only knew who they were brushing up against they would recoil in horror, and the shouts of “Unclean!” would begin. But no one even noticed this wretched creature, pressing through the crowd on their way to Jairus’ house, where a twelve-year-old girl lay dying. “She’s just started dying now,” the woman thought, “but I’ve been dying for twelve years!” She would pause and strain to hear His voice to guide her. She dared not look up lest anyone see her face. Closer, closer, closer...that had to be Him! Just a few feet away. She stopped just to make sure that it was Him speaking, then she quickly reached out, tugged the hem of His garment—

—and froze for a moment: she was healed! She knew it! She could feel it! Oh, she just wanted to get up and run

before anyone knew she had been there. But then He spoke and she froze in shock. “Who just touched Me?” The disciples thought maybe the crowds or heat had gotten to Him. “Master, we’re all touching You. We’re in the middle of a crowd. Everyone is bumping into You, and into us too.” The woman was relieved that she was being defended and decided to get up, as it would be too suspicious to be on the ground.

She was slowly raising herself when He spoke again. “Someone touched Me with faith. That person felt it, and I felt it too.” Though she wasn’t facing Him, she could feel His eyes looking directly at her. As frightened as she was, she couldn’t run. She turned and crumpled at His feet, trembling, sobbing, telling Him everything.

“Daughter,” He said—and heaven descended upon her heart. No one had even wanted to be associated with her, and now He had singled her out from the multitude, calling her His own daughter! He continued as He smiled upon her: “Cheer up: what you’ve believed in your heart has become reality: you are truly whole.” How it had happened, she could never explain. But those words—that Voice—had just removed the pain of twelve years of rejection from her heart. She was made whole; she was complete: because she had a relationship with Him as His child.

We know her as the woman with the issue of blood. Because of her issue, she wasn’t accepted in the crowds that were around Jesus. Because of her issue, she felt like she was different from everyone else. Are there issues in your life that make you feel that you are not like the others in church—that you can’t be close to Jesus like everyone else is? Have faith, humble yourself, and seek a place at His feet. When faith finally moves you past your doubts and fears, you will never be the same again. Just ask that woman.

The actual details of the story with the issue of blood can be found in Mark 5:24-34. The added details to write this retelling are partially based on Old Testament law and Jewish customs. □

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The workmanship of His hands

EVOLUTION FRAUDS

Ever since Charles Darwin published his “Origin of Species,” scientists have been constantly trying to prove the evolution of man and have taken some great measures to make their story believable. Some have even resorted to down right lying to get their point across. In this issue we will look at a few of these frauds. Praise God that the Lord has given us the truth from His word which endures forever.

The history of the discovery of the earliest Englishman (as Piltdown Man was so often called) is well known. A labourer was supposedly digging in a gravel pit near the village of Piltdown in Sussex in southern England when he found a piece of bone. He passed it to the local amateur archaeologist of the district, Charles Dawson, who verified its antiquity and pronounced that it was part of a skull which was possibly human. Dawson began to search for the rest of the skull and, in 1912, a jawbone was discovered. Sir Arthur Smith Woodward of

the British Museum verified that the skull had human features and the jaw was ape-like. The fossils became known as Piltdown Man and were called *Eoanthropus Dawsoni* which means “Dawson’s Dawn Man.” In 1915, another Dawn Man was found a couple of miles away from the site of the first find. Fossil remains of animals that lived with Piltdown Man, together with the tools that he used, were also found at the two sites. At last, here was “proof” that apes had evolved into humans in England.

Almost forty years later, in 1953, Piltdown Man was exposed as a forgery, mainly through the work of Dr Kenneth Oakley. He showed that the skull was from a modern human and that the jawbone and teeth were from an orangutan. The teeth had been filed down to make them look human. The bones and teeth had been chemically treated (and some even painted) to give them the appearance of being ancient. The truly astonishing thing is that the hoax should have been obvious from the very first finding of “Piltdown Man.”

The Piltdown Man fraud was a great embarrassment to the UK scientific community and the evolutionary community as a whole. The notion that there were some who would falsify evidence in order to sell the concept

of evolution was shocking. It was not the first time nor would it prove to be the last time.

