

July - September 2014

# ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

## God's Plan for You

The Feeding of the Five Thousand • Focused Prayer • Real Change

## The Feast of Tabernacles

### A Spark of Hope for Humanity

The incessant troubles in the world today are in no way coming to an end. It has in fact grown from worrisome to scary. The headlines of major news sources will bear this out. Wars and terrorism are on the rise. Famines and “unheard of before” diseases continue to afflict mankind despite advance medical and scientific findings to counter it. Meanwhile, natural disasters continue to stifle growth expectations; even dislocating, if not claiming the lives of thousands.

On the political front, powerful nations keep posturing to dominate other nations whose defense capabilities are weak; and the arms race continue - albeit clandestinely - with no assurances that these armaments which can easily annihilate the human race will not be used.

In all these, do we still hope for a secure and better living condition in the coming years? Definitely - but not through human efforts and initiatives. Jesus said, “with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mat.19:26). Take note that in verse 25 He was asked, “who then can be saved?”; and salvation is not solely confined to the spiritual; it also has something to do with one's physical life being spared from trouble(Mat. 24:21-22; Rev. 3:10).

What possible hope then will mankind expect from God? Believe it or not, God has a plan. The first phase of which is to send His son Jesus Christ to take over the reins of government from man (Rev.11:15). Christ then will rule with the saints for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6), and launch an all-out restoration drive to bring back the earth's former splendor and glory thereby making it a truly utopian dwelling place for mankind (Isaiah 51:3; 11:6-10).

These prophesied events should generate hope and comfort amidst the endless bad news today. This period of time is referred to as the Millennium – the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints. Today this is pictured in one of God's Festivals called the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-36; Deut. 16:13-15). All Bible believing Christians are commanded to celebrate this festival. This is one festival where God exhorted His people to rejoice in full; and He promised to bless them as well (Deut. 16:14-15).

In line with keeping this command, the Church of God International in the Philippines will celebrate this feast as well as all other festivals which God commanded to be observed by those who honor and worship Him.

**Eleno S. Mellomida**

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# God's Plan for You

by Winston S. Co

**T**he most basic question everyone asks in life is “Why am I here”? If you believe in God as the author of life, then the question begs for an answer: What is God's plan for you and why did He create you? Many literary works have been written about the purpose of human life; all of these literature seek to find meaning in our existence.

To understand the purpose of life, we need to understand what is life. The reality of life and living – being alive and conscious – is a mystery. Eons before that moment of conception, we were nothing. In a bleep of time we came into

existence and grew to what we are today. We are endowed with reason, logic, creativity, emotion and consciousness. We are aware of our existence; we are aware that one day we will leave this world and return to the dust of the ground where we came from.

Life is likened to a flower. It blooms with glory for a day and withers away tomorrow. Very often it is difficult to find any intrinsic purpose and meaning in existence. Life can be empty, can be meaningless and can be an existence in futility. Life is meaningless if there is no greater purpose beyond the grave.

The origin and source of life is beyond philosophy and

science. How life exists, what is its purpose, its hopes and its reasons for being are all secrets mankind cannot easily fathom. Look at nature and you instinctively know that there is a Creator. Paul wrote that life can only come from life (Romans 1:18-22). Therefore, the secrets of life can only be revealed by the Author of Life Himself – Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

## What Is Life?

David, from the balcony of his palace, and looking up to the majesty of the heavens pondered and said: When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which

thou hast ordained. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? (Psalms 8:3-4).

Have you ever gaze at the evening sky and consider the stars that dot the evening sky? The flickering light amidst the tranquil sea of darkness is a sight to behold. The magnificence of the heavens, its vastness and its grandeur boggle our finite minds. To understand and comprehend the vastness and grandeur of the Universe, one must calculate the number of stars in heaven to put it in measurable numerical perspective. Ever tried to count the number of stars on a clear night? To our naked eye, we can see an average of a few dozen stars in heaven. But on certain areas of the globe, it is possible to see 8,400 stars on clear evening sky. One thing is certain - we can't see most of the stars that are out there.

According to a study by a team of stargazers at the Australian National University, there are 300 sextillion stars in the known Universe. That is about 40 times more than the grains of sand on earth! How large is the universe? Very large!

When we consider the heavens, space and Universe; we can't help but feel the wonder of creation and the presence of God. Then, we wonder why we are here? What is our role in the vastness of the Universe? Why were we created? What is God's purpose in creating life? Or better yet, why did God create me?

### **Life is a Gift**

Life is a gift – a wonderful gift from God (Eccl. 5:18). Of all God's creation, man alone is



special. God prepared man's habitat for 5 days before creating him on the sixth day. The entire creation and fashioning of the earth is for man. The atmosphere, vegetation and animal life are part of the ecology that sustains human life.

