



BIBLE EXPLORATIONS
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Bible Explorations Newsletter

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2025 is here! Doesn't seem like that much time has gone by...Elder VanDenburgh went to sleep 6 ½ years ago! Are you ready to see him again? Are you ready to see Jesus return? Are you sure? We must BE ready!!

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL Amos 4:12

Suppose that today Christ should appear in the clouds of heaven, who would be ready to meet Him? Suppose we should be translated into the kingdom of heaven just as we are. Would we be prepared to unite with the saints of God, to live in harmony with the royal family, the children of the heavenly King? What preparation have you made for the judgment? Have you made your peace with God? Are you laboring together with God? Are you seeking to help those around you, those in your home, those in your neighborhood, those with whom you come in contact that are not keeping the commandments of God? ... Are we getting ready to meet the King? ... If it were possible for us to be admitted into heaven as we are, how many of us would be able to look upon God? How many of us have on the wedding-garment? How many of us are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing? How many of us are worthy to receive the crown of life? ... Position does not

make the man. It is Christ formed within that makes a man worthy of receiving the crown of life, that fadeth not away. GCB 4/6/1903

I was pointed to the remnant on the earth. The angel said to them, "Will ye shun the seven last plagues? .If so, ye must die that ye may live. Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye must have a greater preparation than ye now have.... Sacrifice all to God. Lay all upon His altar—self, property, and all, a living sacrifice. It will take all to enter glory." EW 66-67 Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father.... While the wicked flee from His presence, Christ's followers will rejoice.... To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion and familiar friend. They have lived in close contact, in constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen.... Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts. COL 420-1 If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today. *In Heavenly Places 227*

PRAY, STUDY, SEARCH!

The true people of God are now pulling apart, and the tares are being bound in bundles ready to burn. Decided positions will be taken. Satan will move upon minds that have been indulged, upon men who have always had their own way, and anything presented to them in counsel or reproof to change their objectionable traits of character is considered faultfinding, binding them, restraining them, that they cannot have liberty to act themselves. The Lord in great mercy has sent messages of warning to them, but

they would not listen to reproof. Like the enemy who rebelled in heaven, they do not like to hear, do not correct the wrong they have done but become accusers, declaring themselves misused and unappreciated. 7LtMs, Lt 13, 1892, par. 9

2025 Resolution: “He Must Increase. But I Must Decrease”

-Brent Meikle

John the Baptist was born with a great and singular purpose destined for his life. He was to bear witness to others of the Advent of the Anointed One. The foretold Messiah (Hebrew), or Christ (Greek), of GOD. John stationed himself at the same place along the Jordan river where Joshua led the new Nation of Israel into the Promised Land nearly 1,500-years beforehand. Where the Jordan was parted as the Priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant stepped forward to cross in faith.

Directly across the Jordan stood the Mountain where the LORD led Moses to show him the Promised Land. John was to point all towards the Fulfillment of the Covenant Promise in Christ. *“Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to him”* (John 3: 25-26)

Note that John's disciples and the “Jews” came to him first with questions of the same nature as the Pharisees had approached Jesus regarding ceremonial purification rituals of His Disciples. Next, they wanted to know John's thoughts on the man that John had born witness toward that was now overtaking the Baptism Ministry of John and his Disciples. Both the purification inquiry and the observation of the thriving Baptism Ministry of Jesus were born of a short-sighted blindness.

“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and heareth him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:27-30).

“He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifies; and no man receives his

testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:31-36)

John turned the earthly, short-sited thoughts of those that came to him to seeing and perceiving the heavenly truth. The jealousy of their Baptism Ministry being surpassed to the glory of witnessing the fulfilment of the Word of GOD before their own eyes. Jesus is the Bridegroom of Prophecy. His Followers are the Bride. John is the friend of the Bridegroom, the “Best Man” at the Wedding. His joy is fulfilled in observing the union. He made the introduction. He helped prepare the Bride for His Arrival and even prepared some of the groomsmen (the disciples that followed Jesus). The Increase of John's work after these introductions was always purposed to be from Christ Himself.

I believe we are living in the times today foretold in Revelations 10 and 11 of the 7th Generation that is foretold to be tasked with the same Ministry as was given to John the Baptist. To prepare the World as it is today for the Glorious Return of the LORD Jesus Christ to in our very generation. E.G. White had much to say about Thoughts. “Thoughts Form Character—As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day, and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded, for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the man is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual pulse is quickened and the power for doing good is increased. And as one drop of rain prepares the way for another in moistening the earth, so one good thought prepares the way for another. The Youth's Instructor, January 17, 1901. (Messages to Young People, 144.)

