

**What Brings
God Delight?**
Sam Thorpe

**What Makes
God Angry?**
Jerry Denny

**The Remaking
of Ben Sloetjes
10 Years Later**

UPLOOK

September 2012

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The EMOTIONS of Christ

The Emotions of Christ

In considering the emotions of our Lord Jesus, we are treading on holy ground. It is all too easy to jump to conclusions and make errors that, while unintentional, are still irreverent. This topic affects our understanding of the very person of Christ and therefore it is of paramount importance that we think carefully and biblically.

What, then, are some biblical principles to be kept in mind when considering the emotions of our Lord Jesus?

The Lord's emotions weren't identical to ours. As with so many elements of the humanity of Christ, there is a great deal of fuzzy thinking here. Often, we read phrases like *"He has been tempted in all things as we are"* (Heb. 4:15) and fail to note that the verse ends by saying, *"yet without sin."* We must be careful to distinguish between what we experience because we're human and what we experience because we're *fallen*. The Lord experienced the elements of humanity because He was (and is) genuinely human. But He experienced nothing of fallen humanity because He is absolutely sinless. There are emotions that the Lord Jesus never felt (e.g. fear, guilt, envy) because they are the result of sin.

Similarly, the Lord didn't experience any of the shallow substitutes for godly emotions that we know all too well. For example, we sometimes confuse fleeting sentiment with genuine compassion. The Lord Jesus is the only man who experienced the full depth of godly emotion (see a portrait of this in Lamentations 1:12).

The Lord wasn't ruled by emotion. There is a difference between having emotions and being emotional. Some

Christians have made emotions the core of their Christianity. Reacting to believers who are perhaps cold and apathetic, they have embraced the opposite extreme. The value of a church meeting is measured by how much it manipulates their emotions—laughter, weeping, giddy excitement. They become addicted to an emotional experience and, like all addictions, require an increasingly potent "fix" to give them the same high as last time.

Nonetheless, the Lord Jesus had emotions. There are others who are tempted to minimize or even dismiss His emotions. In their view, Christ is the ultimate stoic. They fear that acknowledging Christ's emotions would undermine His deity. Yet there is no need to fear this. The Bible speaks openly of Christ's emotions. He was *"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"* (Isa. 53:3). *"You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows"* (Ps. 45:7).

Proper thinking concerning the emotions of our Lord Jesus will ensure proper worship. But it will also help us to live a godly life. In our fallen state, our emotions have been corrupted and we need to be on guard because the world and the devil seek to exploit them. Since *"the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick"* (Jer. 17:9), we must rule our emotions rather than letting them rule us. Let us look to Christ for our example and long for the day when we will be with Him, finally enjoying the fullness and blessings of our God-given emotions without any of their (temporary) fallen flaws.

—James Martin editor@uplook.org

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The Wonderful Ways of God

8 What Makes God Angry?

Jerry Denny reminds us that, while God is patient, loving, and gracious, His righteous anger is essential to the maintenance of His holy character.

10 What Brings God Delight?

In a world so devoid of true enjoyments, Sam Thorpe invites us to share in the delights of God: in His people, in His purposes, and especially in His Son.

12 What Makes God Sing?

Keith Keyser introduces us to the God of music, especially the Lord Jesus, the songs He sung, and the song He will yet sing when His people are safely home.

18 What Makes God Sorry?

As Rex Trogdon succinctly explains, "Although God was sorry that He had *created* man, He did not change His pre-determined plan to *redeem* man."

20 The Remaking of Ben Sloetjes

Ten years ago on September 19, 2002 at age 18, Benjamin Sloetjes started his journey as an acquired brain injury survivor. Read the story of how Ben's life was remade by the Master potter.

(Our front cover features Ben's first painting.)

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front lines pray around the globe

“Occupy till I come”

Sowing Good Seed in the Gaspé

From August 12 to 19, a team of 40 believers linked up in the Gaspé Peninsula of eastern Quebec to distribute Bible texts and share the gospel with the locals. Don Cox writes: “In spite of threatening rain and fog, we have completed one town here, Cap-Chat, without getting wet. Today we have begun Ste-Anne-des-Monts where there is a small assembly where we pioneered in the 70’s. The fellowship, teaching and singing each morning and testimony at camp fires in the evening is edifying and joyful. We have a small Tabernacle model that we set up in a park by the sea, hoping to have conversations with folks and present the gospel. Catholicism is losing its hold more and more and some seem less fearful to ask questions.” (exerpted from prayer.kjk@gmail.com)



CONFERENCES, CAMPS & RETREATS

LABOR DAY CONFERENCE IN MN

The 101st annual Labor Day Conference hosted by the Twin Cities area assemblies will be held Aug 31-Sep 3. Speakers are Kevin Fitzgerald (MO) and Bill Yuille (ON). The conference begins Friday with a prayer meeting at 7:30 PM and ends Monday at noon. Housing and meals provided. Visit www.mnlcd.net for details. **Contact:** Glen Ellis ph: 763-572-1379 email: glencellis_610@msn.com

LABOR DAY CONFERENCE IN TEXAS

Sponsored by the believers at Golden Bible Chapel, Golden, the conference will be held Sep 1-2 at the Mineola Civic Center, Mineola, Texas. Ken Miller (OK) will be opening the Word. **Contact:** Bryan Hughes ph: 903-569-8880 email: dbryanhughes@aol.com web: www.goldenbiblechapel.com

YOUTH CONFERENCE IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope will have their annual Youth Conference Sep 1-3. Nathan Bramsen (West Africa) will be speaking. Cost is \$65/person. **Contact:** Jamie Wolfgram

ph: 706-650-2693 Camp Hope ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com or visit www.camphopega.org for a registration form.

FALL MEN’S BIBLE CONFERENCE

The conference will be held Sep 7-8 at Camp Living Water in Bryson City, NC. Scheduled speakers are Jonathan Brower (VA) Skip Elliott (SC) James Gibbons (SC) and Jeff Johnson (NC). The conference begins at 4 PM Friday and ends with lunch at 12:30 PM Saturday. Cost is \$40 per person prepaid (\$45 on arrival) and includes meals and 1 night lodging. Visit www.mensbibleconference.com for details. **Contact:** Alan Mojonniier ph: 828-277-1211 email: mgart@bellsouth.net

ATLANTIC/LYMAN CONFERENCE

Celebrating 99 years of God’s faithfulness and sound Bible teaching, all are welcome at the annual Atlantic/Lyman Bible Conference. Dates are Sep 14-16. The expected speakers are Warren Henderson (KS) and Jack Fish (Emmaus). The Friday night prayer meeting will be held at the Atlantic Gospel Chapel (13th & Elm St.), beginning at 7:30 PM. The Saturday and Sunday meetings will begin at 10:00 AM,

at the Cass Country Community Center (West 10th & Palm St.) in Atlantic. Included are children’s meetings with teacher Art Manning (IA) and youth activities on Saturday night. **Contact:** Dennis Oathoudt ph: 712-243-6303 email: koathoudt@hotmail.com or Mike Eells ph: 712-254-2530 email: mjeells@yahoo.com

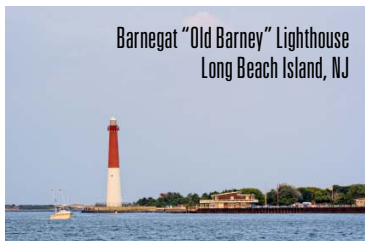
GOSPEL READINESS WORKSHOP

Nervous to talk with your friends about Jesus Christ? Don’t know what to say? Or wonder what they will say? This workshop will help you overcome your hesitations of what to say and help give you the confidence to share the Good News about the Lord Jesus! G.R.O.W. will be a highly interactive afternoon filled with small group role-playing and discussion centered on the subject of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. You’ll learn how to break the ice in any conversation, answer common questions, present the gospel visually in less than five minutes, and much more. The whole event, including lunch, is free. *** Note: New date will be re-scheduled.** Grace Chapel, 341 Tenafly Rd., Tenafly, NJ 07670 web: www.graceonline.info **Contact:** Call or text 914-646-9722 email: GROWWorkshop@gmail.com

front lines praise around the clock

JERSEY SHORE BIBLE CONFERENCE

Willie Burnett (ON) will be the speaker at this year's Jersey Shore Bible Conference scheduled for Sep 17-21. Hosted by Know the Word Ministries, this annual gathering will again be held at the Harvey Cedars Bible Conference, a deluxe facility situated on Long Beach Island on beautiful Barnegat Bay. The cost is \$345 per person. Included in the week will a guided tour of nearby Lakehurst Naval Air Station (site of the Hindenburg disaster in 1937) and the anniversary luncheon at America's Keswick. (www.americaskeswick.org).



Other interesting activities and events have been planned for the week, sure to make an enjoyable and relaxing finish to the summer months. For more information, click on www.knowtheword.com or visit online www.stepsofffaith.org or email mkolchin1@gmail.com To register, send full amount by Aug 31 (or sooner) made payable to "Know the Word" and mail to: Mark Kolchin, Know the Word, P.O. Box 305, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734

WEEKEND IN THE WORD IN NJ

Community Gospel Chapel, 20 Bergen Ave., Voorhees, NJ will host their conference Sep 21-23 beginning Friday at 7 PM. The topic is "Viewing The Christian Life Through The Days Of Creation - Genesis 1 & 2" with Randy Amos (NY) **Contact:** Sherman Fray ph: 856-778-1459 email: safray@msn.com

LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The Ladies Missionary Class of Northwest Gospel Hall, 1350 Garfield N W, Grand Rapids, MI will host the 2012 Southern Michigan Ladies Missionary Conference on Saturday, Sep 22 from 9:30 AM to 3:15 PM. Speakers expected: Rosemary Konkol (Paraguay), Carolyn Vargas (Spain), Jane Wolcott (for D.R. Congo) and Louise Nicholson (Mississippi and other areas). **Contact:** Joanne Sushereba ph: 616-365-0738 email: joshush@juno.com

LADIES CONFERENCE AT CAMP HOPE

Camp Hope will host their annual Ladies Conference Sep 28-30. Carol Bramsen (SC) will be the speaker. The conference begins Friday with registration at 7:00 PM and ends Sunday at 10:00 AM. Cost: \$60/individual. **Contact:** Barbara Thorpe ph: 706-359-6297 email: sambarb@nu-z.net **Camp Hope:** ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com Camp website: www.camphopega.org

MISSION SPRINGS CONFERENCE

The annual Pacific Bible Ministries Conference will be held Oct 1-5 at the Mission Springs Christian Conference Center 75 miles south of San Francisco, CA in the Santa Cruz mountains. The conference begins Monday with dinner at 6:00 PM and ends Friday after breakfast. Speakers expected are Joe Reese (ON) and Al Sculz (CA). **Contact:** Max Krieger ph: 323-256-1992 email: maxnbethk@sbcglobal.net

MAINE BIBLE CONFERENCE

A cordial invitation is extended to the 54th annual conference at Spring Hill Gospel Hall, Westbrook, ME Oct 5-7.