All living things were created after its own kind; except man, who is fashioned in the image and likeness of the Creator – the God kind. And again, of all the creations, it's only man whom God breathe into the nostrils and he became a living being. The spirit – the life source – that God puts in man makes man unique. It endowed him with intellect, reason, logic, feeling, emotion and creativity with high functioning capability and competence.

Life is a gift from God. To live - to experience life - is in itself a gift! To be alive – to be aware, conscious, active, functioning and sustaining is to be God like. What we are experiencing today – in this physical mortal life – this awareness - is a foretaste, an example, a preview of what God is like.

Remember, as written in Genesis 1:26, “we are created in the image and likeness of God.”

Image and likeness are beyond the physical shape and form, creativity and intelligence. There is almost this God like attribute of self-awareness - of being alive. Temporal as this physical life maybe made from the dust of the earth, nonetheless man has a spark of divinity when God breathes into the nostrils and became a living human being (Genesis 2:7). The key word is LIVING. Life is God's gift to us and this gift can be perpetual, permanent and eternal.

### **See and Hear**

“No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9). This is not ordinary statement coming from the prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul. This statement is loaded and packed with a powerful punch. It suggests that the world has no inkling, no clue, no idea what God has prepared for humanity. This plan of God is so marvelous, precious, and intimate that no one can begin to imagine. It is incomprehensible and inconceivable to the human mind. So grand that no one can



contemplate and consider.

The world today is groping in the dark as to what the plan of God is. It is blind, deaf and dull to God's magnificent plan for those who love Him. Yet, this truth is revealed in the very word of God for centuries. That blindness can only be removed through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit - the Spirit of Truth. The veil that covers the truth needs to be lifted for God's true people to see and hear them (2 Corinthians 3:13-18). And the Spirit of God will lead us to understand the purpose why God created us (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

This mystery that was hidden for ages is only revealed to God's true church (Ephesians 3:8-12). This truth is exclusively revealed to the saints (Colossians 1:25-27).

### **Purpose of Life**

David asked: What is man that God is mindful of him? Why should God be bothered with humanity who seems so insignificant compared to the vastness of universe? Why is God even interested with mankind? Why did He even have to send His One and Only begotten Son

to redeem mankind? We love the verse John 3:16 on God's love, and yet we seldom ask the most important question, "What is so special about us that the Father has to send His One and Only Son to die for you"?

We are so precious to God that He sent His Son to redeem us!!! We are exceedingly special to Him!!! The magnificent plan of God and the very purpose of your existence are revealed in Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, thus: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Eph. 1: 3-5). In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (verses 11-12).

God is making us His

children. What a glorious truth! You are predestined to become a son of God (Romans 8:28-30).

This wonderful plan for mankind was made known to the patriarchs and written down in the Book of Genesis. The Genesis account said that mankind is created after the God kind; created in the image and likeness of God. This opens the opportunity for us to become a member of the divine family. That is what Paul wrote in Hebrews 2:5-18.

### **"You are gods"**

Jesus had an interesting discussion with the Pharisees. In this discussion Jesus reveal the purpose of life and instead of embracing the truth with gladness the Jews rejected the concept and wanted to stone Jesus. The incident is recorded in John 10:22-39.

In this account Jesus claimed to be the Son of God making Himself equal with God. The Jews wanted to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Then to everyone's surprise, Jesus proceeded to refer to them as "gods." And all the more they wanted to stone Him.

Why, what happened? Jesus told them they are gods! This was not an excuse by Jesus to escape from the Jews by using a play of words in referring to "gods" as human rulers. No, Jesus was not misleading them, or making a cover up to appease the wrath of His detractors. Jesus meant what He said; "You are gods and the scripture cannot be broken!" This was a forthright statement, a revelation of the destiny of man. This understanding is the clear and unmistakable context of the discussion. The phrase was a



direct quote from Psalms 82 - a clear allusion to sonship.

Relating this incident to the prayer Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount by addressing God as our Father in heaven, the context becomes even clearer. The familial relationship of sonship is obviously clear and was unheard of until Jesus introduced the relationship. To the Jews calling God as “abba” father was inconceivable. It is automatically equated with blasphemy. Yet, Jesus revealed the father and son relationship in the Sermon on the Mount with the famous prayer; “Our Father who are in heaven.”

### Sons of God

The scripture is very clear on the issue of sonship. Take careful note of the following verses:

- **1 John 3:1-3:** Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

- **Romans 8:14-17:** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;

if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Sons, heirs and co-heirs with Christ.