Ernst Heinrich Philipp August Haeckel is notorious as the scientist who perpetrated fraud upon fraud to promote the theory of evolution.

Born in Prussia, on February 16, 1834, Haeckel studied medicine and science at Würzburg and the University of Berlin and was professor of zoology at Jena from 1865 until his retirement in 1909. The turning point in his thinking was his reading of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species," which had been translated into German in 1860.

In 1883, in his book "The History of Creation," Haeckel spoke of the eating habits and reproductive cycle of a creature to which he gave the scientific name, *Protomyxa aurantiaca* (common name, Monera). Never once in his description did he tell his public that this creature did not exist. He said these were "not composed of any organs at all, but consist entirely of shapeless, simple homogeneous matter...nothing more than a shapeless, mobile, little lump of mucus or slime consisting of albuminous combination of carbon."

A few years before in 1868, a prestigious German scientific journal published 73 pages of his speculations. The article contained more than 30 drawings of these

imaginary Monera and the process of fission by which they allegedly reproduced. However, it was later uncovered that his detailed descriptions and elaborate drawings were totally fictional, as these "life particles" were entirely non-existent.

Of all Haeckel's dubious activities (and there are many but not enough space in which to write of them), that for which he is most infamous is his teaching of the erroneous theory that the human embryo goes through a series of stages where it has gills like a fish, a tail like a monkey, etc. This is called "the law of recapitulation" which means the development of each individual embryo repeats its alleged evolutionary history.

The idea is now known to be completely false. It is therefore not surprising that Haeckel could not find sufficient anatomical evidence to make his theory convincing. Never one to let a lack of evidence stand in his way, Haeckel manufactured "evidence" by fraudulently changing drawings of embryos of various animals (and a human) to make them all look basically the same in their early stages. Haeckel's deception was found out as early as 1874. Nevertheless, despite the dishonest basis for the theory of embryonic recapitulation and the fact that it has long since been discredited scientifically, the completely

false idea that human beings retrace their evolutionary past in the womb has been taught as evidence for evolution in schools and universities until very recently, and it is still included in many popular science books.

Fraud has been common in evolutionary circles from the beginning and even in recent times. Another example is that of the Peppered Moths of England.

The “textbook story” of these moths goes like this. The moth comes in light and dark forms. Pollution from the Industrial Revolution darkened the tree trunks, mostly by killing the light-coloured lichen and covering them in soot.

The lighter forms of moth, which had been well camouflaged against the light background, now “stood out,” and so birds more readily ate them. Therefore, the proportion of dark moths increased dramatically. Later, as pollution was cleaned up, the light moth became predominant again.

But this classic story is full of holes. Peppered moths don’t even rest on tree trunks during the day. The photos of moths on tree trunks that school textbooks show are fraudulent. It has been revealed that dead moths were glued to the tree. Furthermore, the moths filmed being eaten by the birds were laboratory-bred ones that had

been placed onto tree trunks by the researchers; these moths were often so sluggish that they sometimes had to be artificially warmed up so as to look alive to the birds.

Researchers in their zeal may possibly make mistakes and evolutionary theory contains many of these. But what we have seen here are deliberate frauds. Why would those who are supposedly devoted to bringing truth to the masses do this? Only for one reason: the belief that evolution is true and therefore must be proclaimed no matter what the facts might otherwise suggest. And what do those facts seem to proclaim? That the world and all that is in it is far too complex and wonderful to be the result of a cosmic accident. We would be wise to see and praise the Creator who is also the Truth, Who does not lie. “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa 139:14). □

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Encounters
WITH *Jesus*

Part 5 — The Fellowship of Prayer

We all want and need to have a closer fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The best way to have that fellowship is to have a daily encounter with the Lord in prayer.

Jesus is our best example of what it means to have a prayer life. When He was baptized by John, He was praying and heaven opened and the Holy Ghost came down upon Him. The purpose of our prayer should be to receive heavenly blessings. Too often our prayers are only for earthly needs and wants, but what is it that we really need? What is it that God has promised us? If only we would ask Him, it could be ours. The following verse gives us a picture of the baptism of Jesus in Jordan: “Now

when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased” (Lk 3:21-22).