Speakers expected are Willi Gyger (PA) and Warren Henderson (KS). Overnight accommodations available upon early request. **Contact:** John F. Stultz ph: 207-432-8881 email: stultzjf@hotmail.com

NC LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The conference will be held Oct 6 at the Ireland Street Chapel in Burlington, NC. Mebane Gospel Chapel will co-host the conference. Speakers are Eleanor Sims, Danielle Shelley and Cassidy Hursey. Lunch provided! **Contact:** Carol Baker, 2923 Chestnut Ridge Church Road, Efland, NC 27243 ph: 919 304-0595 email: charlesbaker008@mebtl.net

FALL CONFERENCE IN INDIANA

Bethany Christian Fellowship of Indianapolis is having their conference on Oct 13-14 beginning 9:30 AM Saturday. The speaker is Craig Rollinger (IL). Housing accommodations are available. **Contact:** Robert Rankin ph: 317-571-0212 email: analyticalchem85@gmail.com

CONFERENCE IN ALBERTA

Good News Bible Chapel of Calgary, AB is having its annual fall conference the weekend of Oct 19-21. The guest speaker is Ed Anthony (TN). His subject will be "The Making and Modeling of the Church," looking at how the church was created, is maintained, and should act as modeled in the Scriptures. **Contact:** Brent Rawlings ph: 403-619-2816 email: rawlings@shaw.ca web: www.goodnewsbiblechapel.org

CONFERENCE IN CONNECTICUT

The annual Fall Bible Conference at Well-spring Bible Fellowship, 115 Welles Road, Old Mystic, CT is to be held Oct 19-21.

The expected speaker is Paul Bramsen (CMML missionary, North Africa). The conference begins 7:30 pm Friday with four sessions on Saturday, with lunch provided. Brother Paul will also speak on Sunday. Please call or email if you plan to attend. **Contact:** John Clifford ph: 860-445-0622 email: clifford.j@att.net

FALL FAMILY CONFERENCE IN GA

Camp Hope will hold their conference Oct 26-28. Rod Sharp (NC) will minister God's Word to the adults and Phil Guikema (FL) will minister to the children. The conference begins Friday with registration at 6:00 PM and ends Sunday with lunch. There will not be a set charge or suggested offering to the camp.

From the outset, it is realized that many young families would not be able to meet the expenses of such a camp weekend but that the Lord would move in the hearts of others to give above the cost of their coming in order to supply the needs of others. For a registration form, visit: www.camphopega.org

Contact: Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonga, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@gmail.com

LOUISIANA FALL CONFERENCE

Southside Bible Chapel, 4256 W. Congress St., Lafayette, invites you to their annual conference Nov 10-11. Dr. Steve Price (KS) will minister the Word. The conference begins at 3:00 PM Saturday ending with lunch on Sunday. **Contact:** William O. Walker ph: 337-232-6577 103 Robert Dr., Lafayette, LA 70506 email: wowalker@bellsouth.net web: www.southsidebiblechapel.com

CMML CONFERENCE IN GEORGIA

Three Oaks Bible Chapel, 3350 Avondale Mill Rd., Macon, GA is hosting a CMML conference on Saturday, Nov 17. The main speaker will be David Croudace, missionary to Zambia. The conference will start at 10 AM and conclude at 4 PM. Lunch, snacks, and a nursery will be provided. Please join us for a wonderful time of teaching, fellowship, and special music. If you plan to attend, please contact John Moore ph: 478-956-4328 email: JohnandJanie956@cox.net

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

CAMP POSITIONS AVAILABLE IN ON

The Board of Directors of Beacon Bible Camp, a year-round facility in the beautiful Muskoka region of Ontario, is accepting applications for the full-time, faith-supported positions of Administrator and Office Manager. For further information, please contact Tom or Liz Williams via the camp office address or phone number, found on the website: www.beaconbiblecamp.com



Liz Williams

CWF FUND UPDATE

The purpose of **Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc.** is to "receive gifts and donations of money from the Lord's people and distribute the same to workers sound in doctrine and associated with assemblies of believers and who are

devoting their time to the Lord's work." Contributions made to the fund by U.S. residents are tax-deductible. All funds received are distributed every month. Only funds designated for expenses are used for this purpose. The directors serve without remuneration. Funds received in the second quarter totaled \$384,163.02, and of this, \$5,303.77 was designated for general expenses, the rest for distribution. A financial report may be requested from: The Treasurer, Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc., Box 1117, Lawrence, KS 66044

COMMENDATIONS

JOHNNY AND KELLY DOUGLAS

The believers meeting at Garland Bible Chapel, Garland, TX commend Johnny and Kelly Douglas to the work of the Lord in evangelism and the establishment of a new assembly in Ottawa, KS. Johnny and Kelly have both exhibited a great concern for the unsaved and have labored to be a witness for our Lord in the area of evangelism.

MICHAEL AND ROBIN FIORELLO

The believers at Bethany Chapel, Columbia, SC commend Michael and Robin Fiorello to the work of the Lord. The Fiorellos continue to seek the Lord's guidance concerning a Bible teaching ministry, either in the US or abroad. In the years Mike has been in fellowship at Bethany, he has labored faithfully as a Bible teacher to adults while Robin cheerfully serves the Lord complementing her husband's work by sharing encouraging words and acts of service with the saints.

DAVE AND DIANA HOOD

The believers at Rideauview Bible Chapel, Ottawa, ON, commend the Hoods to God's care and direction for full-time service at Rideauview and in the Ottawa area for a period of two years. David and Diana have been active for many years as vital members of our church family. David is much appreciated as a teacher of God's Word for the whole assembly. David and Diana plan to serve in teams set up for teaching, evangelism and pastoral care, with a focus on youth and university students and an emphasis on discipleship. As the Lord leads, David will be available to minister the Word in other assemblies and at summer camps.

JOE MURPHY

The elders of Cheshire Bible Chapel, Cheshire, CT commend Joe Murphy to serve the Lord in Ireland, Nigeria and other places as the Lord may direct. Joe has been involved in many ministries in the assembly and is actively encouraging others to grow. He has shown to have a real heart of love for God's people and for those who have yet to know the Lord in a personal way.

FRED SCOTT

The saints at High Point Bible Chapel, Davenport IA commend Fred Scott to serve the Lord with Team Workers Abroad. www.teamworkersabroad.org Fred and his wife Sue have been in fellowship for many years, serving faithfully in various areas in the assembly. He will be involved in presenting the work of Team Workers Abroad at assemblies and conferences. He may be contacted at fred@teamworkersabroad.org

TIM SKILES

The believers meeting at Westside Bible Chapel, Wichita, KS commend Tim Skiles to the Lord's work at *The Ezekiel Project School of Evangelism*, Amada, MI for a period of one year. Tim will be teaching a Bible course, producing graphic design for gospel literature, courses, the newsletter, the website and also helping with areas like maintenance, etc. He will also be involved in "The Ezekiel Project" which includes going to different cities for the purpose of teaching street evangelism.



www.tepse.org

MISCELLANY

TORONTO CONFERENCE RECORDINGS

Audio resources of the 2012 Toronto Easter Bible Conference are available on CD, DVD or MP3. Messages by Joe Reese (ON): "*The Fourth Cry from the Cross*," "*Eternal Security of the Believer*," "*A Wake Up Call?*" and "*Refuge*". Messages by Rex Trogdon (NC): "*Simon Peter's Seven Downward Steps*," "*My Life Now*," and "*Blessings of the Risen Christ*." A charge of \$20 covers the cost of seven messages and postage. Single messages available for \$3. **Contact:** Bill Allison, 3199 Sovereign Road, Burlington ON, L7M 2W1 ph: 905-336-8101 email: hw.allison@sympatico.ca

STUDY IN ILLINOIS

Announcing a Bible study at the home of Jim and Megan Daghfal, 104 Stonewood Dr., East Peoria, IL 61611 from 6:30-7:30 PM every Friday. Please attend and enjoy Christian fellowship around God's Word, beginning with the Book of John. **Contact:** ph: 309-966-2479 email: eastpeoriabiblestudy@gmail.com

MEETINGS

LESLIE SAMUEL RAINEY 1914-2012

Les Rainey went to be with the Lord Aug 4 at the age of 98. Brother Les was a commended worker, serving for over 50 years as a missionary in Bermuda, Israel, and various places in Africa to include Kenya, Zambia, and Botswana. Les clearly loved the Lord and the Word of God. He was a blessing to everyone he came in contact with and enjoyed rich and lasting relationships with friends all over the globe. He will be greatly missed by his family, the family of Pittsboro Christian Village and many others.



NOTE: NEWS SUBMISSIONS

The news editor reserves the right to determine those items best suited for the magazine. Editorial decisions are final. Photos accepted. **Send news to:** frontlines@uplook.org

What makes God Angry?

by Jerry Denny

We hear of the meek and lowly Jesus and conclude that anger is foreign to His character. Many view God as either a God of love or a God of anger. Centuries ago, God was seen mostly as a God of anger. Today, the focus is on His love.

The Bible tells us that “*God is light*” (1 Jn. 1:5) and “*God is love*” (1 Jn. 4:8). The Scriptures never say “God is anger.” But His love and holiness cause Him to have anger and hatred for evil, both because they are opposed to His nature and because they hurt and damage those He loves. Psalm 7:11 tells us, “*God is angry with the wicked every day.*” All His moral laws are based on His holiness and love, which are given to protect us from evil and the harm caused by actions which damage our relationship with Him and with others.

Anger’s purpose is to alert us to issues of right and wrong, and it is a valid response when wrong has occurred. Anger is the emotion which motivates us to take action against hurtful behavior. Being upset by wrong behavior is normal.

Anger is defined as: “a violent passion of the mind excited by a real or supposed injury; usually accompanied with a pro-

pensity to take vengeance, or to obtain satisfaction from the offending party.” We often have a negative view of anger in our normal, everyday life because of the misuse of this God-given emotion. However, not all anger is sinful. Ephesians 4:26 instructs us, “*Be angry but do not sin, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.*”

James 1:19 doesn’t forbid anger; it regulates it. The natural (carnal) way to handle anger is to explode, to implode, or to slowly leak out our anger with harmful, hurtful remarks. All of these methods are ineffective and only contribute pain to ourselves and to others. Being angry at destructive and harmful sinful behavior is not sin, but anger needs to be controlled so that sin is not committed in the process of righting wrongs.

CHRIST’S ANGER

As we look in the New Testament, we can easily see actions and behaviors that angered the Lord Jesus: the story of the healing of the man with a withered hand in Mark 3, the cleansings of the temple, and His rebuke of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

The account of the man with the withered hand is found in Mark 3:1-6, Matthew 12:9-13, and Luke 6:6-11. When we consider the three accounts collectively, we see that the Lord entered the Synagogue on the Sabbath and was teaching. There was a man present who had a withered hand, and the Pharisees and scribes were watching intently in order to bring an accusation against the Lord Jesus. They were plotting to use the Lord’s compassion to accuse Him of breaking the law by working on the Sabbath. The Pharisees and scribes began the dialogue by asking, “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*” The Lord Jesus looked at them with anger and was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. They were more concerned about their position than about the man with a crippled hand.

Next, consider the cleansing of the temple in John 2. It angered Him to see His Father’s house being desecrated and used as a money-making scheme. In response, He drove the offenders out of the temple, overturning the moneychangers’ tables. He could say, “*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up*” (v. 17).

In these examples and others, we see the Lord's anger focused on the religious leaders rather than on the people who did not claim to be righteous before God. Matthew 23 contains one of the most scathing condemnations in the Bible. The Lord gave this message to the Pharisees before He left the temple on the last day before His crucifixion. In this passage, the Lord calls the Pharisees hypocrites and blind guides because they were using people for their own self-seeking pride and gain.

The Lord Jesus was utterly sinless and *"was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). His anger had the proper focus and motivation and did not arise from petty arguments or personal insults against Him. There was no selfishness nor self-will involved, but He targeted sinful behavior and motives that were true injustices.