- **Galatians 4:6-7:** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- **Ephesians 2:19:** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household (family) of God.

- **Revelation 21:7:** He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

### Divine Nature

Now, if the preceding verses are not satisfactory to prove your eventual adoption to become literal sons and daughters of God, here is a specific verse that says we can become gods; will be imbued with the nature of a God and not simply limited to “men in authority”, but specifically composed of a divine nature.

Peter wrote: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:4) Here we have the entire exposition on the subject matter. We have read 2 Peter many times over - and perhaps casually; but this time, given the adjoining passages earlier quoted, it will take on a new perspective, a new insight and a startling revelation.

### Finally...

From this short epistle of

Peter, we affirm, confirm and reconfirm that our tenet of faith is true. That, we are destined to become sons of God - partakers of the DIVINE NATURE in the Kingdom of God - the New Heavens and New Earth - the abode of the righteous.

Life will continue. It will become everlasting. The saints will have a new beginning as Sons of God, clothe in spiritual splendor, immortal beings and heirs and co-heirs with Christ. God has predestined mankind, you and me, to this most glorious and wonderful destiny; i.e., to become children of God in His Kingdom.

What a marvelous and exciting revelation! In Jesus own words speaking to the disciples He said: “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it”. ( Matthew 13:16-17).

This definitely is God's plan for you. Sonship in the Kingdom of God is our hope, our future, our destiny. It is the purpose of your creation. It is the reason why you are here on earth. It is the reason why Christ died for you.

May this revelation from the Word of God open your eyes to the truth that believing God and obedience to His commands is not an exercise in futility, but rather a fulfillment of His grand design for you to become His literal sons and daughters to enter into the everlasting Kingdom of our Father. **AG**





# The Feeding of the Five Thousand

by Rene D. Corpuz

**I**t is interesting to note that every word that the apostle John wrote in his gospel about the Lord Jesus, two primary reasons emerged that are of extreme importance. First, that Jesus is the Messiah and a Divine Being; and second, believing and following Him will give us the chance to gain eternal life.

## The Apostle John as an Eye-Witness

According to the apostle John, to believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God is a condition to salvation. This is probably the most important message contained in John's gospel. Notice: "...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

John testifies that we must believe in the divinity of Jesus, not

only as the Messiah but also as the Son of God. Thus, regardless of the long list of Scriptures that scholars keep quoting to "prove" that the Lord is "just a man", John clearly pointed out that Jesus is of divine origin (John 1:1, 12-14). He testified that to accept Jesus as a Divine Being is crucial to receiving eternal life (John 8:24).

## Conditions to Salvation

While God promised salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:9), this promise is based on loyalty, faithfulness, and overcoming on the part of those who want to be saved. The promise of salvation is not conditioned on the person's 'lip service' to change, or a mere desire to change, but by "actual and real change". Words are useless without actions (James 1:21-25), even as faith without works is dead (James 2:20).

## The Need for Evidence

Jesus began his ministry when He was about 30 years old. He preached for about 3 ½ years before His prophesied "sacrificial" death. Within that period, He has to present enough proof and overwhelming evidence that He truly is the Son of God - the Messiah that was to come. At the same time, He needed to teach and guide the disciples to the Truth and not according to the traditional teachings that they were accustomed to believe since childhood. And the disciples were convinced beyond any doubt that Jesus is indeed who He said He was! They were fully convinced that they were even willing to give up their lives for what they believed in. And the records of their belief are inscribed in the pages of the New Testament. The question now is, "are we willing to believe their testimony?"

Jesus gave the disciples plenty of evidence, not only because Jesus needed to prove who He is, but because the disciples also needed plenty of evidence to believe in Him. Jesus cannot allow the disciples to have any doubts because out of their testimonies the faith that leads to salvation of the coming generation depends on them.

The twelve disciples became the primary witnesses for Jesus. Therefore, they themselves have to be completely convinced if they are to deliver their testimonies effectively! They needed to have proof, and Jesus gave them more than enough of it! (John 20:30)

Thus, all that Jesus taught them, exemplified for them and performed in their presence were done for their benefit and ours. Their faith will also strengthen ours and serve as a solid foundation for our belief. The early disciples recorded sufficient evidence to build our trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus. The Lord did not leave anything to chance. He left us a trail of prophecies that will continue through several generations. And as we see each prophecy fulfilled, our faith and confidence in God the Father and in His Son will grow stronger each passing day.

Walking alongside Jesus for the good part of his three-and-a-half-year ministry, the disciples witnessed the things Jesus did and did not do. All these were lessons for us to learn and to follow. In this article, we will explore one of those important evidences that give us a very good perspective of the real Jesus, the Christ!

