

## Now Concerning Spiritual Things

an historical account of one man's walk with God

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### The Badge of Honor<sup>1</sup>

The One who spoke the universe into existence<sup>2</sup> condensed Himself to a single cell deposited in the womb of a woman by the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> That cell attached itself to the ovarian egg in the virgin and grew to full term delivery through the birth canal.<sup>4</sup> He came to earth like you and me. That linking of the single cell to the egg in Mary's womb is exactly the way you and I became existent. Neither His nor our being was determined by random chance of one cell out of many attaching itself to the ovarian egg. It was determined by God Himself. God spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."<sup>5</sup> Isaiah's prophecy reveals that God chose and formed in the womb Jacob the Patriarch and the nation of Israel.<sup>6</sup> Likewise God formed you and me in the womb and He knew us from the *end to the beginning*.<sup>7</sup> That reflects the detail with which *God plans your life*.

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<sup>1</sup>The "Badge of Honor" idea came from Rick Joyner's book, **The Surpassing Greatness of His Power** which I am presently reading and which I recommend.

<sup>2</sup>Read John 1:1-14.

<sup>3</sup>The arch angel Gabriel visited Mary before she was married to Joseph. The angel announced to her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her as a virgin, and cause her to conceive in her womb one who would be called the Son of God. (Read Luke 1:26-38). An angel of the Lord then visited Joseph to whom Mary was engaged, to confirm to him the miraculous conception of a son who should be named Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins." Joseph obeyed the angel's instructions, married Mary and had no sexual relations with her until after Jesus was born. Although the record does not reflect the name of the angel sent to Joseph, I have wondered if it was not Gabriel who also brought the news to Mary. (See Matthew 1:18-25)

<sup>4</sup>For the story of the supernatural conception and birth of Jesus see Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7.

<sup>5</sup>Jeremiah 1:5 (a).

<sup>6</sup>Isaiah 44:1, 2.

<sup>7</sup>Isaiah 46:10.

More than thirty years ago the Lord said to me, "The smaller things are greater than the great things."<sup>8</sup> The small details with which *God started – planned -- your life and mine* attest to the fact that indeed, *the smaller things are greater than the great things*.

Try and imagine the One who spoke the universe into existence living inside the womb of a woman for nine months, then being thrust through the birth canal, wrapped in birthing clothes and laid on a bed of hay in a stable one night when there was no room in the inn.<sup>9</sup> Try and imagine the next thirty years of His life. He grew up as you and I did, one day at a time, one step at a time. And He waited in the wings of the theater of life until the Father said, "Now!" *Only then* did He come to be baptized of John and with the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> *Only then* was He led (or driven<sup>11</sup>) by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast for forty days in preparation for His ministry. At the conclusion of His fast when the devil came to tempt Him in the weakest moment of His life, His answer to each of the three temptations was, "It is written."<sup>12</sup> That was His testimony<sup>13</sup> – scripture – quoted from the sixth, eighth and tenth chapters of the book of Deuteronomy in the old testament. The apostle John reveals that the accuser of the brethren (Satan) who accuses them (us) day and night is cast down. "And

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<sup>8</sup>The principle set forth in this statement is confirmed in Matthew 25:23 and Luke 19:17.

<sup>9</sup>Read Luke 2:1-7.

<sup>10</sup>Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21,22; John 1:26-33.

<sup>11</sup>Only the Gospel narrator Mark reported that Jesus was *driven* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, as recorded in Mark 1:12. Both Matthew and Luke reported that Jesus was *led* by the Spirit.

<sup>12</sup>Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13.

<sup>13</sup>The testimony of Jesus was (is) the word of God. In everything Jesus is our example. The enemy is thwarted – overcome – by the word of God only as it is *spoken*. It is in *speaking* the word of God (as Jesus did) that it becomes our testimony to the world and to the enemy to defeat him.

they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the *word of their testimony*; and they loved not their lives to the death.”<sup>14</sup> The word of their testimony was the word of God as spoken by faith. We overcome the devil today just as they did and just as Jesus did: by the spoken word of *our* testimony.

Jesus did not go to the elite, the powerful, the popular or the rich. He didn’t play the games people, politicians or the rich and famous play. He came with truth. That’s it! That’s all! Just truth. He also came as the Truth for He was the first man who spoke the truth of God and lived what He spoke. When what you say, speak and do is truth, truth then becomes personified as Truth and is elevated to its rightful position. Any attempt to compromise truth becomes evil. Peace does not come as a result of compromise, it comes through victory. Jesus did not compromise or make deals with Satan. He became victorious with truth. Truth cannot be compromised. Truth was and is intended to shape, mold and conform to itself those who accept it. It has always been that way and that will never change because God does not change.<sup>15</sup>