GOD'S ANGER AND US

Today, we see the type of behavior that God condemns in the world. Romans 1:18 says, *"But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness."* God's judgment of those who refuse to accept His guidance in life is to turn them over to a reprobate mind, to give them the desires of their heart. I asked a group of young people to identify things they thought were wrong and should be dealt with by God because of the hurt it had caused in their lives. They mentioned all the hurtful sins that we witness in our society such as lying, stealing, murder, hate, and adultery. I explained to them how each of the Ten Commandments was given to reveal

when there is problem in our relationship with God. I asked which came first, a relationship with God or the Ten Commandments. They concluded that a relationship came first and the commandments were given as a measure of the relationship. I asked how many of the hurts they had mentioned would exist if everyone involved in the situations had a personal relationship with God and fulfilled the moral law of God by walking according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. They concluded that none of the sins that had hurt them would have occurred if the ones involved had a personal, saving relationship with God and obeyed His Word.



"Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire" (Isa. 66:15).

An unforgiving spirit also angers the Lord. In Matthew 18, Jesus gave the parable of the unmerciful servant who had been forgiven an extremely large debt because he pleaded for mercy, but then refused to forgive a man who owed him far less. This parable reveals God's anger in judgment on individuals refusing to forgive someone who has offended them.

God has set aside a day when He will right every wrong that has occurred and will judge every sin. We can be thankful it is still future. If God were to instantly

judge those who have sinned against Him, no one would be left. All would end up in hell. Therefore, He has postponed judgment to allow us time to repent (2 Pet. 3:9). The only way to have God's anger turned away from us is to accept the forgiveness He offers us through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Micah 7:18-19 speaks of the gracious patience of God. *"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."*

Because God delights in mercy, He has provided a way to have our sins forgiven. The good news for us is that we can flee from the wrath that is to come by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ today. *"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Acts 2:21). ■

Jerry serves the Lord in evangelism and pastoral care, and has been instrumental in the ministry of Good News on the Move since its inception. He and his wife Karen live in Reidsville, NC. Their two grown children serve on the mission field overseas.

What brings God delight?

by SAM THORPE

We are emotional creatures. We know how to love and hate, to rejoice and grieve. Our heart is part of God's creative design, patterned after Himself. God, who can love and hate, rejoice and grieve, made us like Himself. But here is an amazing truth: Our actions can affect God emotionally. We'll see this in more detail as we look into what God delights in. But first we must lay the foundation.

How does the Bible use the word "delight"? Our first step is to examine the English word and its various forms in Scripture. Although these words are found exclusively in the Old Testament, this is not a simple step. There are four Hebrew words translated *delight* in English. Here they are along with their *Strong's* numbers and definitions from Spiros Zophiates' *Lexicon To The Old Testament*.

• **chaphets** (2654): To find pleasure in, to take delight in, to be pleased with, to have affection for, to desire, to choose, to bend, to have a strong positive attraction, to like someone or thing very much (e.g., Ps. 22:8).

• **chashaq** (2836): Having a sense of joining together, clinging, cleaving,

already bound to the object. It is a love that will not let go (e.g., Deut. 10:15).

• **ratsah** (7521): To be pleased with in satisfying a debt. The root word frequently describes God's pleasure with His servants, particularly the Messiah (e.g., Isa. 42:1).

• **shashau** (8191): Enjoyment, pleasure (e.g., Prov. 8:30).

When studying these Hebrew words, we find the things God delights in:

1. His chosen nation
2. His appointed leadership
3. His character seen in His children
4. His children's spiritual growth
5. His Son

God's delight in His chosen nation Israel holds a unique place in God's heart. As the "apple of His eye," she occupies a land that is the beacon of His glory. All four Hebrew words are used for the delight God has in the Jews and the land of Israel.

"If the Lord delight [2654] in us, then He will bring us into the land, and give it to

us; a land which floweth with milk and honey" (Num. 14:8).

"Only the Lord had a delight [2836] in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day" (Deut. 10:15).

"For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth [7521]" (Prov. 3:12).

"Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights [8191] were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:31).

Historically, Israel has been a source of sorrow as well as delight. However, in Isaiah's prophetic view, this nation is seen as a crown of glory and a royal diadem in the hand of God (Isa. 62:3). Isaiah 62:1-5 also tells us that, in a coming day, the Lord will again rejoice over His people with great delight. Israel will be renamed Hephzibah, meaning "my delight is in her."

God's delight in His appointed leadership

Both David and Solomon, prominent kings of Israel's earthly glory, are objects of God's delight. In his song



"Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord" (Jer. 9:23-24).

of praise, David states, *"He brought me forth also into a large place: He delivered me, because He delighted [2654] in me"* (2 Sam. 22:20). The Queen of Sheba, during her visit with King Solomon, made this observation: *"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted [2654] in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice"* (1 Ki. 10:9; 2 Chron. 9:8).

Even though these two kings were not perfect in all their ways, God looked at the heart and found His delight in His two servants. This principle is true for God's appointed leadership today. God rewards the good work of His *"under-shepherds"* (1 Pet. 5:4). It is sobering to note, however, that the Lord found no delight in Israel's first King, Saul. Saul's disobedience was described by Samuel as that which did not delight the Lord (1 Sam. 15:22).

God's delight in His character seen in His children

The Bible tells us that *"godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1 Tim. 6:6). Godliness is the manifestation of God's character in us. This can be accomplished only by the power of the Spirit as He defeats the flesh and brings forth His fruit in our lives. Paul reminds us that when our focus is on Christ, we *"are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor. 3:18b). God delights in having

godly children—in seeing His people reflect His glory.

There are several attributes of God that we are specifically told bring Him delight when they are manifested in our lives: goodness (Ps. 37:23), honesty (Prov. 11:1), uprightness (Prov. 11:20), truthfulness (Prov. 12:22), kindness (Jer. 9:24), and mercy (Mic. 7:18).

God's delight in His children's spiritual growth

One of the greatest joys known to parents is to see their children walking in the truths of God and pleasing Him in their lives (2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 4). Likewise, God finds great delight in the spiritual growth and development of His children. Note how the psalmist captures this thought in Psalm 147:11: *"The Lord taketh pleasure [7521] in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."*

Solomon continued that thought: *"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight [7522]"* (Prov. 15:8). Just like our earthly parents, God finds delight in seeing His children *"grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 3:18).

God's delight in His Son

God's own well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, shares all the divine characteristics and virtues in which God

the Father delights. Christ is the perfect Son, and God the Father desires for us to know the perfections of His Son. Christ, as wisdom personified, speaks of the Father's delight in Him: *"Then was I by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight [H8191], rejoicing always before Him"* (Prov. 8:30). Even in the context of the crucifixion of Christ, the Father's delight in His Son is mentioned: *"seeing He delighted [2654] in Him"* (Ps. 22:8).

This brings us to a great paradox of Scripture. God delights in the children He gains through Christ. However, in order to gain those children, He had to sacrifice His own Son, in whom was *all* His delight. We read of this mystery in Isaiah 53:10-11: *"Yet it pleased [2654] the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure [2656] of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."* In light of the tremendous price the Lord paid, let us live so that His delight in us can grow day by day. ■

Thy joy in Him who is with Thee we share;
Our hearts delight in Thy delight in Him;
Chiefest of thousands, fairer than the fair;
His glory nought can tarnish, nought can dim.
—W.B. Dick

What makes

GOD Sing?

BY KEITH KEYSER

The Bible is filled with singing and songs. The creation of the universe was accompanied by a heavenly oratorio (Job 38:7). The earth was still relatively young when Lamech penned the earliest recorded pop song: a distasteful ditty in the gangster rap vein that celebrated human bloodshed and prideful vengeance (Gen. 4:23). Millennia later, Moses, his sister Miriam, and their redeemed countrymen celebrated in song their deliverance out of Egypt at the Red Sea (Ex. 15). His valedictory words to the Israelites were also conveyed in song (Deut. 31:22). The ark was brought back to Jerusalem with Chenaniah conducting the singers and King David leading the procession with festive dancing (1 Chron. 15:16-28). On at least one occasion, Israel's armies marched into battle with the choir leading the way (2 Chron. 20:21-24). Given the seven annual Levitical festivals (Lev. 23), the daily life-rhythms of ancient Israel were set to the soundtrack of the Psalms, and an entire Old Testament book is one long romantic song (the Song of Songs; also known as the Song of Solomon or Canticles).

Worthy of homage and of praise

The Bible repeatedly calls on people to sing to the Lord in worship and praise

(e.g. 1 Chron. 16:23; Ps. 9:11; 30:4). This is appropriate because the Almighty possesses unparalleled attributes and an unequalled track record of gracious, holy, and merciful conduct. Whether one thinks on God's goodness, love, omnipotence, or justice, there is no end to the material that these qualities provide for musical adoration. When He calls on mankind to laud Him in song and recount His all-wise activities, He is telling them to do the most reasonable thing in keeping with His identity and His purposes. No other sensible course presents itself to the unbiased mind—especially if that mind belongs to one who has tasted divine mercy, grace, and love firsthand. In light of His person and His work, it is understandable that human beings should sing to their altogether-lovely Creator. But one may well wonder, "What makes *God* sing?"

The Son of Man's hymnbook

Galatians 4:4 affirms, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." As a devout Jewish man, the Lord Jesus dutifully attended the feasts in Jerusalem (Lk. 2:41-42; Jn. 7:10; Jn. 10:22; Mt. 26). Such behavior leads to the natu-

ral inference that Christ regularly sang through the Psalter with other Jewish worshippers. Collections of Psalms like the Egyptian Hallel (Ps. 113-118) were customarily sung at the Passover and other feasts.¹

One historian describes ordinary practice at the Passover meal:

Jewish families sang Psalms 113–114 before the Seder meal and 115–118 afterward. In the Synoptic Gospels...Jesus and His disciples ate a Seder (Passover) meal and sang a hymn before departing for the Mount of Olives (Mt. 26:30). Thus, in all likelihood, they sang all or parts of Psalms 115–118 (or, less probably, Psalms 135–36).²

Therefore, on the way to the cross, the Lord Jesus sang a hymn (Mt. 26:30)—probably the 118th Psalm, which includes lines that are prophetic of His sufferings: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it" (vv. 22-24). On the way to drink the cup of God's wrath, Christ delighted in His Father's perfect will and praised Him in song.



Knowledge and culture were fragmented along with language at Babel. Imagine what it will be when the whole spectrum of musical creativity is blended back together by heaven's Concert Master! Then the redeemed from "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9) will sing the new song to the Worthy One in glory. Hallelujah!

The Son of God as soloist

The Lord Jesus' singing did not cease after His return to glory. Happily, the Scriptures point to a future day when He will sing in the company of His Father and His delivered brethren. Two passages in the New Testament refer to this great future recital of the Father's name in song: Romans 15:9 (quoting Psalm 18:49 and 2 Samuel 22:50) and Hebrews 2:12 (quoting Psalm 22:22). While the former text emphasizes that God's will is to bless Jews and Gentiles, the latter stresses the risen Christ's identification with His redeemed people—He is not ashamed of them! As brother Gooding eloquently puts it:

Would not the glorified Son of Man now feel a little ashamed before the majestic angels of God to acknowledge His humble followers on earth as His brothers? Never! On the very threshold of the ascension He said to Mary: 'Go...to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God' (Jn. 20:17); and in the bright morning of the second half of the Psalm 22 we hear the glorified Messiah announce: 'I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the congregation I will praise You' (22:22). And still wherever His people meet, there He is among them, revealing the Father's name to them (Jn. 17:26, AV/KJV) and leading the response of their praise.³

In the future realized kingdom of God—which encompasses the millennium and the subsequent eternal state

(Rev. 20-22)—the Lord Jesus will sing of His Father's name, thereby revealing afresh God's character, identity, authority, and activities. All of these things are manifested in the names and titles of God the Father. This action of the glorified Messiah is also the opposite of impenitent men's treatment of the divine name (Rev. 16:9). Having brought many sons to glory, the Captain of their salvation sings praise to His Father in their congregation.