She spoke of how we think about ourselves. “We commit sin when we talk of our weakness and inability. It is an offense to God for his children to do this, when Jesus, through taking upon himself the nature of man, has exalted humanity, and has brought the fallen race into favor with God, and has opened to us the resources of power and the treasures of his grace. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” This does not mean that we are

not to speak of the genuine challenges, pain, and suffering we may endure.

It means that we must put things in proper perspective. Rather than viewing and speaking of pain and suffering and even death as eternal, those that are truly in Christ must view them for what they really are—temporal. We must never fail to believe that Christ is in us and that nothing is impossible with GOD. Every pain, all suffering and every injustice will be healed by Christ in this age or the next. This is a Blessed Assurance that is not Promised or enjoyed by those who reject Christ. But it is our Truth. One Day there will be nothing standing between us and our LORD.

So, although we suffer, we do so as one who is precious to the LORD. Satan expects us to curse GOD when our “gifts” are taken away. That we don’t love the “Giver” --only the gifts. Many of us no longer want to attend Church, or study the Bible, or be among other Christians during the times of our greatest suffering. This is the “Sin” In this we acknowledge that we only love the LORD when we are not challenged. But the LORD sometimes allows these challenges in order to “hedge us in”. To put us in a place where Bible Study and Christ-based relationships is all we have to lean upon. This has happened to me. Without it I would have not drawn as close to GOD.

It is in these times of personal challenges we must tell ourselves and others, “He must Increase but I must decrease”. The situation is too overwhelming to try and handle on our own. We must decrease and allow Him to increase in our own hearts and minds. To comfort us. To heal us. “The training of the heart, the control of the thoughts, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, will give control of the words. This is true wisdom, and will ensure quietness of mind, contentment and peace. There will be joy in the contemplation of the riches of the grace of God.—Letter 10, 1894.

Captive Thoughts—If the life is given into its control, the power of the truth is unlimited. The thoughts are brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. From the treasure of the heart are brought forth appropriate and fitting words. Especially should our words be guarded. Writing to Timothy, Paul says, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:13, 14).—Manuscript 130, 1897.

Adversary Cannot Read Thoughts—The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the thoughts of men; but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words; he takes

account of actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations to meet the cases of those who place themselves in his power. If we would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words or actions, Satan would be defeated; for he could not prepare his specious temptations to meet the case. But how often do professed Christians, by their lack of self-control, open the door to the adversary of souls!—The Review and Herald, March 22, 1887. (Selected Messages 1:122, 123.)

For every class of temptations there is a remedy. We are not left to ourselves to fight the battle against self and our sinful natures in our own finite strength. Jesus is a mighty helper; a never-failing support.... The mind must be restrained and not allowed to wander. It should be trained to dwell upon the Scriptures and upon noble, elevating themes. Portions of Scripture, even whole chapters, may be committed to memory, to be repeated when Satan comes in with his temptations.... When Satan would lead the mind to dwell upon earthly and sensual things, he is most effectually resisted with, “It is written.”—The Review and Herald, April 8, 1884.

The Only Security Is Right Thinking—We need a constant sense of the ennobling power of pure thoughts and the damaging influence of evil thoughts. Let us place our thoughts upon holy things. Let them be pure and true, for the only security for any soul is right thinking. We are to use every means that God has placed within our reach for the government and cultivation of our thoughts. We are to bring our minds into harmony with His mind. His truth will sanctify us, body and soul and spirit.—Letter 123, 1904.

Dwelling on Frivolous Things—We should endeavor to have our minds in that condition where we can receive the impressions of the Holy Spirit. But they cannot receive increased light who allow their thoughts to run constantly upon frivolous things. The mind should be stored with heavenly treasure, with food that will enable us to grow spiritually, and thus prepare us for a holy heaven.—Manuscript 51, 1912. (Our High Calling, 284.)

Provision Made to Elevate Thoughts—God has made every provision whereby our thoughts may become purified, elevated, refined, and ennobled. He has not only promised to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but He has made an actual provision for the supply of grace that will lift our thoughts toward Him and enable us to appreciate His holiness. We may realize that we are Christ’s possession and that we are to manifest His character to the world. Prepared by heavenly grace, we become clothed with the righteousness of Christ, in the wedding garment, and are fitted to sit down at the marriage

supper. We become one with Christ, partakers of the divine nature, purified, refined, elevated, and acknowledged to be the children of God—heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.—The Youth's Instructor, October 28, 1897.