The three and one-half year ministry of Jesus was lived mostly among the “nobodies” of His day. Plain men and women, chosen from the everyday walks of life. From the record it appears that His first missionary was a Samaritan woman who was “sleeping around,” and was living with guy number six who was not her husband. An encounter with Jesus of Nazareth as He rested at a well one day so changed her that she went back to town and turned it “upside down.”<sup>16</sup> The first one to see Him after His resurrection was a woman who was possessed by the devil out of whom He cast seven demons.<sup>17</sup> These are not among your usual high society, socially acceptable, well respected, church or synagogue going people. Most would call them the dregs of society, but Jesus called them. And His call changed them. And they changed others. And that’s the way He works to change lives from the inside out, never from the outside in. He sees through the peripheral

outside and beyond one’s outward looks, how he is dressed, what part of town he lives in, the kind of car he drives or whether or not he has a car, the kind of home he lives in or whether or not he has a home or gets his meals at the Salvation Army. He didn’t come to the righteous or the rich and famous who don’t need Him. He came to the poor and needy, the sick, the lame, the blind who do. He said that ministering to them was His “meat” or “food” or His sustenance – His maintenance -- His provision.<sup>18</sup> He was fulfilled by doing what the Father instructed Him to do.

Jesus and his disciples were walking through corn fields one Saturday, pulled and ate some of the corn from the stalk because they were hungry. In today’s litigious society an enterprising lawyer would have gone to the owner of the corn field and said, “Here we’ve got a case of trespassing or unlawful entry and confiscation of personal property. I’ve already investigated the whole bunch and they don’t have enough money among them to hire an attorney. Loss of grain is minimal and punitive damages is out of the question. We might as well forget it.” But what actually happened is this: The Pharisees, the religious Jewish lawyers of Jesus’ day, did accuse him of violating the “no work” law of the Jewish Sabbath by pulling and eating the raw grain from the stalk on the Sabbath. They did not understand that man was not made for the Sabbath, but instead the Sabbath was made for man.<sup>19</sup> Man was more important than the meticulous Jewish rules concerning the day, since “keeping the rules” were only an outward expression of compliance which could feed one’s pride, whereas the heart of man was unchanged by obeying the outward rules.

And yet, Jesus did not appeal to just the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, the poor. Nicodemus was a prominent political figure of his day who had a secret appointment with Jesus at night. The record reflects that Nicodemus became a believer.<sup>20</sup> The apostle Matthew left a lucrative tax-collector’s job to become a nomadic follower of the

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<sup>14</sup>Revelation 12:11, italics added.

<sup>15</sup>See Malachi 3:6.

<sup>16</sup>Read John 4:1-43 for this complete story.

<sup>17</sup>The woman’s name was Mary Magdalene, see Mark 16:9-11.

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<sup>18</sup>Jesus said that his food or meat was to do the work of God who sent Him and finish His work, See John 4:34.

<sup>19</sup>See Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5

<sup>20</sup>See John 3:1, 2; 19:39.

man Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

The crucifixion of Jesus scattered His followers. The record reveals that doubters and cowards were among His most ardent disciples.<sup>22</sup> His expected, long hoped for, take-over of the throne of David as the scripture prophesies<sup>23</sup> didn't occur. Instead, He died an ignominious death as a lamb led to the slaughtering pen, crucified between two thieves in the same humble fashion as He lived.<sup>24</sup> He willingly gave up his life, it was not taken from Him.<sup>25</sup> As He was dying on the cross, He asked the apostle John to take care of His mother.<sup>26</sup> He was buried in a tomb not His own.<sup>27</sup> Those who crucified Him gambled for His last worldly possession: His coat that He wore to the cross.<sup>28</sup>

Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Moses and Jesus died. Only Jesus was resurrected and appeared to many of His disciples during a forty-day period of time before he ascended back to the Father God.<sup>29</sup> Then He sat down at His right hand and now has all

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<sup>21</sup>Refer to Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27, 28.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew 26:69-75; 28:16, 17.

<sup>23</sup>Isaiah 9:7.

<sup>24</sup>See Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:38.

<sup>25</sup>Read Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46.

<sup>26</sup>“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple (the disciple by intimation was the apostle John), ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” (John 19:25-27). Since no mention is made of Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus, by obvious inference, the assumption is that Joseph had died sometime prior to the crucifixion of Jesus. The apostle John therefore was given the primary responsibility to care for Mary. There is a secular historical account of the death and burial of Joseph at the age of 110 years written by Hennecke, **Handbuch der neutestamentlichen**. This account relates entreaties of Mary to Jesus to save him. The aim of the account is said to show forth Christ as the Savior, even at the last hour, and the rightful manner of Christian death.

<sup>27</sup>Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

<sup>28</sup>John 19:23, 24.

<sup>29</sup>Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11.

power and authority.<sup>30</sup> AND HE WILL RETURN TO THE EARTH to literally sit and reign on the throne of David during His Millennial reign. *He will bring with Him those of us with transformed bodies who were taken in the “catching up” or the Rapture, to rule and reign with Him.*<sup>31</sup> And the Rapture will come much sooner than most of the Church believes. I have been given some instructions by the Holy Spirit concerning the Rapture about which I shall write in a future letter.