The theme of His song

The Old Testament passages of the Messiah singing that are quoted in the New Testament reflect His rejoicing over the culmination of God's plans of redemption and judgment. In Psalm 22:22, He exults in the fact that after His unparalleled sufferings, which are recorded in verses 1-21, He is now on resurrection ground. Consequently, He praises the Father for delivering Him from such deep sorrows. Thereafter, God the Father raised Him from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22 are virtually identical. Their shared theme is God's ultimate triumph over evil in the setting up of the Messianic kingdom that He promised in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7).

The Son's future praise of the Father's name is prefigured every time the saints gather here on Earth to praise and worship God in the power of the Holy Spirit. To paraphrase Kepler's description of his scientific research,

when they adore their Maker in word or song, Christians are thinking the Lord's thoughts of the Father after Him (Jn. 16:12-15). Jennings's beautiful hymn grasps the idea well:

*Hark, my soul! Thy Savior sings;
Catch the joy that music brings;
And, with that sweet flood of song,
Pour thy whisp'ring praise along.* ■

Endnotes

1 "The Hallel was sung at the great Jewish festivals—Passover, Tabernacles, Pentecost, and Chanukkah ('Dedication' of the Temple)." W.O.E. Oesterley, "Hallel", in James Hastings, John A. Selbie, John C. Lambert and Shailer Mathews, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 326.

Another adds: "Pss. 135–136 are sung on the sabbath, and the Great Hallel (Pss. 146–150), with Ps. 145, at all morning services." H.L. Ellison, "Hallelujah", in D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 441.

2 Steven R. Swanson, "Hallel", in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 30.

3 David W. Gooding, *An Unshakeable Kingdom: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Port Colborne, ON: Gospel Folio Press, 1989), p. 54.

4 F.C. Jennings, "Oh My Savior Glorified"; Hymn #109 in *Hymns Of Worship And Remembrance*.

Princes of Egypt

Which Pharaoh?



There is no denying that Israel's sojourn in Egypt and subsequent departure are as significant a set of events as you'll find in the Old Testament. On any given day in the world, somebody somewhere is expounding on passages where an Egyptian pharaoh is involved.

Yet, relatively speaking, there is very little available material as to which pharaoh is being spoken of in a given passage. Much of this is owing to the rampant confusion in ancient Egyptian chronology. Frankly, a quick Internet study on the topic reveals how confused the subject is—there is no clear consensus on dates or reigns of pharaohs during the different events from secular history.

This is where archaeology has begun to clear things up. The more we learn about ancient Egypt, the more its history lines up with what is documented in Scripture.

ABRAHAM ENTERS EGYPT

To begin, the word *pharaoh* is more like a title than a name. It is just the moniker given to the ruler of Egypt. (Incidentally, the "Candace" served by the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:27, is a similar title given to the queens of Ethiopia.)

In Genesis 12:10, we read of a famine that caused Abraham and Sarah to leave Canaan and move down to Egypt. During this visit, a pharaoh took a particular liking to the patriarch's wife. This resulted in

the Lord bringing plagues on the Egyptian king's household—no doubt a precursor of the events to come several centuries later. So who might this pharaoh be?

Egyptologists will refer to the 1st Intermediate Kingdom (2188–2055 BC).

This came on the scene within a couple of centuries of the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza and within three of four centuries of the great flood of Noah's day. Originating from the west (possibly out of Libya), this included Egypt's 7th through 11th dynasties. Such pharaohs ruled intermittently between Thebes (Southern or Upper Egypt) and Memphis (where the Nile delta spreads out).

JOSEPH LEADS EGYPT

In Genesis 37, Scripture begins to lay out the events of the life of Joseph. Key to this life was his being sold into slavery by his brothers. He ultimately landed in Egypt and, through the miraculous workings of the Lord, ended up as the Prime Minister of the fledgling superpower of the day. To paraphrase Joseph, though his brothers meant these events for evil toward him, God meant them for good (Gen. 50:20). As famine spread through much of the Middle Eastern world, God used Joseph to provide for not only his family but also countless others.

The Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BC) of Egypt supplanted the 1st Intermediate Kingdom. Because of Joseph, these rulers

were favorably disposed toward the Israelites. As a result, Israel flourished in the land of the Nile. When we understand what took place in the Bible and look at the history of the Middle Kingdom, certain things begin to align quite well.

One such example has to do with Joseph's father-in-law. We know that the Middle Kingdom focused a good deal of their pagan worship on the sun god, Re (also known as Ra or Amon-Re). In the Bible, we read that Pharaoh gave Asenath, daughter of Potiphara, to be Joseph's wife. Potiphara was a priest from the town of On (Gen. 41:45), and On was the center of solar worship in ancient Egypt.

An even more striking example involves Egypt's unification. It is the Middle Kingdom pharaoh Sesostris III that history most associates with uniting northern and southern Egypt. He came to power in 1876 BC, shortly before the famine predicted by Joseph took place (Gen. 41). The Bible tells us that the famine was so extreme that the territory's inhabitants eventually bartered their land and possessions to Pharaoh in exchange for grain (Gen. 47:13-26). History reveals that this Pharaoh removed local magistrate rule across Egypt and started to expand Egypt's territory to encompass Nubia (today's Sudan and Ethiopia).

The background recorded in the Bible lines up perfectly with the events of history.

MOSES' CHOICE

The experts can't be certain who the pharaohs were of old,
 Though they carved their forms in marble and etched their names in gold;
 But the man who left the palace, not fearing pharaoh's rage,
 Has his name enshrined in honor on the Bible's deathless page.
 He traded sinful pleasures for the lonely path he trod—
 But composed the name of "Jesus" and saw the face of God!
 He was called to pen the Torah, when the written Word began,
 And given heaven's blueprint in the tabernacle's plan.
 So when Jesus was transfigured, and His glory shown to us,
 Who would God return but Moses to discuss *His Exodus*?
 And when from each tongue and nation at last we gather Home
 To a land of fadeless beauty, where our Lord sits on the throne,
 We will sing a song by Moses, composed from his servant heart;
 And not one of us will wonder if he chose the better part. —Jabe Nicholson

Heb. 11:27
 784 times!
 Heb. 11:25
 Num. 13:16; Ex. 33:11
 Lk.22:44
 Heb. 9:24
 Mt. 17:2
 2 Pet. 1:15-18
 Rev. 5:9; 14:6
 Rev. 7:7
 Rev. 15:3
 Heb. 11:24-27

ISRAEL SOJOURNS IN EGYPT

“So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly” (Gen. 47:27).

There is an archaeological dig within the land of Goshen at the location of ancient Rameses (a.k.a. Raamses) known as Tel El Daba. It has garnered a great deal of attention in recent years. Archaeologists have discovered that people from

Canaan lived here shortly after the time that Joseph and his family would have arrived. During the time of Joseph, the city would have been known as Rowaty (“door of the two roads”). This site is located along the Horus Road to Canaan.

Many of those who lived here resided in more eastern-style huts than what you would find elsewhere in Egypt. In the center of the community, however, seems to have been a villa different from the oth-

ers. Associated with this villa is a burial area. The artifacts found thus far clearly show the residents to have been from the East and not native to Egypt. There is good reason to believe that this was the center of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt.

But Israel’s prosperity in Egypt lasted only as long as the Middle Kingdom was in power. *“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.... Therefore they set taskmasters over them”* >

YEAR	PATRIARCH (Lifespan)	SCRIPTURAL EVENT (Text)	PHAROAH (Reign)	EGYPTIAN KINGDOM	DYNASTY
2090 BC	Abraham 2166–1991 BC	Enters Egypt during famine (Gen. 12:10ff)	Intef II 2118–2069 BC	1 st Intermediate Period	11 th
1898 BC	Joseph 1914–1805 BC	Enters Egypt as a slave & sold to Potiphar (Gen. 37:36)	Amenemhet II 1929–1895 BC	Middle Kingdom	12 th
1885 BC		Made administrator over Egypt (Gen. 41:37ff)	Sesostris II 1897 – 1877 BC		
1876 BC		Jacob enters Egypt with his family (Gen. 46)	Sesostris III 1878 – 1843 BC		
1859 BC		Jacob dies & Joseph buries him in Canaan (Gen. 50)			
1805 BC		Joseph dies & is buried in a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26)	Amenemhet III 1843 – 1797 BC		
1664 BC		Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph (Ex. 1:8)	Possibly Sheshi or Yakubher	2 nd Intermediate Period Hyksos	15 th

I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt

Ezekiel 29:3



Goshen was the region of Egypt east of the Nile delta which the Israelites inhabited during their sojourn there. It is situated on the eastern frontier of Lower Egypt (Gen. 46:28-29; Ex. 13:17), forming an outpost of it (Gen. 46:34); apparently not at all (or scantily) inhabited by Egyptians, but, in the estimation of shepherds, evidently "the best of the land" (47:6, 11), since Pharaoh's cattle grazed there (v. 6). According to verse 11, "the land of Rameses" is synonymous with "the land of Goshen." It contained the towns of Pithom and Succoth (Ex. 1:11; 12:37, etc.).

—The Jewish Encyclopedia

to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel" (Ex. 1:8-12).

The Middle Kingdom fell into weak leadership and made a series of poor decisions. As a result, the Hyksos, or what Egyptologists refer to as the 2nd Intermediate Kingdom (1664-1555 BC), eventually overtook them. The Hyksos seem to have been from the East (the hieroglyph for Hyksos means "foreign ruler"). They could have been other Canaanites, possibly Hittite or Amalekite in origin. The Hyksos saw the Israelites as rivals and began to subjugate them. The rulers forced them to construct the great storage cities of Pithom and Raamses

(see Ex. 1:11). Such storage cities were viewed as the key to Egypt's wealth, in accordance with what Pharaoh had learned from Joseph. In the Hyksos mind, it probably made sense to have the people of Joseph build these.

Incidentally, the Hyksos seem to have been worshippers of the Canaanite god Baal. One of the key pharaohs of the 2nd Intermediate Kingdom was a ruler named Yakubher, also called Yak-Baal. Thus began a millennia-long running battle between Baal and the God of Israel (note the final Victor, Hos. 2:16-17).

MOSES DEPARTS EGYPT

Eventually, the Egyptians drove out the Hyksos from the Nile delta. Ahmose I began the reunification of Egypt around 1570 BC. It took his regime

about 15 years to complete the task. This led to the establishment of the New Kingdom (1554-1070 BC).

Egyptians resented the Hyksos and any others within their borders who were from the East. It's clear they saw the Israelites as a continued foreign threat in their midst.

—ROB SULLIVAN

In the next issue of *Uplook*, we will consider the regime of the pharaohs that played a part in the life of Moses and the events of the Exodus.

To get the facts to defend your faith (Manuscript, Archeological, Prophetic and Scientific evidence), visit the *Christian Evidences* web site:

www.christianevidences.org

Mobile Christianity

***“He sends out His command to the earth;
His word runs very swiftly” (Ps. 147:15).***

In 2010, Apple released the iPad and it quickly became the standard for tablet computing. The accolades poured in for Apple. What many didn't realize is that the concept of tablet computing had been around since the 1960s when Steve Jobs was just a boy. His genius was in taking something that was being developed for specific markets and making it mainstream. You see, people have been trying to be more mobile in their technology for decades.