God wants this to be our experience of prayer as well. Indeed, it is when we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit that heaven truly opens and we are filled with the glorious power of God. But for many of us it does not get any deeper than that or at least it doesn't get as deep as we know it can and we remain in the shallow water. We don't seem to be able to get out into the depths of the spiritual blessings God intends for us to have. Do we ask God in prayer for what it is that we really need from Him? Are we honest with God in our personal times of prayer? Or do we merely scratch the surface in our personal devotions?

Another important point in this passage of scripture is that God bore witness of Jesus that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. Through water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit we enter into a Father and son relationship with God. It is required of us that we cultivate that relationship through constant fellowship with God in faithful and loving obedience.

Rising Early

There are a number of examples of the prayer life of Jesus recorded for us in the gospels. Let's take a look at a few. It seems that Jesus made a practice of rising early for prayer: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mk 1:35). One man of God has said that it is essential for us as children of God to rise and pray early in the morning and "secure the presence of God" in our lives. Many notable Christians were known for rising early each morning for prayer such as John Wesley and Martin Luther. Martin Luther is remembered for saying that he had so much work to do, it would be impossible for him to finish it if he didn't rise early and pray for at least three hours.

The manna that God provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness had to be gathered early in the morning. If they waited too long the sun would melt it. If we wait to seek God at our leisure we will never be able to get personal revelations from the Word of God. We will read the Bible but it won't impact us as deeply as it would if we put God first in our lives. Rising early for prayer is like building an altar to God, that is, making a sacrifice of our comfort for the sake of the blessing of God's presence in our lives.

Isaiah spoke prophetically about Jesus, saying, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa 50:4). Before the world comes to us with all its messages, it is vital that we hear from God and get a word from above. That word will give us life. That word will burn in our hearts. That word will be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. That word will give us light all day long. As the prophet Isaiah said, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa 30:21).

In The Night Season

Jesus prayed at night. We read, "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). In the morning, Jesus called His disciples to come to Him, and from them He chose the twelve whom He named apostles. Before this very important work of choosing the twelve, Jesus prayed all night. No doubt that enabled Him to have the mind of His Father concerning the extension of His ministry through the apostles. It seems, therefore, that if we are facing important matters in our lives, it would be

good if we also spent some time before God in the night time in earnest and fervent prayer. If a brother or sister in the Lord, or a loved one, is facing a trial, it could be of great help to them if we earnestly cried out to God on their behalf in the night.

Jacob wrestled all night with the angel. It is said that he wept and made supplication to the angel (Hos 12:3-4). That night he was changed from a supplanter to a prince with God. This night experience also prepared him for the next day he was facing when he would meet his brother Esau who had vowed to kill him. Everything had been changed when he met Esau. They were reconciled. Many of the problems that God's people face could be solved through earnest prayer.

At midnight, suffering from their wounds after being scourged, with their feet in the stocks in a terrible prison, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. We all know what happened next. What would have taken place if Paul and Silas had succumbed to their wounds and bodily weaknesses? Probably nothing. We see how important it is to pray when we feel like it and when we don't. David spoke prophetically of Christ when he wrote the words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my

roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psa 22:1-2). Even while going through the "why hast thou forsaken me" experience, Jesus cried out to His Father.

For parents who are concerned about their children, we have some advice from the prophet Jeremiah: "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street" (Lam 2:19). We have yet to see the type of revival that would break out among the children and youth of the church if we prayed more fervently for them.

On The Mountain

It is good to get alone with God for prayer. Several times we read in the gospels that Jesus went up to the mountain to pray. Perhaps the most significant time was when He was transfigured. We read the account of Luke, "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening" (Lk 9:28-29). This very plainly encourages us to believe that we too will be changed into His

likeness through prayer. Paul writes that we are changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ by the Spirit of God (2Cor 3:18). We can believe that God will work to sanctify our spirit, soul, and body as we pray in the Spirit. Jude encourages us to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20). Paul writes that we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). We can understand that the Holy Spirit changes our inner man so that we will be ready for the Lord to change our bodies at the secret coming of Christ for His saints. Again we read that the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered and that His intercession is according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27). So, let us pray in the Spirit in order that the Holy Spirit can accomplish His work of transformation in our lives. □

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I was born and brought up under Catholic teaching: my parents were faithful Catholics and would practice their religion with devotion in the house. I also remember seeing my mom visit a spiritualist center on Sundays with her bottle of water and money to give to a medium so that my brother, who was mentally disabled, could be healed. On one of those visits, I went with my mother, and although I was little, I did not like what I saw.