Avoid Negative Thinking—As we are not our own, as we are bought with a price, it is the duty of everyone who professes to be a Christian to keep his thoughts under the control of reason and oblige himself to be cheerful and happy. However bitter may be the cause of his grief, he should cultivate a spirit of rest and quietude in God. The restfulness which is in Christ Jesus, the peace of Christ, how precious, how healing its influence, how soothing to the oppressed soul! However dark his prospects, let him cherish a spirit to hope for good. While nothing is gained by despondency, much is lost. While cheerfulness and a calm resignation and peace will make others happy and healthy, it will be of the greatest benefit to oneself. Sadness and talking of disagreeable things is encouraging the disagreeable scenes, bringing back upon oneself the disagreeable effect. God wants us to forget all these—not look down but up, up!—Letter 1, 1883.

Peril of Dwelling on Earthly Things—If your thoughts, your plans, your purposes, are all directed toward the accumulation of the things of earth, your anxiety, your study, your interests, will all be centered upon the world. The heavenly attractions will lose their beauty.... Your heart will be with your treasure.... You will have no time to devote to the study of the Scriptures and to earnest prayer that you may escape the snares of Satan.—Review and Herald, September 1, 1910.

Higher Grade of Thought—Man has revolted from God and has ever since endeavored to make his scheme of doing as he pleased a success in securing happiness. But whenever he has sought to fill his mind with any other object than God, he has been disappointed. There must be an altogether higher grade of thought, an altogether higher class of studies, and higher objects for you to seek to obtain than you have had in the past. The disorders and imperfections of human words and human characters can be restored only by the Lord Jesus Christ. He, then, should be the object of your contemplation, the theme of your conversation. You must have an altogether higher exercise of thought and action if you would understand the great plan of redemption.—Manuscript 13, 1897.

A New Endowment of Power—Those who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God, purifying their thoughts by obedience to the law of God, will continually receive a new endowment of physical and mental power. There will be heart yearnings after God and earnest prayer for clear

perception to discern the office and work of the Holy Spirit. It is not for us to use it, but for the Holy Spirit to use us, molding, fashioning every power.—Testimonies on Sabbath-School Work, 106. (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 40.)

Power of Thought a Gift From God—The mind is a trust from God. The powers of the mind are to be cultivated. They are to be so wisely used that they will increase in strength. Each one is to use his entrusted talents in a way that the greatest good will be done. The mind is to be educated that the best energies of the soul will be brought out and every faculty be developed. We must not be contented with a low standard. We are to move onward from one advanced line of work to another.—Letter 106, 1901.

He [Christ] died for me that I might be blessed and that His joy might remain in me. Therefore I keep my mind in that channel; I educate it; I train it; I train my tongue; I train my thoughts; I train all that there is of me that I may fasten it upon Jesus Christ.—Manuscript 36, 1891. Every faculty of the mind shows that God designed these faculties to be used, not to remain inactive.—Testimonies for the Church 4:411 (1880).

Right Thinking Only Security—The only security for any soul is right thinking. As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). The power of self-restraint strengthens by exercise. That which at first seems difficult, by constant repetition grows easy, until right thoughts and actions become habitual. If we will, we may turn away from all that is cheap and inferior and rise to a high standard; we may be respected by men and beloved of God.—The Ministry of Healing, 491 (1905).

Christ-centered Thinking—Your last thought at night, your first thought in the morning, should be of Him in whom is centered your hope of eternal life.—Letter 19, 1895. (Our High Calling, 116.) **Positiveness to Be Developed**—The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character manifested in Christ are to be developed in us through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us.—The Desire of Ages, 73 (1898).

Effort Proportionate to Object of Pursuit—The thoughts must be centered upon God. We must put forth earnest effort to overcome the evil tendencies of the natural heart. Our efforts, our self-denial and perseverance, must be proportionate to the infinite value of the object of which we are in pursuit. Only by overcoming as Christ overcame shall we win the crown of life.—The Ministry of Healing, 455 (1905).

Christ Changes Thoughts—Christ came to change the current of his [man's] thoughts and affections.—Testimonies for the Church 1:196 (1859). As the Flower Turns to the Sun—Let the soul be drawn out and upward that God may grant us a breath of the heavenly atmosphere. We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun.—Steps to Christ, 99, 100 (1892). Transformation Begins With Thoughts—The words “A new heart also will I give you” (Ezekiel 36:26) mean, “A new mind will I give you.” This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our view of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God.—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 452 (1913).