The fact that mobile computing is exploding at an insane rate is undeniable. Tablets and smartphones now outsell desktops and laptops by hundreds of millions. It's rare to walk into any public place and not see people texting, surfing, or talking on a mobile device.

This new attachment to technology has an impact on us as Christians. There are



some truly positive things about mobile computing. I can take the Word of God with me wherever I go and can have multiple versions, commentaries, and good books all in my pocket. If I am thinking about someone the Lord brings to mind, I can pray for them and send them a quick text or email to encourage them. If there is an urgent prayer request, I can receive notice of it wherever I am and start praying right away. These are just a few of the advantages of mobile computing in the Christian life.

One of the biggest dangers of having technology constantly with us is how much time it demands. A woman said to me recently (as I was sending a text message), “I see you are into technology, too, like my husband. At 7 am, he is on that thing; and it drives me nuts.” I have to admit that when I wake up I do check my phone (which also acts as my alarm) for emails or texts. Going without my phone for a day is unthinkable. Then one morning it hit me: “What if you misplaced your Bible for a day?” Ouch, that one hurt! But it's so true. Would I be panicking about where it is and the effects of its absence on my life? Would it have any impact on me at all?

In Matthew, we read of an incident in the life of the Lord. In chapter 14, verse 23, it says, “And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.” Why was

He alone? In the gospels, we are given several reasons such as prayer, grief, and refreshing. He had been with the multitudes and taught them. He was connected to their souls all day, but now it was time to be alone. As I applied this to my life, the Lord said to me, “Why don't you ever get alone?” It was a question that made me uncomfortable. The Lord knew exactly what I needed to hear.

Reality check: I am not so important that the world needs constant access to me, and spending time alone with the Lord is infinitely more valuable than being connected 24/7 to this world. Are you with me, technophiles? Maybe it's time to take a look at our connected time and turn off the technology when we don't need it. Maybe it's time we spend more of our daily lives purposefully disconnected from the multitudes and more connected to the most amazing Person in the universe. I know one thing is certain—He would love it if we did!

—CRAWFORD PAUL
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www.whyweweb.com

What makes God **SORRY?** • Rex Trogdon

“Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow...” Lamentations 1:12

To read in Genesis 6:6, “*And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart,*” gives us a glimpse of God and His compassion. This statement affirms what we know to be true: God is not a faceless, insensitive being who put things in motion and then left us to our own devices. Indeed, it was man’s devices (Eccl. 7:29) that brought God, as our loving Creator, to this point of grief and response.

We have a heart-to-heart connection here between God and His creature, man. What happens at this intersection? Follow the events as they unfold and prepare to be amazed as we gaze right into the heart of God.

MAN’S SIN

First, GOD IS AWARE. We read that “*the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*” (Gen. 6:5), and it grieved Him. How different from the creation account that took place a thousand years before, when “*God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good*” (Gen. 1:31)!

If, as Peter says, “*One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (2 Pet. 3:8), then we say, “What a difference a day makes!”

Second, GOD IS ACCURATE. The account of how sin and death entered the world and spread to the whole human family is a sad story. But the source of such defilement was not global; it was individual. The very heart of the problem was man’s heart. God declared, “*that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5). This is not what we want to accept in our pride and arrogance, which is itself sure proof of the accuracy of God’s appraisal of man’s heart.

Third, we read that, in response, GOD IS AFFECTED. Genesis 6:6 records, “*the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*” These two verses contain the first mentions in the Bible of sorrow, heart (man’s heart and God’s heart), and grief. The astounding truth is that it is God, not man, who is so affected. The wickedness in man’s heart so moved God that He was sorry that He had made man on the earth.

Finally, GOD IS ACTIVE. For us, sorrow is to lead to repentance. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the godly sorrow caused by his letter. It was a godly sorrow that led them to repent of sin (2 Cor. 7:9). Not so with God, for “*God is not a man...that He should repent*” (Num. 23:19). God’s sorrow led Him to action—action that stretched from creation to redemption.

GOD’S RESPONSE

Although God was sorry that He had *created* man, He did not change His predetermined plan to *redeem* man. He still sent His Son into this world of woe to redeem us. The Lord Jesus, that Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, suffered sorrow that was unique. The prophet said of Him, “*Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see If there is any sorrow like My sorrow?*” (Lam. 1:11a). It was through His Son that He could turn the sorrow of sin into the joys of eternal pleasure. The heart-to-heart interaction of Genesis 6:5-6 finds its satisfaction at the cross.



Grave Situation

Does sin still break the heart of God?
Oh, yes! That's why we are exhorted not
to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).
Does God still sorrow? Better to ask,
"Does He still care?" The Bible assures
us that He does! We have a Great High
Priest who is touched with the feeling
of our infirmities (Heb. 2:15). The hymn
writer reminds us,

*Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief.*

But does He still sorrow over sin? Yes.
Sad to say, we can still break the heart
of God.

*Upon that cross of Jesus,
mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess:
The wonders of His glorious love
and my own worthlessness.*

How good to know that while God was
temporarily sorry that He had made
man in creation, He will never regret
His great act of redemption! Both God's
creation and God's redemption will give
Him joy and glory in that eternal day
(Rev. 4:11; 5:9). ■

The sepulchre was open wide,
The closing stone was rolled aside,
And curious crowds pressed round to see
What passing wonder there might be.
There, groaning deep for him who slept,
E'en Christ stood at the grave and wept.

He wept! but His was not the tear
Of human grief on human bier,
That gushes, hopeless for tomorrow,
In unassuaged excess of sorrow.
And yet He wept, though there He stood,
In power's unquestioned plenitude.

But closer now, and closer grew
The press of the surrounding crew,
Who deemed He came to mourn, not save,
As He stooped o'er the dead man's grave,
And gazed with self-communing air
For a short space in silence there.

Nearer He stooped, and yet more near;
Then, do you catch, like trumpet clear,
His life-shout in that mouldering ear?
Forth sent the tomb its hidden birth,
For He who called was God on earth!

Thus, following that resistless word,
The dead sprang forth before his Lord,
Bound hand and foot with funeral clothes,
In life, in breathing life he rose,
And cast amid the astonished crowd,
From his freed limbs, the loosened shroud.

Health's crimson light o'erspread his face,
His eyes were fire, his steps were grace;
Complete in sense, and limb and motion,
Absorbed, he stood in rapt devotion,
While through each uncollapsing vein
The rushing life-stream burst again.

—Lionel T. Berguer

The Remaking of Ben Sloetjes



Everybody has red letter days—days that change our lives in dramatic ways. But September 19, 2002, a beautiful autumn day with a brilliant sun and an azure sky, would change Benjamin Sloetjes' life and those of his family in such profound ways that we could never have imagined. Benjamin was athletic, a fun-loving 18-year-old, a budding musician with a zest for living. His body, like a well-shaped clay vessel, was full of potential. But that day, the car he was working under slipped and crushed him under its weight, leaving his brain oxygen-starved for twenty minutes. What was God allowing in his life—and ours?

He was airlifted to Hamilton General Hospital. The prognosis was not good. He was in a coma, on life support. The doctors were quite certain that, if he lived, he would be blind, and unable to communicate with us. Then his blood pressure began to plummet. At an emergency meeting with the medical staff, we were told that surgery was impossible. Our son's life was slipping away.

Do you believe God hears prayer? While we stood by our dying son's bed, an SOS was sent around the world by e-mail, asking those who trusted in the Lord to ask Him to spare Benjamin's life. You may

think it just a coincidence, but at 8:30 that night, an hour after the call went out, his blood pressure slowly and miraculously began to rise. According to the doctors, it was unheard of for that to have happened.

Slowly, doggedly, our son turned the corner. After seven months of intensive rehab, he came home in April of 2003. But it was a different Benjamin.

The master keeps working

The words from the ancient prophet Jeremiah (in chapter 18) have been a great source of comfort to me. God asked him to watch the potter work at his wheel. Of course when a potter looks at the unshaped clay, he sees something others don't see. He sees a perfect vessel—not the clay on the wheel, but the vessel he has in his mind.

Then slowly, as the potter applies pressure at the right time and in the right way, the clay begins to look more and more like the vessel in the master's mind—until you would not be able to tell one from the other. But I've discovered that if I want to benefit from life's pressures, I need to let God get His hand inside. I need to let Him change me where it matters most—in my thoughts and feelings and beliefs.

*I went down to the potter's house,
and I saw him working at the wheel.
But the pot he was shaping from
the clay was marred in his hands;
so the potter formed it into another pot,
shaping it as seemed best to him.*

(JEREMIAH 18:3-4 NIV)

Not everyone thinks that life has meaning, that there is a personal God working in our lives to accomplish the purpose for which He made us. But it was this that kept me going in the dark times with Benjamin and the family. As a child I had become familiar with the story of God's amazing journey into our pain-riddled world, not only to share in our suffering but to provide the ultimate solution to it.

In childlike faith I had entrusted my life to the One who had died for me, taking my personal sin so that I might be freed of its crushing weight.



A piece of pottery made by Benjamin that was mysteriously found broken where it sat on display by his family's fireplace.



Ben's artwork was featured as part of the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver. He travelled there with his mother Anita and brother Jesse.

I knew I could trust someone who would sacrifice Himself for me. And in the hard times I can't imagine what I would have done without sensing Him nearby, "a very present help" (Psalm 46:1).

As the potter thinks best

Benjamin in some ways is still made of the same "clay" but he has been reshaped by his troubles into a new and wonderful vessel. We have all come to love Benjamin in a new way. He has taught us so much about life.

I used to look back and grieve over all the losses of the talents he had. He was athletic, musical, computer smart. He was funny and had so many friends. But one day I was struck by the words from a song taken from the book of Job: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away—but blessed be the name of the Lord." God gave us Benjamin with a bright and capable mind and He also took aspects of that mind away, but blessed be His name. The new Benjamin has many talents. He of all people should be depressed; instead he is so content and happy, experiencing a deep inner peace that most people long for. It is God's faithfulness that is seeing us through.

About Ben's artwork

Since Benjamin started his journey as an acquired brain injury survivor, he has received four years of intense therapy that focused on walking and balance, speech pathology, cognitive and fine motor skills. Now, his emotive paintings encompass all of these therapies.

A typical painting day for Benjamin includes getting out of bed and being transferred to his studio. He is then presented with a variety of colours of paint and is asked to communicate the hues he wants for the project at hand. He holds the paint brush and generates the expression of art through the movement of his hand. His artwork has become therapeutic and gives him great sense of purpose in his life. 🇨🇦



Ben hard at work in the studio, where he produces greeting cards as well as paintings in a variety of sizes.



Three of Ben's paintings (including the one on our front cover) were selected to be part of an Abilities Arts Festival exhibition. The art was then displayed at the Queen's Park offices of The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. This photo commemorates the sale of his first painting.

The text of this article is adapted from a tract that Ben's mother, Anita has given out many times over the past decade. To learn more about Ben, or to send encouragement or make contact, visit his web site: www.bensloetjes.com

What Makes God

Steve Batts

WEEP?

John 11:35 is the shortest verse in all of the Bible. It contains only two words, yet it is one of the most intriguing verses in all of Scripture. In this verse, we see a rare glimpse into the emotions of Christ. Here the Son of God weeps. He doesn't just shed a tear; it is a deep sorrow that involves a groaning within Himself. What is it that could make Him so sorrowful that He would react this way?

A casual reading of the passage would suggest that sorrow was due to the death of His friend Lazarus. However, upon further investigation, we see that this really isn't the case. In His omniscience, our Lord knew that Lazarus was sick and was going to die as a result. When word of Lazarus's sickness was sent to the Lord Jesus, He intentionally stayed where He was and waited until Lazarus had died, and probably even been buried, before leaving for Bethany.