Coming from a large family which had few resources, I put all my heart into studying efficiently with a firm goal of excelling in my studies, which was something I really liked to do. While studying in the ninth grade, some young Christians began to meet for prayer and they began to speak to me about God. They invited me to their meetings and gave me tracts. The next year I went to another school, and to my surprise, there was a group of Christian youth from different denominations that met during the lunch hour to sing, testify, and preach the Word of God. These youth were very enthusiastic and very daring to do the work of an evangelist. One of them caught me in the

hallway of the school and began to witness to me about Jesus Christ. His words dug deeply into my heart, and I wanted to cry, but my pride did not permit me because I was a very timid and reserved person. I was invited to attend a church, but knowing that I did not want to promise something that I wasn't going to keep, I did not give an answer. At this time, my little sister and a good friend of the family had accepted Jesus Christ. Both began to invite me to church, but I was not interested in attending. These Christians had an evangelistic outreach for a week and that got my attention. It felt like there was an invisible force attracting me towards that place in such a way that I said to my friends that I was going to stay and listen. For the whole week I attended every meeting, but sadly, every time they would make an altar call something inside of me told me not to go because I would have to stop doing many things I liked.

During the vacation time, I was interested in reading the Bible. Some stories like Joseph and Moses moved me, but when I got to Revelation and read of the judgments and that all liars would go to the lake of fire—that put some fear into me. Once I had a dream where I saw nothing, but heard a strong firm, voice with authority that said, “Repent, repent, repent.” When I woke up, I spent

the whole day thinking about it and I knew I had to do something.

Meanwhile, my sister continued speaking to me about the Lord, and something that caught my attention was the change in behavior that I saw in her. She had been really converted. How can I explain what happened to me after? I can only say that it was a supernatural and sovereign act of the love of God in my life: I woke up one morning with a firm conviction that I should go to church and yield my life to Jesus. As always, my sister invited me to church, but this time I went with her. I listened closely to all that the pastor said, but I waited for something specific: the altar call. I immediately responded by raising both my hands and almost running to the altar and crying, unable to contain myself any longer. I don't know how long I was kneeling, but when I rose from there, there was only the pastor with his family, and the people that took me home. When I got to my room, I reflected and asked myself, "what have I done?" Not in a sad voice, but rather recognizing the great value of the decision that I had taken. From then on, the presence of God was real in my life. A great need to read the Bible, pray, go to church, testify to others about what God had done in my life rose up in me. For months, my soul was so thankful to God that the

only thing I could do was pour out my soul before Him. Immediately the Lord gave me a revelation that the people in the church were my spiritual family and that the young Christians in the school were my brothers and sisters in Christ. Eleven months later, I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This happened one beautiful, unforgettable morning, when one of the young girls in the group prayed for me and I was filled with a joy so great that I began to dance and speak in other tongues. From then on, I only had one desire: to serve God.

Because of various circumstances that I could attribute to the divine plan of God for my life, I went to the New Testament Church in Lares (my native city in Puerto Rico) four years after being converted. There God showed me through a dream of the need for water baptism. In the dream I could see a very beautiful house, which signified my life. I saw myself walking toward the basement. Once there, I knew that the first wall had been finished completely but the second was still lacking. I went outside the house, and immediately I heard the Lord telling me that I had to confess my sins. After this, I found myself in the faith home, in a room where I could hear some people saying, "Milagros has to die." Later, I found myself in the

faith home kitchen. Someone opened the refrigerator and it was full of delicious fruits, and invited me to eat them. Then I woke up.

