

## NOW CONCERNING SPIRITUAL THINGS.....

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### GOD'S ERASER

Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem on Friday, the day of Preparation. That same day, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent Council<sup>1</sup> Member, went to Pilate, the Roman governor, and asked for the body of Jesus. After confirming with the Centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate gave the body to Joseph, who took it down from the cross, wrapped it in fine linen he had bought, and laid it in the tomb he had prepared for himself. Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices and fragrant oils to anoint the body, which was delayed because the Sabbath had already begun. When the Sabbath was over, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they and certain other women with them, went to the tomb with the spices and fragrant oils and found the stone rolled away from the door and the tomb empty except for an angel sitting on the right side of where the body had been laid. The angel assured the women that "Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified is risen!" He then told the women to go tell His disciples -- and Peter -- that Jesus was going before them to Galilee and that they would see Him there. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She then went immediately and reported the resurrection to the eleven as they mourned and wept, but they did not believe her.<sup>2</sup> "Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen."<sup>3</sup>

The unbelief in the eleven, for which Jesus "raked them over the coals," occurred on the day of His resurrection, prior to the time the eleven had actually seen the risen Jesus. However, prior to His

ascension, there was another incident of unbelief and doubt in some of the eleven, which reveals even a more significant insight into their thinking. It occurred this way: After His resurrection, Jesus (and an angel) told the disciples to go to Galilee where He would meet them.<sup>4</sup> "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but *some doubted*."<sup>5</sup> The word "some" implies two or more. To this writer, the record here seems to indicate more than two. And the record also appears to reveal that the upbraiding of the eleven for their unbelief and hardness of heart occurred before they saw Him and worshiped Him, when *some doubted!*

The fact that some of the eleven would still doubt after seeing and worshipping the risen Jesus humanizes and removes from these disciples the "halo" superimposed by one who may tend to elevate them to a status above the believers of today. This one incident puts the *doubting* Apostles and today's believers on common ground: human beings who were dealing with the uncertainty of whether or not to accept Jesus as the Jewish Messiah spoken of by the Prophets,<sup>6</sup> but under a different set of circumstances. Jesus had not yet ascended. These disciples had no New Testament. The term "bible" was unknown to them and "the scriptures" meant old testament books, handwritten by Scribes on cumbersome parchment scrolls, available to only a few and certainly not something one would have available at home to read. I can identify with those men who doubted. For example, late at night with no one around, or in the cool early part of the morning upon awakening, one of the *doubters* might have had such thoughts as: Could Jesus really be the Messiah? Why doesn't He reign as

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<sup>4</sup>Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 28:16, 17 (Italics added)

<sup>6</sup>Moses, David (the Psalmist), Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Mica and Zechariah all prophesied concerning the coming of the Messiah. Eight Old Testament books contain at least fifty-three Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of which is recorded at least seventy-three times in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Galatians and Hebrews.

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<sup>1</sup>The Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jewish People in the time of Christ and earlier.

<sup>2</sup>For this narration see Mark 15:42-16:11 and Luke 23:50-24:8. All bible references are from the RSV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 16:14.

king now in Jerusalem as David did? What does he mean by, “I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me”?<sup>7</sup> Enoch and Elijah didn’t die; they were caught up to heaven -- translated. Why did Jesus have to die? Much of His teaching sounds good, but how do you make it work in the real world? It looks to me like the meek get stepped on instead of inheriting the earth<sup>8</sup> as He said. How does this all sort out? Have the last three and one-half years of my life been wasted? If this doesn’t work out, I wonder if my job at the market is still available. I haven’t seen my girlfriend in weeks -- wonder if she is seeing someone else?

The record is clear. Doubts were in the minds of some of the Apostles after they saw the resurrected Jesus and worshiped Him. The doubts were real in the minds of real men and had to be *erased* if the *doubters* were to become effective disciples of and spokesmen for a radical new way of life. And what a lovely and lively *eraser* the Lord used. Listen:

“Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that *power* belongs to God;”<sup>9</sup> “And while staying with them [after His resurrection but before His ascension] he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>10</sup> And he then said, “But you shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”<sup>11</sup> Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with *power* from on High.’ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them

and carried up into heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

The *power* Jesus said the disciples (about one hundred and twenty<sup>13</sup>) would receive came in the form of Holy Spirit baptism. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”<sup>14</sup> The disciples, now including the twelve (after Matthias was enrolled with the eleven<sup>15</sup>) were transformed from doubters and cowards to confident, bold, assured believers by the Holy Spirit. The miracle of the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus still continues.