Jesus planned ahead of time to go and raise Lazarus from the dead. He even told His disciples this: *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep"* (Jn. 11:11). As was so often the case, the disciples didn't quite get what

He was saying. They took him literally, so He bluntly told them, *"Lazarus is dead"* (v. 14). That should have signaled to them that not only was Lazarus literally dead, but that Jesus meant to go and raise him from the dead. The imminent resurrection of Lazarus was no cause for sorrow.

Another possible reason for our Lord's display of emotion could have been the pain that some of His closest friends were experiencing. He may have been filled with empathy for them, which led to this release of tears. However, when the passage is taken as a whole, a different reason emerges. Throughout the whole chapter there is a common thread. It isn't the death of Lazarus, it is the unbelief that surrounds our Lord.

UNBELIEF

It started even before the Lord left for Bethany. His disciples didn't get the hint that Christ was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. They seemed more concerned with the fact that the Jews were out to kill the Lord. After all, in the previous chapter, you see that they went to where they were because the Jews had tried to stone Him.

It wasn't only the Lord's safety that they were worried about. When Jesus announced His intention to go into Judea, Thomas said resignedly, *"Let us go and die with Him"* (v. 16). That is not exactly a ringing endorsement. The thought the Jesus could actually raise Lazarus from the dead hadn't entered his mind.

Once they reached Bethany, the trend continued. Martha, Lazarus's sister, came to the Lord and said, *"if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"* (v. 21). The implication was that it was then too late for the Lord to help.¹

Doubt and unbelief were everywhere. When Mary arrived, she made the same statement Martha had made with the same implication: now that her brother was dead, there was nothing that could be done. It is at this point that we begin to see the emotions of our Lord. It was when He saw the sorrow of Mary and of those around her that He first *"groaned within His Spirit and was troubled"* (v. 33). After He asked where they had laid the body, He began to weep Himself.

Bethany, on the eastern shoulder of the Mount of Olives overlooking the wilderness of Judea, hometown of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.



So what was it that made the Lord weep? Perhaps it was simply empathy for these people He loved, but it appears that there was also the issue of unbelief.

GREATER FAITH AND GLORY

These people had seen the Lord do other miracles, including raising the dead. Why were they unable to conceive that He was able to bring this man back to life, too? It might be due to the length of time that Lazarus had been dead. Many Jews at that time believed that the soul of a person hovered over the body for a period of three days after they had died before departing. Now that Lazarus had been dead for four days, the soul had surely departed and could not be reunited with the body.

This is why our Lord waited to go to Bethany. He had a point to prove: He was the Lord of life and the Master of death. He wasn't merely going to do what they thought impossible; He was going to perform the unfathomable—just as the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20, *“unto Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we as or think.”*

None of these people had even considered the possibility that Jesus could raise this man from the dead. His disciples hadn't; His closest friends hadn't; certainly the crowd around Him hadn't. Therefore, they began to verbalize this unbelief. In verse 37 we read, *“Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”* Their unbelief turned into blame. If He were such a great healer, why hadn't He done anything?

Of course, we know how the story ends. Christ had the stone removed, and then He prayed, *“Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me”* (vv. 41f). Finally, He cried out with a loud voice, *“Lazarus, come forth!”* and Lazarus came out of the tomb

Before we are too hard on the people in this passage, we must ask ourselves how many times we doubt that our Lord can do what is impossible for us. Do we really have confidence that He can do *“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or*

think”? We can grieve the heart of God by our own unbelief, even if it might not be as dramatic as this situation. In our everyday lives, do we show our faith by believing that God can act in extraordinary ways? Imagine what God would do through us if we actually lived in a manner that reflected unreserved faith in Him! As we see in this passage, God will accomplish His will with or without our belief. It just brings more joy both to Him and to us if we trust Him wholeheartedly.

May we be more like Martha, who is often maligned for her statements in chapter 12. May we say even in our times of despair, *“but I know even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to Thee.”* She held out that sliver of faith even in her darkest times. God will reward that faith and use it for His glory.

1 Although, when you read this portion, you see that Martha may have been the only one who believed that Jesus could do something. She followed her first statement with, *“but I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give Thee”* (v. 22). ■

What makes GOD SICK?

Jack Baker

When John wrote to the assembly at Laodicea, it could not be called a Christ-centered assembly. It had been at one time (Col. 4:15) but now it was the only one of the seven assemblies in Revelation where He was outside the meeting, knocking to get in (Rev. 3:20). Perhaps this helps explain why our Lord describes Himself from Revelation 1:5 rather than from John's vision of Christ in Revelation 1:9-20, as with the other assemblies. In Revelation 1:4-5, John prays for grace rather than revealing Christ in the midst.

THE SAVIOR'S NAMES

The Lord presents Himself to Laodicea as the Amen, the source of eternal reality. Believers end prayers with "amen" (1 Cor. 14:16), meaning "may it be so." On earth, the Lord Jesus Christ alone *began* sayings with "amen" meaning "truly." Only John's Gospel doubles the "amen" (25 times). It is equivalent to the Old Testament's "Thus saith the Lord."

He is also the Witness. In Him, eternal reality is revealed. He faithfully bears witness, not sparing mere pretense. His witness is true and genuine. He can be relied upon. So Christ is the touchstone of every assembly. Only with Him in

the midst is spiritual and eternal reality known and practiced.

Furthermore, He is the Beginning (or origin) of the Creation of God. All creation begins with Him as its Creator and also as the Firstborn (Col. 1:15), we being made in His image and likeness. This applies to both creations, old and new. Without Him in the center of the meeting, we need a new beginning as a local assembly.

THE SAVIOR'S REBUKE

It is not surprising that He knew their works (Rev. 3:15). He alone is the test of reality. The Lord uses the second person singular "you" in all these letters as He is writing to the assembly as a unit. His testimony describes the whole assembly. Laodicea was no exception.

They were not "cold." A cold glass of water on a hot day refreshes the soul (Mt. 10:42). A cool head bringing God's peace in time of trouble reflects the presence of the Lord. Our Lord demonstrated such a refreshing influence in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:51ff) when Peter cut the ear off Malchus. Except for His cool spirit of perfect peace, murderous strife would have engulfed them all.

Neither were they "hot." They were not on fire for the Lord. There was no zeal in their assembly affairs. A work without heart is a lifeless work. If we are not excited about our message and our ways, why would anyone else pay attention? Contrast this with the passion of Christ's love for His own (Rev. 3:19).

Lukewarmness shows clearly that Christ is not in the midst. Nothing of Him was found in this assembly for He is surely "cold" as seen by His practical, spiritual, advice in verse 18. He is just as surely "hot" as seen by His love in verse 19 (not to mention the "spewing" of verse 16). The reality of Christ in the midst refreshes in all ways.

Very possibly Laodicea held right doctrine, church order, and meetings. But no spiritual refreshment was to be had. Temporal glory (v. 17) was all they boasted of. There was no lasting value to their work. Perhaps they criticized others for being "emotional" (hot) on the one hand or "legal" (cold) on the other.

They also demonstrated that Christ was not in the midst by testifying of themselves (v. 17) which testimony is not true (Jn. 5:31). Strikingly, this is



Aerial view of ruins on the flat-topped hill of Laodicea.



Evidence of high mineral content in terracotta pipes which carried the water about 5 miles to Laodicea.

“The lukewarmness for which, thanks to this letter, the name of Laodicea has become proverbial, may reflect the condition of the city’s water supply. The water supplied by the spring...was tepid and nauseous by the time it was piped to

Laodicea, unlike the therapeutic hot water of Hierapolis or the refreshing cold water of Colosse” (Anchor Bible Dictionary).

the only place in the book of Revelation where we read “*you say*” (second person). Clearly, the Word of the Lord was not in their mouth (Rom. 10:8*f*) so their works did not glorify God (Mt. 5:16). It seems proper that the Lord threatened to “*spew thee out of My mouth*” (v. 16). Imagine the faithful and true Witness with nothing to say about us because we are not in His mouth!

An assembly that pats itself on the back is in great danger. Self-satisfaction takes what belongs to the Lord for its own self. When we meet around Him, He is made known and glorified. Only so is His refreshing Spirit available.

THE SAVIOR’S SOLUTION

How could this assembly return to Christ-centeredness? The Lord counseled them (v. 18) to exchange their riches for pure gold proven in the heat of fire. Their enthusiasm had to be for Him. Perhaps a good start would have been to speak often (warmly) of Him, for we talk of what is important to us. They would quickly have found they didn’t have much to say (witness). This would have forced them back to the Scriptures to learn of Him and His love.

He also counseled them to cool the burning shame of their nakedness with the robes of His righteousness. Their walk had to be by faith rather than feeling. When they began to boast of His doings in their lives, they may not have had much to say. This would have forced them to walk prayerfully by His Spirit.

But they needed eyes opened by personally applying salve. Who other than the Amen, the faithful and true Witness could open them? They had to do more than read the Bible. They needed to hear His voice and know when He was speaking of them. A clear conviction of need makes the rest much easier.

Here, for the first time in these seven letters, the Lord addresses the individual. All seven letters end with a personal exhortation to the hearers and the overcomers, but only here is the body of the letter addressed to an individual. The “anyone” of verse 20 refers to any individual in the meeting. Just as the whole impacts the individual, so too the individual impacts the whole assembly. One person can make a difference.

Israel’s well-being was endangered by one man right at the start. In Joshua 7:21*f*, Achan explains how he came to sin. He saw...coveted...took...hid what belonged exclusively to God. It began with a look but it ended with God’s possession becoming Achan’s possession. In Joshua 7:2*ff*, the whole nation did the same. By means of two spies, Israel saw that Ai was a small town and felt sure they could take it for themselves. It seems Achan’s sin preceded Israel’s, influencing the whole camp.

The church also began so. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) sold a possession and gave it to the Lord. That was fine but they kept for themselves part of what they said

they gave to the Lord. There was no burning zeal for Him. Their “cold” was selfish human calculation. As a result, they jeopardized the whole church.

Is that what happened in Laodicea? They took the Lord’s portion as their own. They testified of their own greatness. Their glory was that which only lasted for time. But God is not deceived. He is the faithful and true Witness who reveals all to them. His love is hot. His counsel is cold. Both provide refreshment.

Notice the grace of Christ in the midst. He did not demand but rather “wished” (verse 15) that they were like Him. He “counseled” (v. 18) them. Even more amazingly, He (the Lord of the Church) stood outside, knocking (v. 20), patiently waiting for anyone (you? me?) to open the door and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Let Him cause your heart to burn. Let Him quiet your heart with His cool comfort. Then you can return to a Christ-centered meeting. How great is the God we adore! ■

As this issue of the magazine is going to press, Jack is on his way to Armenia to visit and encourage fellow saints there. His travelling companion is the author of our Why We Web column, Crawford Paul.

WHAT MAKES GOD REJOICE?

BY MARK ANDERSON

“The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works.” PSALM 104:31

The precise linguistic distinctions between joy and rejoicing is a matter this article will leave for others to detail. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that joy is most often understood to be an inward response of the spirit, a feeling we may or may not have. Thus, David can say in Psalm 51:12, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation”; David rightly recognized that a full and trusting reliance on God ought to produce an inward joy, a joy which sin had muted. Thus in the New Testament, we read in Romans 15:13, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

CHRISTIAN JOY

In contrast to that inward and perhaps quiet joy of salvation which is to be the hallmark of all Christian endeavor, Scripture speaks often of rejoicing: a joy that has been lingered upon and magnified beyond the bounds of the unobserved inner life. The word used

for rejoice in the New Testament means “full of cheer”; rejoicing is what happens when joy has filled us entirely.