Immediately I knew that it was necessary to open my heart, confess those things which were bothering my soul, and be baptized in water by immersion. I knew that if I obeyed, God was going to bless me greatly. When I was baptized, I received deliverance, and God gave me a conscience free of guilt. At once, God began to speak to me of serving Him. There was a prophecy, in which I could feel that God was going to demand something that would cost a lot. While in University, I visited a church with a group of youth. The pastor was speaking about the calling of Jeremiah and gave an invitation for all those who felt a call to serve God. I did not go up as I was not a member of that church, and I didn't want to make a promise. But when the pastor finished praying for the people who went up, with authority he made a call for someone who had stayed back. I could not resist any more. I knew that God was calling me. Finally God captured and won the battle for my heart. God spoke directly to my heart from John 21:15-17: "Do you love me more than your studies, more than your own family?" My response was, "Lord, I love you more than everything." I experienced a great peace

that words cannot describe. A great celestial and inexplicable joy flooded my heart entirely. Definitely, this was the perfect will of God for my life. In that year, 1981, I was taken into the full-time ministry. Since then, my desire and determination has been to serve and love God until the end.

*Sister Milagros Arroyo
San Miguel, El Salvador*

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Throughout history certain individuals have been called “Great.” Military and political leaders such as Alexander, Peter, Catherine, Lois, etc have all had this adjective appended to their names. Egyptian kings were known as Pharaoh which means “Great House.” The tyrant Herod, who built the last temple in Jerusalem and tried to kill the child Jesus, is still called “The Great.” Others who have been thought of as remarkable in achievement or character have also been given this title. Job was known as the greatest man in the East (Job 1:3). The Indian independence leader Gandhi is known as Mahatma which means “Great Soul.” Sport stars and entertainers are also given this label. The most famous American prizefighter, a man who betrayed his name, religion, country, and wives, is known worldwide today as “The Greatest.” Tragically the last words often shouted by terrorists and suicide bombers before they join their false prophet Mohammad in Hell is “Allah Akkbar.” This Arabic slogan can be translated as the fake god “Allah is the Greatest.”

Who Is The Greatest?

With so many famous and infamous names to choose from, people wonder as to which one is the greatest of all. Scholars and laymen alike have spent lifetimes studying the lives of noble and notable men. Some actually idolize or adore those great personages. Others argue about who is the greatest. Yet there is no need for wonder or debate. The Son of God settled the issue forever when He declared that no one born of a woman is greater than John the Baptist. Jesus went on to qualify this declaration by stating that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John (Mat 11:11; Lk 7:28). This truth gives great comfort and encouragement to those who have been saved. Though they may not be considered great in this present evil world, the children of God know that in the world to come they will possess true and lasting greatness and glory. Even if hidden now, the work of grace done in the saints’ lives will shine throughout eternity. Like John, the child of God’s greatness is “in the sight of the Lord” (Lk 1:15). On the other hand, because of the fact that the least saint of the Grace Dispensation is greater than the greatest ones of the Conscience or Law Periods, the study of the qualities of John the Baptist has often been overlooked or neglected. However, it is still worthwhile and profitable today to study and emulate the life, character and ministry of this greatest of prophets and

men. In the Old Testament, God uses the lives of different individuals as parables to warn and teach us how to live our lives fit for heaven. From the New Testament we learn that there is no one greater than John. In this series we will study the qualities of this greatest man in history, as attested to by the One Who is above and beyond history, and whose greatness is past finding out: Jesus Christ!

Two outstanding qualities in the life of John the Baptist which we will examine first are his anointing and his humility. These two characteristics are not often found together in the same person at the same time. The self confidence that comes from great talent does not seem to be compatible with the meekness of the truly humble. The anointing is manifest in a person through the gifts and graces that enable and equip them to accomplish great things. God sets them apart for special service. Gifted individuals often begin to see themselves as special and forget that everything they have was given by God. They often have an exaggerated sense of their own dignity, importance and worth.