“Then they said to Him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the *works of God*?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’”<sup>16</sup> The power of God manifested by (or through) the Holy Spirit is the *work of God* and convicts, or affirms to, the inward man the reality of the risen Christ.<sup>17</sup> And the record is clear, this blessing could not occur, or be sent, until Jesus was glorified in His risen body and had ascended back to the Father.<sup>18</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who manifests (makes known) Jesus to the believer.<sup>19</sup> When this happens, you *know* from the inward witness of the Holy Spirit and *the doubts are gone!* Today it is the Person of the Holy Spirit Himself who counsels,<sup>20</sup> teaches<sup>21</sup> and guides<sup>22</sup> us into all truth and glorifies

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<sup>7</sup>John 14:6.

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 5:5.

<sup>9</sup>Psalms 62:11 (Italics added).

<sup>10</sup>Acts 1:4, 5 (Bracketed explanation added)

<sup>11</sup>Acts 1:8.

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<sup>12</sup>Luke 24:49-51, NKJV (Italics added).

<sup>13</sup>Acts 1:15.

<sup>14</sup>Acts 2:4.

<sup>15</sup>Acts 1:26.

<sup>16</sup>John 6:28, 29 (Italics added).

<sup>17</sup>John 14:21 (b).

<sup>18</sup>John 7:38, 39; 16:7.

<sup>19</sup>John 14:21 (b)

<sup>20</sup>John 14:15.

<sup>21</sup>John 14:26.

<sup>22</sup>John 16:13.

Jesus.<sup>23</sup> The Holy Spirit Himself is *God's* doubt eraser.

## BENEFITS PROGRAM

The Psalmist David wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, *and forget not all his benefits*, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases."<sup>24</sup> Here are some of the innumerable *benefits* I have discovered after accepting the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

1. A spiritual thirst or hunger for the Word. Bible verses begin to come to Life. The fourth Beatitude in Matthew 5:6<sup>25</sup> is literally fulfilled.

2. Acceptance of all of the bible, Old and New Testaments, as the Word of God -- as the operations manual for an abundant life as we learn to appropriate God's blessings by grace through faith when we act on the Word and depend on Him to bring into existence the "evidence of things not seen."<sup>26</sup>

3. The "partition" between the Old and New Testaments begins to self-destruct, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."<sup>27</sup>

4. Knowledge of some of the distinguishing features of the authority and work of Jesus in six distinct time-frames: (1) before He became flesh and dwelt among men, (2) from birth to "about thirty years of age,"<sup>28</sup> (3) from about thirty years of age to the cross, (4) from death to resurrection, (5) from resurrection to ascension and (6) from ascension to this present day. Biblical understanding in these areas helps to define a believer's authority, work and opportunity in this present day.

5. Acceptance of and understanding the significance of the spirit world.

6. Recognition of why Jesus came to earth,<sup>29</sup> as well as the active participation in and the support of that endeavor.

7. Real freedom.

8. Realization that miracles in the early church of the first century did not cease with the Apostles.

9. The elimination of doubt about my own personal salvation and about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as three distinct Persons.

10. The desire to be with and talk to the Lord Jesus, whose Love<sup>30</sup> is both humbling and exalting.

11. Knowing Jesus personally.

12. Prayer then becomes an intimate and personal conversation with someone you know.

13. The blessing of hearing the 'still small' voice.<sup>31</sup>

14. Total obliteration of structured, legalistic, exclusivistic, bible-based doctrine which Jesus referred to as the "leaven of the Pharisees."<sup>32</sup>

15. Recognition of initial salvation, the new birth experience and Holy Spirit baptism as stages of growth for believers and that salvation is by far the most important.