Of course, when something has filled us entirely and continues to increase, it overflows. Rejoicing then is usually joy in action, joy that finds expression in word or deed and has spilled out of a full inner life. Throughout a reading of both Old and New Testaments, we find many references implying action, references like Zephaniah 3:14: “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.” A joy properly appreciated should produce outward effect—singing and shouting in this case.

It’s hard to imagine a better picture of rejoicing, of joy made full and then overflowing, than that of the once-lame beggar we find in Acts 3:8—a man who literally jumped for joy.

We do well to note here the injunction of

1 Thessalonian 5:16: “Rejoice evermore!” Certainly that’s a short enough verse to commit to memory quickly and easily, but despite its brevity and simplicity, it remains a verse that is rarely applied with any consistency. We are instructed to rejoice in every circumstance and at all times; instead, we grumble easily. The world, and perhaps, more importantly, our own Christian family, should instead see a visible and consistent manifestation of gratitude to God in our daily lives regardless of trials we may face. Rejoice always.

THE LORD’S JOY

Of course, that is exactly the example we have in our Savior. Scofield has noted that while the Lord Jesus was well spoken of in the early days of His earthly life, He had virtually nothing to say on the subject of joy. But on the night of His betrayal and in the sure knowledge of His impending crucifixion, He spoke clearly and frequently about joy. His request in the upper room



It isn't just in the ideal environment of heaven that joy is to be found. It is found in the dark night hours when shepherds hunt for wayward sheep, in the drudgery of common labor, and in family life where there are crises yet to be faced with a son still outside (Lk. 15:6, 9, 23).

that night was that His joy would fill His disciples too, a joy that He held even in the face of multiple betrayals and His own impending death. Psalm 19 speaks of the strong man “*rejoicing to run his race*” which eloquently describes our Lord on the night He was betrayed.

We are enjoined to rejoice evermore. We have been provided the best possible example of remaining joyful in the life of the Lord Jesus. It should not surprise us then to find that Scripture often speaks of God the Father rejoicing.

It was certainly the case with His people Israel. Deuteronomy 30:9 reads in part, “*the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers.*” The suggestion is not that God will be simply satisfied or content, or even that He will be mildly pleased. The idea is that God will be so filled with joy over His people that His joy will find expression: He will “*abundantly prosper*” the work of their hands. A similar thought is found in Jeremiah 32:41 where we are again told that the Lord will rejoice over His chosen people, and the result of that rejoicing will be their planting in the chosen land. However, God neither simply rejoices over Israel nor does He confine rejoicing to the Old Testament.

The parables of Luke 15 feature a lost sheep and a good shepherd, a lost coin and a diligent searcher, and, finally, the lost son and a waiting, forgiving father. There are many wonderful lessons within these parables, but if we'll pause for a

moment, we'll notice that all three end in shared joy: “*rejoice with me*” is the repeated idea. The words of Luke 15:7 are almost too wonderful to be believed, but no matter how often I read the text, they remain, and so I simply take them at face value: “*joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*”; it is a shared joy, a rejoicing in the presence of the angels. It is God's joy over people just like us.

ETERNAL JOY

Groucho Marx famously quipped that he would never want to belong to any club that would have him as a member. The quote is repeated so often because it is universal—it speaks directly to a sense of our own inadequacy. Once while traveling, tired, and facing a long wait, I was providentially ushered into the airport's first-class waiting area by a helpful baggage clerk. The amenities were wonderful and the rest was appreciated, but the coach-class ticket in my pocket was a constant reminder that I did not really belong there and was not truly welcome.

Often in the grip of conviction about some recent lost battle with sin, I have imagined that heaven will be just a little like that feeling: it will be a wonderful place, but I will slink about with downcast gaze—like the prodigal imagined himself—constantly aware that I do not belong. Those sorts of thoughts do a grave injustice to a Shepherd who carries home the lost sheep, the diligent Searcher who wouldn't stop searching, the Father who waits hopefully for the worst of sons, and to the God who rejoices over repentant sinners.

Due to an unfortunate choice of chapter break, we lose the context, but in John 14:2, the Lord Jesus is speaking to Peter—the same disciple who would shortly deny Christ three times in rapid succession with an oath. When Peter later reflected on his own failure and guilt, how comforting must the words of Jesus have been to him: “*In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*” For you. Even for those who deny, there is a place—there are, after all, many mansions; mansions reserved for sinners and failures who have repented.

We often dwell on that lovely phrase from Matthew 25: “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” We emphasize that opening phrase and make it our goal to be faithful stewards. However, the closing phrase of that passage is worth consideration too: “*Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*”

Finally, among the closing sentences of Scripture, we find these words in Revelation 19:7: “*Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.*” What makes God rejoice? Repentant sinners fill the heart of God with joy—so much so that He wills to share that joy with us. Repentant sinners are exactly who heaven was made to house, and we are not unwelcome guests there, even for a moment. We will spend eternity with the One who rejoices over us and has carried us to the best of all possible homes. ■



Many people have asked, “Does God laugh?” In reaction to the ironies of life, others suggest that God must have a sense of humor. Both statements might mask other questions: Does God have a sense of humor anything like ours, and does He laugh at things like we do? Does God exhibit happiness, or is He cold and unmoved?

The Bible teaches that there are three sources of revelation available to those wanting to learn about God: nature (Ps. 8; Ps. 19; Rom. 1:19-20), the inspired Word of God communicated through prophets or apostles (Deut. 18:18-19; 1 Cor. 14:37), and the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:18; 14:9; Heb. 1:3). While nature might not help us answer the question about whether God laughs, the Scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ certainly do.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S LAUGHTER

Isaiah 55:8 reminds us that there is a vast difference between God's thoughts and emotions and those of humanity. Thankfully, such affirmations of the transcendence of God are balanced by verses like Hebrews 4:15. Though vastly beyond us, God is personally familiar with human emotion and experience. Nonetheless, the idea of God laughing,

in the sense of being amused by a joke as we would be, is not found in Scripture. In such cases, our amusement and laughter are reactions to novel combinations of information or unique perspectives on life. God's omniscience renders surprise and novelty impossible for Him.

GOD'S LAUGHTER IN SCRIPTURE

While the image of God laughing is rare in Scripture, three verses in the Psalms mention a setting in which God laughs. This laughter is nothing to smile at. It is a terrifying event. What is it that makes God laugh? Psalms 2:4, 37:13, and 59:8 all give a similar answer. God laughs at the confident intentions of the wicked in their attacks on the righteous. Consider Psalm 2 as an example.

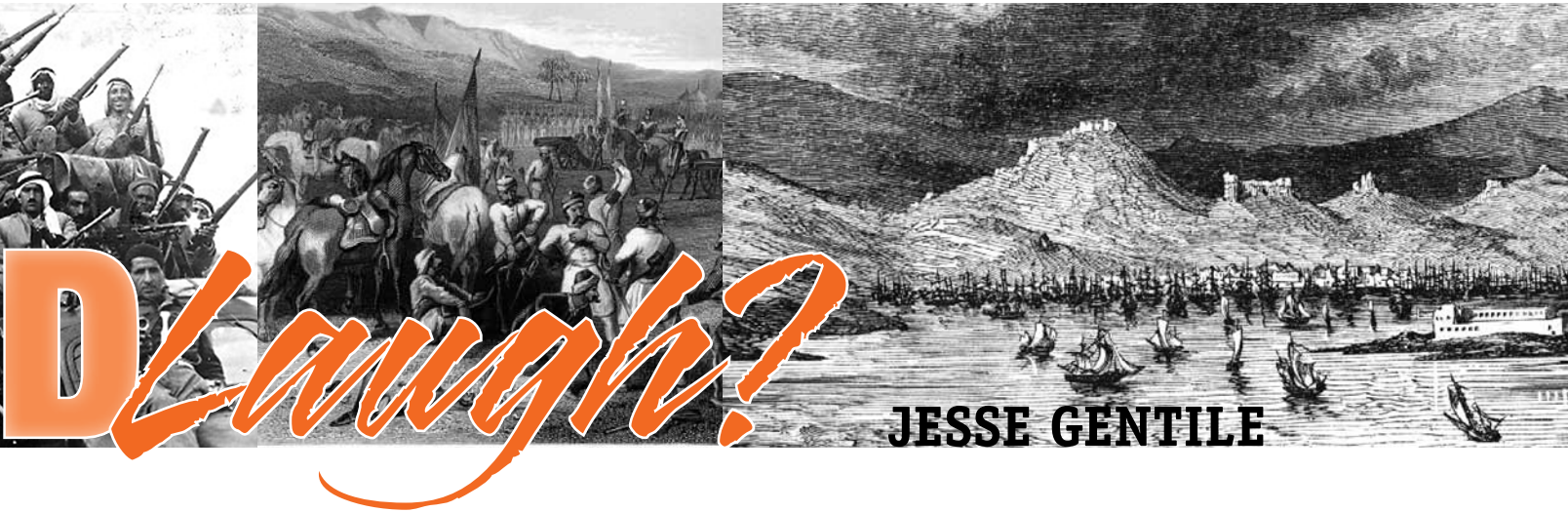
The second psalm is one of the most frequently quoted psalms in the New Testament. It stands at the head of a category of psalms known as “royal psalms” (see also Psalms 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144) because they address themes like authority, rule, and Israel's king.

Psalm 2 opens with a question of amazement. What futile expectations have infected the nations? What could be more

vain than to attempt to attack the God who upholds the galaxies (Heb. 1:3)? The kings of earth are delusional to speak of throwing off God's rule. They are unified in their threats and the marshaling of international forces (v. 2). They announce their intentions (v. 3). The planet has spoken. God and His King are no longer welcome to rule.

The scene shifts to heaven for God's response (v. 4). Laughter is heard. God is laughing! It is not a laugh of amusement, but of derision. God is in fact scoffing (NASB)—taunting even (NET)! What makes God laugh? The idle threats of the ungodly make God laugh.

After expressing disdain for such nonsense, God announces the one reality that all authority on Earth must come to grips with: He has placed His King on the earth (v. 6). The anointed King joins in by echoing God's pronouncement of the Davidic covenant to Him. God has decreed that the Davidic king, in Zion, is His only begotten Son. To oppose Him is to oppose heaven. Furthermore, He will not rule on earth as one King among many. It is God's intention to give all nations to His Son as



an inheritance (v. 8). Like a man smashing clay pots with an iron rod, God's anointed King will put down all rule and authority (v. 9). He will be King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14). The wise reaction to this revelation is twofold: service (v. 11) and worship (v. 12). We are reminded of 1 Corinthians 2:7-9. If only the rulers of this world had listened!

DID JESUS LAUGH?

There is more for us to consider, though. One can look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as a second source of revelation on the question of God's laughter. Being fully man, the Lord Jesus had the human ability to laugh. Yet we ought not to rush to the assumption that He did.

Throughout His ministry, the Lord Jesus was very clear about the fact that the words He spoke were the words the Father gave Him to speak (Jn. 12:50; 14:10). This dispenses with the idea that our Lord walked through Israel saying or doing whatever came naturally to His mind, even in its moral perfection. While we cannot say that He never laughed, no verse in the four Gospels records His doing so. As the express image of the Father (Jn. 14:9; Heb. 1:3), this is an extremely significant revelation about God.