Disappointed With The Anointed

The first and foremost example of this is the Anointed Cherub. Of all the angelic beings, he may have been created with the most beauty, ability and glory (Eze 28:13-17). As long as his eyes were on God, this individual was exalted

above all others. When he looked to his own beauty he fell lower than all. Another sad and similar example is seen in Israel's first anointed king, the tall Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. He was head and shoulders above all others in Israel, but in the beginning he was little in his own eyes. Though he was from the smallest tribe, God made him head over all the tribes of Israel (1Sam 15:17). As he got used to men obeying him, he stopped obeying God. He ended up desiring honor from men more than seeking the honor that comes from God alone.

The opposite of this is seen in the life of another Saul, also from the tribe of Benjamin. This Saul had great heritage and achievements to be proud of. Yet he counted all his gain as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. After salvation he even changed his name to Paul, which when translated means "little" (Phil 3:7). John was named by God Himself. His name means gift or favored of God. Though John was so gifted and special he was also so humble. Called "The Baptist" he confessed to Jesus, "I need to be baptized by you!" When he recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, (the perfect prophet, priest and king) his testimony was, "He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). We New Testament saints must also have John's type of ambition.

John's Anointing

At first view, John's anointing appears something of a mystery. The angel Gabriel declared that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (Lk 1:15). As an unborn babe, with no other way to communicate, John leapt for joy within the womb when Mary brought the unborn Lord Jesus near him. Nevertheless when we take the whole counsel of Scripture and not just one passage, things become clearer. We learn that even though John was filled with the Holy Spirit his whole life, he did not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus in the New Testament. "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:39). In Old Testament times holy men spoke the word of God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2Pet 1:21). God breathed His word into them (2Tim 3:16). It was not until after the resurrection and ascension that the Holy Spirit was given unto mankind in fullness (Jn 15:26). This was the confession of John himself. He testified that Jesus was the one that would baptize with the Holy Spirit, something that John and all before him did not receive (Jn 1:33). John's anointing caused him to recognize the Messiah, or "Anointed One." It also prepared him to prepare the way for the Lord. In this Age of Grace we still need to hear the message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

John & Elijah

Another mysterious aspect of John's anointing is in how it relates to the prophet Elijah. John's thundering voice appeared in Israel like a sudden storm out of the desert, just as Elijah's had. John also preached boldly to men of both high and low estate. The Jews of John's time knew that Elijah had been caught up to heaven and were awaiting his return, heralding the advent of the Messiah. To this present day the Jews still leave a full cup of wine and a place at their Passover tables for Elijah. They do this because they did not recognize their Messiah, the Lord Jesus, when He first came. The last promise of the Old Testament is, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet...he shall turn the heart of the fathers...and the heart of the children" (Mal 4:5). Israel saw this word being fulfilled in John's message and his baptism of repentance so their leaders asked John if he was Elijah (Jn 1:21). Since they were looking for the prophet in bodily form, John denied that he was Elijah. Yet Jesus spoke of John to those who had ears to hear, telling them that "this is Elijah, which was for to come" (Mat 11:14). We know that Elijah was still alive in heaven when Jesus said this. We also know that John had been physically born to Mary's cousin Elisabeth. How could Jesus say that John was Elijah and that Elijah was still to come? The answer had already been given by

the angel of the Lord when he proclaimed that John would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn men's hearts and prepare the Lord's way, thus fulfilling that final promise in Malachi. As we continue to study the life of John the Baptist we will find many more comparisons between Elijah and John. For now we will do well to be like John in recognizing the Lamb of God and preparing a way for the Lord in our lives and in the lives of others.

John's Humility

Regarding his humility, as stated above, John's desire was to "decrease." This greatest man's testimony was, "Jesus is greater than I am." What elder rejoices when the younger is preferred before him? (Jn 1:15). This was the character of John. In contrast to many of today's ministers and ministries, John did not promote himself. He sent his followers to follow Jesus (Jn 1:37). His happiness was in seeing the Bridegroom happy. Like the Lord Jesus and apostles that came after Him, John's first message was, "Repent" (Mat 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38). This type of preaching does not make one popular or prosperous. Though chosen to be the final prophet that prepared a road for the Lord, he did not feel worthy to untie Jesus' shoe (Jn 1:27). We too should desire the Lord's and others' elevation more than our own. In humility let us esteem others better than ourselves. Though our lives may be like a wilderness,

we can prepare a way for the Lord. The work of John can still go on. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Lk 3:5-6). □

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“The Apostle of Simple Faith.” This was the title later ascribed to Samuel Morris, a young man whose life was filled with the presence of God. His life inspired many people during his day to seek a closer walk with God, and till today continues to be an example of intimate fellowship with God. As he stood up to share the Word of God, many would fall to their knees in repentance, stricken with conviction. This African prince had come to America to learn more about the Holy Spirit, but in the end, this student modeled for America what a Spirit-filled life truly is.