We want the transforming grace of God to take right hold of our thinking powers. We may think evil, we may continue to keep our minds upon objectionable things, but what does this do for us? It conforms our entire experience to that which we are looking upon. But by beholding Jesus we become changed into His likeness. The servant of the living God sees to some purpose. The eyes are sanctified, and the ears are sanctified, and those who will close their eyes and ears to evil will become changed.—Manuscript 17, 1894.

Perhaps it can best be summed up with the instructions, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD and all these shall be added to it”. The benefit of purposed ongoing Bible Study cannot be understated. The challenges we have in life---big and small---appear much less in the Light of His Wonderful Face. Bible Explorations is both the name and the entire purpose of this Ministry. To explore is to search through, dig deep, uncover, and enjoy our travels from beginning to end of the Word of GOD. Ongoing Biblical Explorations are essential to the well-being of our heart, mind, and soul.

The ideal New Year's Resolution for all of us in 2025 is, “He must increase but I must decrease”. If we spent 10% more time in our study of the Word of GOD, it can be assured that our spirits and our joy would increase proportionately due to the Increase that we experience from the LORD. The more truths that we observe in Him the less we need depend on ourselves for our contentment. I hope you will continue to tune in to Bible Explorations throughout 2025 and may you experience the Increase we are all Promised. My Covenant CODE© Series will continue to offer those of interest with new and fresh studies presenting the Revelation of the Messages from the Tabernacle. Happy New Year 2025

LOOK WHO'S INVITED

By Ted Schultz

In a previous study we saw that the parable of the great supper as well as the parable of the wedding garment illustrate the gospel invitation which the Jewish people rejected. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 307. These parables illustrate the purpose for which the sacred feasts were given to God's covenant people. These annual gatherings were given as object lessons and as spiritual blessings not only for the Jews but for the whole world. “The spiritual blessings [of the “sacred feasts”] given to Israel were not for themselves alone. God had given the bread of life to them, that they might break it to the world.” Christ's Object Lessons, p. 219, 220. Nearly fifteen hundred years before Jesus gave the parable of the great supper He instructed Moses in regard to the feasts.

COMMANDED TO PROCLAIM AS HOLY

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.” Lev. 23:2. Notice that the Lord instructed that the feasts of the Lord were to be proclaimed holy convocations. Many today are instead proclaiming that they are not holy convocations. It is now being taught that these holy convocations are nothing more than a common work day. Let us each one on this point be charitable toward everyone. For most of those who now observe the holy convocations it could well be said that they too did not always do so. Further, they are still growing in their understanding of these things and in a very great many other things beside. We may ask about those who now observe the holy convocations, were they any less sincere in their walk with God when they did not observe the holy convocations? We think not!

HOLY OR UNHOLY?

It was because of the prevailing ignorance of the people that the priests were to teach the difference between the holy and the unholy. “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane [common], and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” Eze. 44:23. It is now being taught that the feasts had been instituted for the making of sacrifices only, but we have seen from Christ's parables of the wedding feast that this is not so. In fact when we compare the parable of the marriage feast to the feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23 some truly amazing things come to light.

God had commanded Israel that the feasts of the Lord were to be proclaimed holy convocations. The Hebrew word for proclaim is qara (Strong's #7121) which means to call out to (address by name), that are bidden, call forth, cry unto,

guest, invite, publish, proclaim. Notice the words call, bidden, cry unto, guest, and invite. These terms remind us of the parables of the great supper (Luke 14:15-24), the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14), and of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). Jesus said, “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.” Matt. 22:3. The words call and bidden are the same Greek word *kaleo* (Strong’s #2564) which means to bid, to call (forth). In other words God’s servants, the Jews, were to call the called to the marriage feast. The Jews had been called by God more than once. They had been called out of Egypt and later they were called out of Babylon. When He called them out of Egypt He reestablished the sacred feasts which were to be proclaimed holy convocations. Also when He called them out of Babylon He reestablished His law among them with the annual feasts and Sabbaths. During the feast of trumpets the book of the law was read to the people. “So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” Neh. 8:8. The people were reminded of how God had miraculously delivered them from their slavery in Egypt and how the law was given to them at Sinai. “Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, and good statutes and commandments: and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.” Neh. 9:13, 14. The people were reminded that they had cast the law behind their backs, and had slain the prophets. Neh. 9:26. The people were made to clearly understand that there were conditions upon which they would receive the blessings of God.