Why would Jesus, as the express image of the Father, not laugh? In Christ, God came to His own, and His own received Him not (Jn. 1:11). He had no place to lay His head (Mt. 8:20). He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3). His Father's house was turned into a house of merchandise (Jn. 2:16). He wept over the blindness of Israel (Lk. 19:41). His hour of suffering and death was always before Him (Mk. 10:45; Jn. 12:27). The whole world lay under the sway of Satan and wickedness (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:19). Painful verses like these cover the Scriptures. In Christ, God entered a world horribly defaced by sin. He found little in a fallen world to be joyful about, let alone laugh over.

If the Savior did not laugh and if the only statements about God laughing are expressions of His scorn, is the situation worse than expected? Does this confirm the fears of some that God is cold, distant, and unmoved? Thankfully, Scripture answers with a resounding "No!" Although we do not see God laugh (in a happy sense) in a world of rebellion, it does not mean that He is cold or lacking in positive emotion.

Passages like Isaiah 62:5, Zephaniah 3:17, and Luke 15:7-10 show God rejoicing. Like a person celebrating over a lost sheep that is found, so God rejoices when even one person repents. He also promises to rejoice one day over His restored people Israel. His Word tells us that He delights in obedience (1 Sam. 15:22), justice (Prov. 11:1), and truth (Prov. 12:22). Most of all, God took such delight in His Son that He publically announced His pleasure from heaven (Lk. 3:22). Furthermore, we are told that it is God who will one day put an end to all sadness (Rev. 21:4). In His presence is fullness of joy forever (Ps. 16:11).

In this age, God's laughter is an expression of anger towards the very thing that robbed this world of true happiness: rebellion. It is no wonder that God delights to set His Son as King upon Zion. The rod of iron wielded by God's Son is also a "*scepter of righteousness*." In a coming day, when the King of Psalm 2 completes His rule on earth (1 Cor. 15:24), we may yet have the joy of hearing God laugh in a new way (Rev. 22:3-5). ■

Living in the Light *Part Two*

BALANCING RISKS AND BENEFITS

Ultraviolet (UV) light in sunlight can damage human skin and promote the development of skin cancers. Health news abounds with warnings about sun exposure for people with light skin. In recent years, these warnings have increased sharply because of tanning and more vacation travel.

In part 1 of *Living In The Light*, we asked how could it be good for God to have placed the first humans naked into a sunlit garden if sunlight is associated with skin cancers. Wouldn't they have suffered from skin cancer even while having strong bones due to abundant vitamin D?

There are several reasons why this would not have been the case. First, the pattern of sun exposure in the garden would not have produced the most common nor the most deadly forms of skin cancer associated with UV exposure: Basal Cell Carcinoma (>90% of skin cancer cases) and Malignant Melanoma (<5%). Development of these types of skin lesions is associated with excessive but intermittent exposure to the sun, not daily exposure.

Secondly, the risk of developing skin cancer from exposure to UV light is associated with certain genetic mutations which would not have been present in Adam's genetic pool. Even the development of skin cancer that is associated with total cumulative UV light exposure, as in Squamous Cell Carcinoma (0.1%),



“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun” (Eccl. 11:7).

would have been unlikely without these genetic defects.

Third, Adam's skin, like ours, was equipped with a protective pigment called melanin. Melanin effectively absorbs ultraviolet light and releases the energy as heat. This prevents damage to genetic material in skin cells which could otherwise lead to skin cancer. People with darker skin are less susceptible to skin damage from UV light. But dark-skinned people don't have so much melanin that production of vitamin D is prevented. Darker-skinned people need longer exposure to more intense sunlight/UV to produce sufficient vitamin D than do lighter-skinned people—just the type of conditions naked people living in an equatorial garden would face. If Adam and Eve were created with medium to dark brown skin, they would have had enough melanin to protect their skin from UV light damage but still allow

sufficient vitamin D production. Strong bones, yes. Skin cancer, no. An elegant balancing of risks and benefits.

The protective design of human skin and the occurrence of the weak bone disease rickets, caused by vitamin D deficiency from insufficient sunlight, are indicators that we were originally designed to live outside and to actually need sunlight (and calcium) for proper health. Today we wear clothes and hide from the sun to prevent skin cancer and often live at high latitudes where sunlight is so weak that we become vitamin D deficient. Today we can cure skin cancer with surgery and treat weak bones with supplements, yet we still need sunlight for our mental health as well as physical health. And what about spiritual health? The light we need most today for our spiritual health is “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6).

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

When God Repents

Relents



PS: IS THIS CHANGE HELPFUL?

In the KJV, the Hebrew word *nâcham*,¹ translated as “repent” (39x) and “comfort” (65x), literally means “to sigh.” It can express a range of feelings in the spectrum of regret, pity, sorrow, or consoling oneself. The word clearly has its challenges for the Bible student.

The common Greek word rendered “repent” in the New Testament is *metanoëō*. Strong’s defines it as “think differently,” or, as is often given, “to change the mind.” But the Greek equivalent to *nâcham* is *metamellomai* (used only 6x). Strong’s says it means “to care afterwards.” This equivalence is noticed by its use in Hebrews 7:21 where it is the Greek rendering of Psalm 110:4.

Some scriptures state that God cannot repent, for example Numbers 23:19, “*God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of a man that He should repent*” (see also 1 Sam. 15:29). But others appear to say just the opposite.

Of course, in some contexts one of those alternative meanings might fit. “*And it repented the Lord [the Lord was sorry, NKJV] that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart*” (Gen. 6:6). If the NKJV rendering is appropriate, there is no repentance here in the sense of mind change, only the grief in God’s heart at the pathetic plight of the fallen human race. A similar passage speaks of the times of the Judges (Jud. 2:18), another case of God’s sorrow.

This could also be the case in the tragedy of King Saul, although the NKJV in

this passage introduces something more than sorrow: “...*the Lord repented [regretted, NKJV] that He had made Saul king over Israel*” (1 Sam. 15:35, see also v. 11). My concern is that “regret” may connote more than sorrow in the reader’s mind; it may infer remorse over one’s actions. While it is true the Lord “*made Saul king*,” it was Saul’s fateful actions that led to his failure, causing God’s grief.

Immutability expresses the idea that God, in His essence, character, and will, is constant and perfect. God is not capricious, changing His mind for whatever reason. With the Lord there is “*no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning*” (Jas. 1:17, ASV).

So what do we do with the verses² where God is said to repent, where clearly there is a change? Some suggest that, when referring to God, it is a figure of speech known as *anthropopathism* (literally, man feelings) where human emotions are ascribed to God. They say it is similar to *anthropomorphisms* (man form) when God is described as having physical parts (e.g., right arm, feet, eyes, hands, etc.) even though He is not a physical being.

But is that true? Long before the Incarnation of the One who is “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb. 4:15), we read of a God who knew Israel’s sorrows (Ex. 3:7). Are these merely figures of speech? Were the tears of Jeremiah not in fact the tears of Jehovah? And is the Good Shepherd not still moved with compassion towards the multitudes?

One example where God is said to repent is the showdown at Sinai when “*The Lord repented of the evil [relented from the harm, NKJV] which He thought to do to His people*” (Ex. 32:14). Does changing “*repent*” to “*relent*” help us in our understanding here? I’m not sure it does.

When Moses had mercy on the people and pled their case with the Lord, whose will was done that day? Why, it was God’s will! He loved the people far more than Moses did. He was looking for an intercessor that day, who felt the way He did about His people.

Clearly God did not change His mind that day at Sinai. However He does alter His actions in response to man’s behavior, in this case the pleadings of Moses. God does answer prayer—Jesus said so (Jn. 16:23)! He does respond to human need.

So now the question is: What makes God repent? We find a key in Psalm 106, which recounts a long list of the failures of the Israelites and the corresponding kindnesses of their God. Then the psalmist gives us our answer: “*And He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies*” (v. 45). —J.B.N.

1 The Hebrew word *shûb* is also rendered “repent” on three occasions: 1 Ki. 8:47, Ezek. 14:6, 18:30. It means to turn back or away, and among other words is translated “return” (396x) “again” (245x), and “turn” (220x).

2 Other key passages are 1 Chron. 21:15; Jer. 15:6; 18:8; 26:3, 13, 19; 42:10; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:10

Seed Thoughts

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April 6

READ: 1 Kings 20-22; 2 Kings 1-2

MEMORIZE: Isaiah 61:10

I had been called at the last minute to speak at a conference. I spent the night preparing and was exhausted when the taxi arrived to take me to the airport. The cabbie, on discovering the purpose of my trip, asked my age; he thought I was too young for the task. I then asked him his age. "Fifty," he replied. Flippantly I said, "So does life begin at 50?" "It hasn't begun for me yet," he responded. "Does your Bible have the answer?" My tiredness vanished as I shared with him the way of salvation. As I read scriptures to him, he suddenly pulled the car to the shoulder, put his head on the wheel, and began to pray. "Lord, You knew I needed this. I'm ready for all you want to do for me. Thank You, Jesus, for what you did to save a pathetic case like me." Back on the road, his joy was evident as I shared with him the blessings of being in Christ. I wasn't ready, but the Spirit was, and so was this poor soul. What grace that the Lord uses weak vessels. *It's all He has to work with!*

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June 3

READ: Psalms 25-27

MEMORIZE: Mark 8:31

Christian apologist JOSH McDOWELL explains that the change in his life when he trusted Christ convinced his father that there was hope for him as well. McDowell writes: "After I trusted Christ, my life was changed in six to eighteen months. But my father's life was changed right before my eyes. It was as if someone reached down and switched on a light inside him. He touched alcohol only once after that. He got the drink as far as his lips, and that was it—after forty years of drinking! He didn't need it anymore. Fourteen months later, he died from complications of his alcoholism. But in that fourteen-month period, over a hundred people in the area around my hometown committed their lives to Christ because of the change they saw in me. You can mock and ridicule it. But it works... because Jesus Christ is in the business of changing lives."

READ: Psalms 100-102

MEMORIZE: Luke 23:4

Baha'i: founded in 1863 in Tehran, Iran as a breakaway from Islam. There are now 5-7 million adherents. They believe that the deity has revealed himself progressively through world religions, the last of these being Bahá'u'lláh, who united all religions—thus practicing any of these leads to the same end. This course this is self-defeating. You cannot believe that all ways lead to God at the same time believe what Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn 14:6). They believe the purpose of life is to develop spiritually. Heaven and hell are merely states of being. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as Christ's deity, virgin birth, vicarious death, bodily resurrection and second coming. For these reasons, they are not able to say with certainty: "The Son of God... loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Yet in His mercy, the Lord is still "able to save us" (1 Tim 2:25) if they come to God through Christ alone.

30

MEMORIZE: John 1:11-12

Psalm 114-116
"God has spoken once, twice..." (Ps 62:11). Scottish physician W.P. Mackay remembered seeing his mother in agonizing prayer over his salvation. But it did not move him, and he grew increasingly godless. Years later, he treated a badly injured laborer. The man asked that his landlady be called, and to bring him "the Book." Mackay was deeply impressed with the "happy expression constantly on his face." After his death, a nurse asked, "What shall we do with this?" holding up the man's Bible. Mackay wrote: "I took the Bible and—could I trust my eyes? It was my own Bible! The Bible which my mother had given me when I left my parents' home, and which later, when short of money, I sold for a small amount. My name was still in it, written in my mother's hand." He concluded, "The regained possession of my Bible was the cause of my conversion." Later he wrote: "We praise Thee, O God, for Thy Spirit of light, Who has shown us our Savior and scattered our night."

If you're eager to read the whole description of the Baha'i faith that's clipped off by June 3, its hanging out the other side of June 3. Of course, it would be easier just to look it up on the Good News Granary website!