The *badge* Jesus wore throughout His life was *humility*, the highest honor in the kingdom. You and I must also wear that badge to be effective in the kingdom. This will not happen until we die to self, take up our cross and follow Him. The cross is the sign of death, not of life. One who is dead to self cannot take offense or become resentful. A life surrendered to Him in covenant relationship, will in time, be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual power and authority may come only to one who has totally surrendered everything he possesses to the One who now possesses all authority and power. The highest enablement of true spiritual power and authority comes through the test of rejection.<sup>32</sup> Effectiveness in the kingdom is not about self, it is about self denied. And this is not an intellectual concept, it must be taught by the Holy Spirit. The denial point of self is the entry point of God. Only as we fast from the fleshly desires of self is God free and freed to use us. A life surrendered to God is the only true avenue to peace, contentment and fulfillment in this life. As the knowledge of God's word becomes the governor of our lives, we may achieve and receive abundance now and super abundance throughout eternity.

Jesus did not come to glorify Himself, He came to glorify the Father.<sup>33</sup> He didn't push his own agenda because He had none. Only as He was obedient to the Father's will – the Father's leading

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<sup>30</sup>Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:19.

<sup>31</sup>I Corinthians 15:50-55; I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

<sup>32</sup>The Lord Jesus is the best example. The rejection by his disciples at the cross followed by that awful moment when God Himself withdrew (See Matthew 27:46) to enable Jesus to literally bear the weight of the sins of the world, was necessary for the birth of resurrection power in His life.

<sup>33</sup>Read John 17:1-5.

and guiding through the Holy Spirit – did He become the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.<sup>34</sup> Only as He became obedient, even to death on the cross, was God the Father able to then exalt Him to His rightful place of power and authority. In like manner, so must you and I also become obedient unto death to the Father’s will for us. Only as we are obedient is He able to use us to attract others to His Son through whom salvation is offered to the world. As the apostle Peter wrote, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.”<sup>35</sup>

The world is indifferent as to whether or not you profess Christ. The demons so believe and tremble.<sup>36</sup> But the world is not indifferent to changed lives. And changed lives are the result of knowing – not knowing about, *but knowing* the Lord Jesus personally. He is the greatest transformation Agent the world has ever known – and the only One who brings peace with the transformation. The world is no longer impressed with religion. Religions that come with reason and argument avail little in today’s world. You neither debate nor argue one into the kingdom. Entry is only through rebirth, a supernatural spiritual experience you receive by faith.<sup>37</sup>

There are still ‘women at the well.’ There are still men and women with lives controlled by demons, who matriculate in what appears to be a normal fashion in today’s world. There are still men and women who wear masks to hide their hurts, their fears, their hopes, their insecurity, their shattered dreams, their unfulfilled lives. There are still men and women who do not want anyone to know *who they really are* because they unknowingly have become victims of Satan’s trap. And in today’s knowledge explosion they have heard the arguments of religion without being delivered, washed, cleansed and saved from the glitter of the world and an unfulfilled life. The test of a fulfilled life is peace –

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<sup>34</sup>See John 1:29. The death of Jesus fulfilled the death sentence imposed upon mankind by Adam’s sin since “the wages of sin is death.” (See also Romans 6:9).

<sup>35</sup>I Peter 5:6.

<sup>36</sup>“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19).

<sup>37</sup>Read John 3:1-21.

peace with God, with your neighbor and with yourself. Knowledge about Jesus does not bring peace. *Knowing Him does.*<sup>38</sup> A personal relationship with Him is the only antidote for a lost and dying world. In a God directed life prayer at times becomes *dialogue* instead of monologue. In a God directed life hearing Him speak to you through the ‘still small voice’<sup>39</sup> *becomes a reality. Hearing Him speak one word to you will change your life forever.* He wants that relationship with you, for He said, “I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep, and I am known by my own” and “the sheep hear his [My] voice; and he calls his own sheep by name.”<sup>40</sup> The reason He said that His sheep hear His voice and He calls them by name is so you and I might realize that this is truth to accept and to act on by faith. He wants that relationship with you. The reason He said such personal things is that you and I might hunger and thirst after such a *relationship*. Once the hunger is there, that desire *will be fulfilled* for He said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”<sup>41</sup> This is a spiritual law that has no exceptions. And that hunger is satisfied by the Lord Jesus Himself, *Who is our righteousness.*<sup>42</sup> “And this is eternal life that they may *know* You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”<sup>43</sup>

Jesus also said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”<sup>44</sup> There are two crosses in the Christian endeavor. The one Jesus died on and the one He has for you and me.

*The badge of honor* comes with a cross.

And He has a cross and a badge for you and me.

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<sup>38</sup>Read John 14:21.

<sup>39</sup>I Kings 19:12.

<sup>40</sup>John 10:14; John 10:3, brackets inserted.

<sup>41</sup>Matthew 5:6..

<sup>42</sup>Read I Corinthians 1:30.

<sup>43</sup>John 17:3, italics added.

<sup>44</sup>Luke 9:23.