Samuel Morris, or Kaboo, as he was named by his parents, was born in the Ivory Coast in 1872. Tribal wars were commonplace, and Samuel was the oldest son of the local tribe chief, which placed his life in great jeopardy—for a chief’s eldest son would be given to an enemy tribe if they lost a war. Samuel had been handed over several times, delivered to a victorious chief until his father brought the ransom demanded.

When Samuel was fifteen, he was delivered to an infamously savage tribe. His father tried to free his son, but

nothing could satisfy this enemy chief. Samuel was tortured daily, often losing consciousness. His captors decided upon his final torture: to bury their victim alive up to his neck and then allow flesh-eating ants to consume his head. Before their plan could be executed, the Lord entered Samuel’s story in dramatic fashion. Suddenly a bright light shone and a Voice commanded Samuel to flee. His body was miraculously strengthened and he ran for his life. This visitation would be the beginning of Samuel’s incredible experiences with his heavenly Father.

The Lord guided him through the jungles and protected him from animals and cannibals until he found a plantation near Monrovia, Liberia. This was a Christian settlement where Samuel would live, work, and attend church. One day he heard the story of Paul’s Damascus road encounter and recognized that same wonderful Light that had appeared to him and set him free. Samuel’s sincere conversations with his heavenly Father, at times throughout the night, blossomed into the prayer life that would later inspire American Christians.

One night he had a beautiful encounter with the Lord. *“All at once my room grew bright. At first I thought the sun was rising, but others were sound asleep. The room became brighter, until it was filled with glory. The burden of my heart suddenly*

disappeared, and I was filled with a sense of inner joy. My body felt as light as a feather. I was filled with a power that made me feel like I could almost fly. I could not contain my joy, but shouted till everyone in the barracks was awakened. I knew then that my Father had saved me for a purpose and that He would work with me."

"Kaboo" was then buried in waters of baptism and given the name Samuel Morris; he continued working, learning English and studying in Liberia for two more years. His life, now transformed by the Holy Spirit, began to influence others. Another escapee from the Ivory Coast tribes joined them in Liberia and to Samuel's surprise, he learned that this boy was there when that light had appeared to him, and he also had heard the Voice that commanded Samuel to flee! Samuel excitedly shared God's love with him, and this boy was saved, baptized, and given the name Henry O'Neil.

One day someone read John 14 to Samuel and the promise of the Holy Spirit captivated his heart. He questioned every missionary he knew about this promise, wanting to learn more, yet found himself still searching. Finally, one missionary said that he learned everything he knew from a man named Stephen Merritt, who lived in New York City. Hearing this, Samuel's mind was made up: he must travel to New York and learn about the Holy Spirit from Mr. Merritt.

He immediately went to the docks and approached a captain of a ship and said, "My Father in heaven told me you would take me to New York." The captain dismissed the boy thinking he was crazy but Samuel would not let up his efforts. Finally when some of his crew deserted, the captain decided to take Samuel on as a helping hand and his impact was felt right away. Samuel saw a young man who could not walk because of an injury and prayed for him—he was immediately healed!

The ship was full of ungodly men and one that particularly hated Samuel. One day during a brawl, Samuel interrupted with God's presence. He began to pray and the Holy Spirit convicted all aboard. Life aboard the ship changed: prayer meetings replaced drunkenness! The man who hated Samuel was healed when Samuel prayed for him. When they arrived in New York, some of the crew wept at Samuel's departing. They gave him proper clothes; he gave them different lives. Years later the captain of the ship testified of Samuel's lasting influence on his sailors.