The history of the Hebrew people is one of continual forgetfulness of the terms of the covenant and the conditions that applied to the fulfillment of the covenant promises made by Jehovah to them. God had clearly warned the people, “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.” Deut. 8:11. “Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” Hosea 4:6 To guard against this ever-present danger to forgetfulness God instituted holy convocations. The Hebrew word for convocation is *miqrah* (Strong’s #4744) which defines it as “something called out, i.e. a public meeting (the act, the person, or place); also a rehearsal:—assembly, calling, convocation, reading. So we see that in the Hebrew language the words for proclaim and convocation are by their definitions closely connected. As one follows the *miqrah* throughout the book of the law, it becomes apparent that all the various meanings for *miqrah* can

apply at one and the same time—both to the people and to the scheduled events to which they have been invited.

We have yet one more key word found in connection with the words proclaim (*qara*) and convocation (*miqrah*) in Lev. 23:2 and that is the word feast. The word feast is translated from the Hebrew word *moed* (Strong’s #4150) which means “a fixed time or season, an assembly (as convened for a definite purpose), technically the congregation; by extension, the place of meeting; also a signal, an appointed sign or time, assembly, feast, and set time.” These three terms, *qara*, *miqrah*, and *moed*, enshrined within the book of the law define God’s covenant people. The Lord gave them holy convocations because they were to be a holy people.

Arriving at true biblical understandings using word studies alone is fraught with certain dangers. Words have definitions that often are opposite in their meanings which of course can lead to opposing interpretations. The biases of the individual can often determine the selection of a given definition of a word while the context is not given consideration. All three of the words *qara*, *miqrah*, and *moed*, however, overlap each other in their meanings. The definitions of these words are quite similar. Indeed the context in which these terms are used supports the overlapping of meaning that we see in the definitions of these terms. It is as though God is purposefully driving home a key point in such a way that the point cannot be missed unless one sets themselves to miss it on purpose.

A PEOPLE CALLED OUT

God was calling the children of Israel “out of the land of Egypt” (Lev. 22:33) to be His covenant people. It is often claimed that the holy convocations were for the Jews only as part of the old covenant—that it was given to those who were “called out of the land of Egypt”, but are not for His New Testament church. We direct those of that persuasion once again to the book of the law. “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20:2. These words (which are the same as those of Lev. 22:33) are part of the Decalogue. In the giving of both the annual feast day statutes and the giving of the Decalogue God reminded the people that He was the One that brought them out of the land of Egypt. Are we to conclude therefore that the Ten Commandments were for those only who came out of Egypt and not for the New Testament church? We have seen in previous studies that the commandments, statutes, and judgments were the terms of the covenant that God extended to His people. The condition of being God’s covenant people and His holy nation was based upon whether they would obey the terms of the covenant. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my

covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” Exodus 19:5, 6.

His holy nation was not only to keep His holy convocations, but they were to proclaim them as well. By Israel’s proclamation of and participation in the holy convocations (miqrah) they identified themselves as God’s called out ones (miqrah). Let us remember that these holy convocations in which they participated weekly and annually were a rehearsal (miqrah). What does it mean to rehearse? Webster’s gives the following meanings; “to say it again, repeat, to recite, to recount, to train or make proficient, to perform or practice.” This definition of rehearsal brings to mind a statement from the pen of inspiration. “As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 541. Is not “call to mind” the same as “to recount”, “to recite”, “to say it again” as Webster’s defines rehearsal?

THE TRUE RELATION OF GOD AND NATURE

Since the fall of man nature can not reveal a perfect knowledge of God; for sin has brought a blight upon it, and has intervened between nature and nature’s God. Had man never disobeyed his Creator, had he remained in his state of perfect rectitude, nature would never have been marred by sin, and it would thus have revealed to man the perfection of the character of God. But when man disobeyed God, when he ate of the tree of knowledge, he united with the apostate leader, and separated himself from the knowledge of God.

When Adam and Eve listened to the voice of the tempter, they sinned against God. The light, the garments of heavenly innocence, departed from these deceived souls, and they drew about themselves the dark robes of ignorance of God. The clear and perfect light of innocence which had hitherto surrounded them had lightened everything which they approached; but deprived of that heavenly light, the posterity of Adam could no longer perfectly trace the character of God in his created works

After the fall, the things of nature could not fully teach the lesson of the great and marvelous love of God. Therefore the Father sent his well-beloved Son into the world, and declared him to be a perfect revelation of himself to man.