16. Experiencing the blessing of Jesus being Lord of my life.

17. Experiencing inward Peace that Jesus talked about.

18. Inward Spiritual confirmation that Christ Jesus lives in me through His Spirit.

19. The ability to perceive the difference between Spiritual understanding (revelation knowledge) of bible truths and intellectual comprehension of these same truths.

20. Improved physical health. There is so much to be learned here.

21. Supernatural events are prayed for and expected.

22. Getting the opportunity of sharing the Lord Jesus with someone, believer or unbeliever, is the highlight of my day.

23. Tears of joy when sharing the Lord Jesus with someone is not uncommon.

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<sup>23</sup>John 16:14.

<sup>24</sup>Psalms 103:2, 3 (Italics added).

<sup>25</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. NKJV

<sup>26</sup>Hebrews 11:1.

<sup>27</sup>Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4.

<sup>28</sup>Luke 3:23.

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<sup>29</sup>1 John 3:8.

<sup>30</sup>See Romans 4:5 for the source of God's Love.

<sup>31</sup>1 Kings 19:12.

<sup>32</sup>Matthew 16:12.

24. Denominational or doctrinal walls come down like the walls of Jericho.

25. Some of the signs Jesus said would follow *believers* have been experienced.

26. Some of the Spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 have been received.

27. If you begin with the fruit, go on to the gifts of the Spirit.

28. If you begin with the gifts, go on to the fruit of the Spirit.

29. Learning to be led by the Spirit. His light intuitive leading or the still small voice carry great blessings.

30. The Spiritual blessings of today cannot be preserved for reuse tomorrow. Every believer starts each day afresh and anew. Faith is always in the 'now'<sup>33</sup> of time. That's what makes it interesting and at times exciting -- not without problems, of course -- but knowing personally the One who spoke this universe into existence, Who has the answers, is such a blessing.

### A BIBLE FOR IDIOTS

Recently I was talking with someone about the bible who said, "I wish I could find a bible for idiots, one that I could understand, like the publication 'Word Perfect For Dummies,' for example". And my reply was, "You already have one. The Holy Spirit is the One who imparts to us spiritual understanding of the bible, and Jesus said the Holy Spirit is available to every believer."<sup>34</sup> All of us are idiots, or dummies if you prefer, who believe we can comprehend spiritual truths with our intellect alone. It doesn't work that way because the kingdom of Heaven is a spiritual kingdom, not an intellectual one, and it is the Holy Spirit who provides Illumination and imparts spiritual understanding to words which Jesus said are spirit and life.<sup>35</sup>

### SUPERMARKET "SPECIAL"

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<sup>33</sup>Hebrews 11:1 starts with the word "Now" which is exactly where faith is -- always in the present, never in the future or the past.

<sup>34</sup>Luke 11:13.

<sup>35</sup>John 6:63.

There is a massive exchange program going on today in the world's biggest Supermarket. The Lord Jesus, who died for your sins and mine and rose from the dead, owns the store and wants to exchange His Life for yours, no questions asked. If you haven't been to His 24-hour Supermarket and accepted His offer, go now while there is still time. He'll receive you with open arms, save you and love you into a relationship that lasts forever, and immediately enroll you in His "Benefits Program" -- there's nothing like it. And the Apostle Paul tells us how to start: "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."<sup>36</sup>

### GOD CAN

What is good about you, God can use: what is good about what you say; what is good about what you do; what is good about what you are.

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

The Holy Spirit is not an "it", or a "thing" or a "bird" or a "wisp of smoke" (holy or otherwise) The Holy Spirit is a Person, the third Person of the Triune Godhead, active in the Creation, who wants to be active in your life today if you will extend Him a personal invitation<sup>37</sup>. In instances where Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, as recorded by the Gospel Narrators, the personal pronouns He and Him are always used;<sup>38</sup> the "h" is either capitalized or is in lower case letters, depending on the specific Version of the bible. For example the RSV uses lower case letters, the NKJV uses capitals.

....more later, the Lord willing.

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<sup>36</sup>Romans 10:9, 10, NKJV.

<sup>37</sup>Luke 11:13.

<sup>38</sup>Here are a few examples: John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 8, 13.