This total stranger in this large city simply asked people on the street for Stephen Merritt: by a miracle he was guided to the man. Merritt was too busy to talk to a young African boy and left him at the mission office while he attended to his duties. Merritt returned to the shock of his life: Samuel had shared the Word of God to the men there and seventeen of

them were on their knees crying out to God. Heaven's radiance shone from his face.

The next day there was a funeral, and Merritt took Samuel along. During the coach ride Merritt was pointing out all the attractions of New York City but Samuel wasn't interested. Samuel asked Merritt if he ever prayed in the coach and Merritt had to admit that he hadn't. Immediately they stopped the coach and Samuel began to pray: *"Father, I wanted to see Stephen Merritt, so I could talk to him about the Holy Ghost. He shows me the harbor, the churches, the banks and other large buildings, but says nothing to me about this Spirit I want to know more about. Fill him with Thyself, so that he will not think, talk, write or preach about anything else."* During that prayer, Merritt felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in a way that he had never felt before. From that day onwards his life was changed. At the funeral the power of the Holy Spirit moved in such a tremendous way that many knelt at the casket in repentance.

Because of Samuel's desire to know more about the Lord, Merritt enrolled him in Taylor University in Indiana. Upon arrival at the university, he was asked to choose a room. He replied, *"If there is a room nobody else wants, give it to me."* This answer profoundly impacted the president of the university. Samuel's gentle and humble spirit pervaded the university campus and the presence of God was felt as never before.

On his first Sunday he found a church to attend. Arriving late, he approached the pastor and said that he had a message for the congregation. Because of the glory of heaven on Samuel's face the pastor could not resist. In response to the message and the divine presence of God, the entire congregation went to their knees and many were weeping and repenting of their sins. There were more meetings like this and newspapers spread the story. People from all over the country came to see this revival and were touched and changed by the presence of God.

During the winter, Samuel fell sick. The Lord showed him that his mission on earth had been accomplished and Samuel accepted this with joy. He went to be with his Father in May, 1893, at the tender age of 20. Yet his impact continued after his death as many took up Samuel's burden and became missionaries to Africa. Those that had come in contact with Samuel were changed by the presence of God that radiated through him. He came to America to learn about the Holy Spirit and how to bring the gospel back to Africa. Instead, his prayers became the lectures to teach a Spirit-filled life to America, and his life planted on US soil brought a harvest of workers for Africa. □

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The Bamboo & The Fern

One day a man decided to quit—quit his job, his relationship, his spirituality. He wanted to quit his life. He went to the woods to have one last talk with God. “God,” he said, “can you give me one good reason not to quit?” The Lord’s answer surprised him.

“Look around,” He said, “do you see the fern and the bamboo?” “Yes,” the man replied. “When I planted the fern and the bamboo seeds, I took very good care of them. I gave them light. I gave them water. The fern quickly grew from the earth. Its brilliant green covered the floor. Yet nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo. In the second year, the fern grew more vibrant and plentiful. And again, nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo. In the third year, there was still nothing from the bamboo seed. But I would not quit. In the fourth year, again, there was nothing from the bamboo seed. I would not quit. Then in the fifth year a tiny sprout emerged from the earth. Compared to the fern it was seemingly small and insignificant. But just 6 months later the bamboo rose to over 100 feet tall. It had spent the five years growing roots. Those roots made it strong and gave it what it needed to survive. I would not give any of my creations a challenge it could not handle.”

The Lord said to the man, “did you know, my child, that all this time you have been struggling, you have actually been growing roots. I would not quit on the bamboo. I will never quit on you. Don’t compare yourself to others. The bamboo had a different purpose than the fern, yet, they both make the forest beautiful. Your time will come and you will rise high!”

“How high should I rise?” the man asked. “How high will the bamboo rise?” The Lord said in return. “As high as it can?” the man questioned. “Yes,” He said, “bring me glory by rising as high as you can.” The man left the forest with renewed hope to keep pressing forward in life knowing that the Lord had not given up on him and that to every thing the Lord has a beautiful purpose. So you keep pressing on by His grace because the Lord is not done with you yet!