In order that the world might not remain in darkness, in eternal, spiritual night, the God of nature met in Jesus Christ. He was “that true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

The most difficult and humiliating lesson that man has to learn, if he is kept by the power of God, is his own inefficiency, and the sure failure of his own efforts to read nature correctly. Sin has obscured his vision, so that, of himself, man cannot interpret nature without placing it above God. He is in the same position as were the Athenians who erected their altars for the worship of nature, upon which they might well inscribe, “To the unknown God.” Nature is not God, and never was God. The voice of nature testifies of God, declaring his glory; but nature itself is not God. As God’s created work, it but bears a testimony of his power.

The ancient philosophers prided themselves upon their superior knowledge, but God has said of them: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever

Christ came to the world as a personal Saviour. He represented a personal God. He ascended on high as a personal Saviour, and he will come again as he ascended to heaven,—a personal Saviour. We need carefully to consider this; for in their human wisdom, the wise men of the world, knowing not God, foolishly deify nature and the laws of nature. Those who have not a knowledge of God by their acceptance of the revelation God has made of himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of God in nature. Those who think they can obtain a perfect knowledge of God, aside from the Representative whom the Word declares is the “express image of his person,” will need to become fools in their own estimation before they can be wise. This knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, so far from elevating the mind, the soul, the heart, and bringing the whole being into conformity to the will of God, will make men idolaters.

Though it is impossible to gain a perfect knowledge of God from imperfect nature; yet the things of nature, marred though they be, inculcate truths regarding the skillful Master Artist. One omnipotent in power, great in goodness, in mercy, and love, has created the earth; and even in its blighted state, much that is beautiful remains. Nature’s voice speaks, saying that there is a God, the Creator of nature. Nature in its imperfections can not fully

represent God; it can not reveal the character of God in his moral perfection.

It was for the purpose of giving to man a perfect representation of the character of God that Jesus came to our earth. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.... Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork, but Philip could not accept nature as his God. "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We are to behold the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. In the person of his only begotten Son, the God of heaven has condescended to stoop to our human nature. The Father in heaven has a voice and a person which Christ expressed. Those who have a true knowledge of God will not become so infatuated with the laws of matter and the operations of nature as to overlook or to refuse to acknowledge the continual working of God in nature. Deity is the author of nature. The natural world has in itself no inherent power but that which God supplies. How strange, then; that so many make a deity of nature! God furnishes the matter and the properties with which to carry out his plans. Nature is but his agency.

The hand of God is continually guiding the globe in its continuous march around the sun. The same hand which holds the mountains, and balances them in positions, guides and keeps in order the respective planets.



All the wonderful glories in the heavens are but doing their appointed work. Vegetation flourishes because of the agencies employed by the great and mighty God. He sends the dew and the rain and the sunshine, that verdure may spring forth, and spread its green carpet over the earth, that the shrubs and the fruit-trees may bud and blossom and bring forth fruit. It is not to be supposed that a law is set in operation for the seed to work of itself,—that the leaf appears because it must do so of itself. It is through the immediate agency of God that every tiny seed breaks through the earth, and springs into life. Every green leaf grows, every flower blooms, through the working power of God.

The physical organism of God is under the supervision of God; but it is not like a clock that is set in operation, and must go of itself. The heart beats, pulse succeeds pulse, breath succeeds breath; but the being is under the supervision of God. Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. In God we live and move and have our being.

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Each heartbeat, each breath, is the inspiration of that God who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life,—the inspiration of the ever-present God, the great I AM. Idolatry of nature is a farce; it is the invention of men who know not God, and who are trying to keep out of sight a knowledge of the true God. The words of Holy Writ say nothing of the independent laws of nature. They teach us that God is the superintendent as well as the Creator of all things. The divine Being is engaged in upholding the things which he has created. God has laws which he has instituted; but they are only his servants, through which he effects results. It is God who calls everything into order, and keeps all things in motion.

We may look up, through nature, to nature's God. The beautiful things of nature have been given us for our pleasure. Then let us not turn our blessings into a curse by being led away from God in the worship of the creature rather than the Creator. Let nature's beautiful ministers of love answer the purpose of God, drawing our hearts to him to adore his goodness, his compassion, his inexpressible love, and to be filled with the beauties of his character. *GCDB March 6, 1899, par. 1-12 E. G. White.*

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