### **The Feeding of the Five Thousand**

John wrote: After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were

diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world (John 6:1-14).

John wrote from personal perspective, the rest of the story was filled in by the other writers such as Matthew, Mark and Luke. Feel free to read them in Matthew 14, Mark 6 and Luke 9.

### **The Parallel Gospels**

The benefits of reading multiple or parallel accounts is that we get a better picture of the entire event compared to reading just one. Putting all parallel accounts together then harmonizes the seemingly contradictory

perspective of the gospel writers. What many misunderstand about what is meant by writing under the “inspiration of the holy spirit” is that it does not mean that the Holy Spirit “dictates” what is written, rather, the Holy Spirit inspires the writer to tell the story. But how to write it down or how to present it, is left entirely to the perspective and personal experience of the writer. And this is what an independent testimony ought to be. The writer should be free to tell the story according to how he remembered it. This is not the same as when a prophet is sent by God to deliver a specific message in His behalf.

For the readers and the recipients of the story, although there are variations or slight differences in the “finer” details of what was recorded, the main elements and characters of the story are essentially the same.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. This miracle is primarily a demonstration of power. But there's more to it than meets the eye. It has similarities, and is perhaps meant to be associated with the experience of the Israelites in their 40-years of wandering in the wilderness. Jesus fed 5,000 people by multiplying 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish. In the end, the leftovers were more than what they originally had. If these people were mindful of their forefathers' history and is paying close attention, they would easily relate what Jesus did here, and what God did in the wilderness when the Israelites were fed by God with manna for 40 years. If they were only willing to see beyond Jesus' image as the “son of the carpenter”, they should be able to see the similarity between the God of Israel in the wilderness and the Jesus of Nazareth who performed the miracle. This miracle was meant to be a sign, a proof or evidence, to lead people to see a semblance that Jesus IS the God



who was with Israel in the wilderness. Paul clearly understood the similarity, and told the Corinthians that Jesus is in fact the Rock that was with Israel (I Corinthians 10:4, 9). The Jews entertained the idea that Jesus could be the Prophet that Moses wrote about in Deuteronomy 18:15-18, but they will not hold on to this thought for long.

2. John tells us that Jesus intended to use this situation to test Philip (John 6:6). We are not told about the details of what was the reason of the test, and why Philip. What we see in this situation is that John knew about Jesus' purpose while the rest of the disciples seem unaware (the other "gospel" writers did not mention it). Even though John did not tell us the reason for the test—knowing that this is a test is significant. It serves as a lesson and a warning to us. As fellow disciples and Christians, there will be times when even though we go through the same general experience, it could easily be an experience meant specifically for one person. There are hints and clues spread throughout the Bible that God has a habit of testing His people. Most of the trials and tests we go through in this life are mostly tests of character, endurance, loyalty and faithfulness. This gives us a very interesting insight into the mind of Jesus, a lesson for all modern-day Christians. The Lord Jesus has a habit of "testing" his disciples! And He does not always warn us of an incoming test. We would have to face and accept every struggle we go through in life as if they were tests, and strive to "pass the test with honors."

What may appear as a common experience for many people, can easily be a test to those of us who entered into a covenant with God. Of course, we can also be tested without having to go through a particular experience. How we act and react to the experience of

others can be a test! Paul warned us of this through the letter he sent to the Corinthian Church (I Corinthians 10:1-11). Tests are a part of Christian life. We've seen it many times in the Old Testament. Adam and Eve were "tested" through the presence of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Abraham was tested whether he would be willing to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. Israel went through a 40-year period of testing in the wilderness, which for the most part they failed. And even when they entered Canaan, their test continued and their failures also continued.

The same is true in the New Testament. In Matthew 19:20-22, Jesus tested a young rich man whether he would be willing to let go of his riches in favor of the Lord. In Revelation 2-3, we read that each of the seven churches were being tested and were encouraged to overcome to pass those tests before they can receive the rewards God has promised.

If there is one lesson that we should commit to memory, we must keep in mind that Jesus could test us at any time. He can arrange for us to go through the experience, or we can be spectators of an event and we would be tested based on how we act, or react from the experience of others.

Why was Philip tested? Was there something in his character that he needed to overcome? Was it because there's still doubt in his mind about Jesus? Whatever the reasons, this experience helped Philip, for at a later time he was willing to give up his life for Jesus' sake.

3. Why were these people - all 5 thousand of them - following Jesus in the wilderness? We have hints from the parallel stories found in Mark's and Luke's accounts; and there are three possible reasons:

a. Jesus had been healing the sick. In all probability, many of

these people needed healing or simply wanted to witness the miracles.

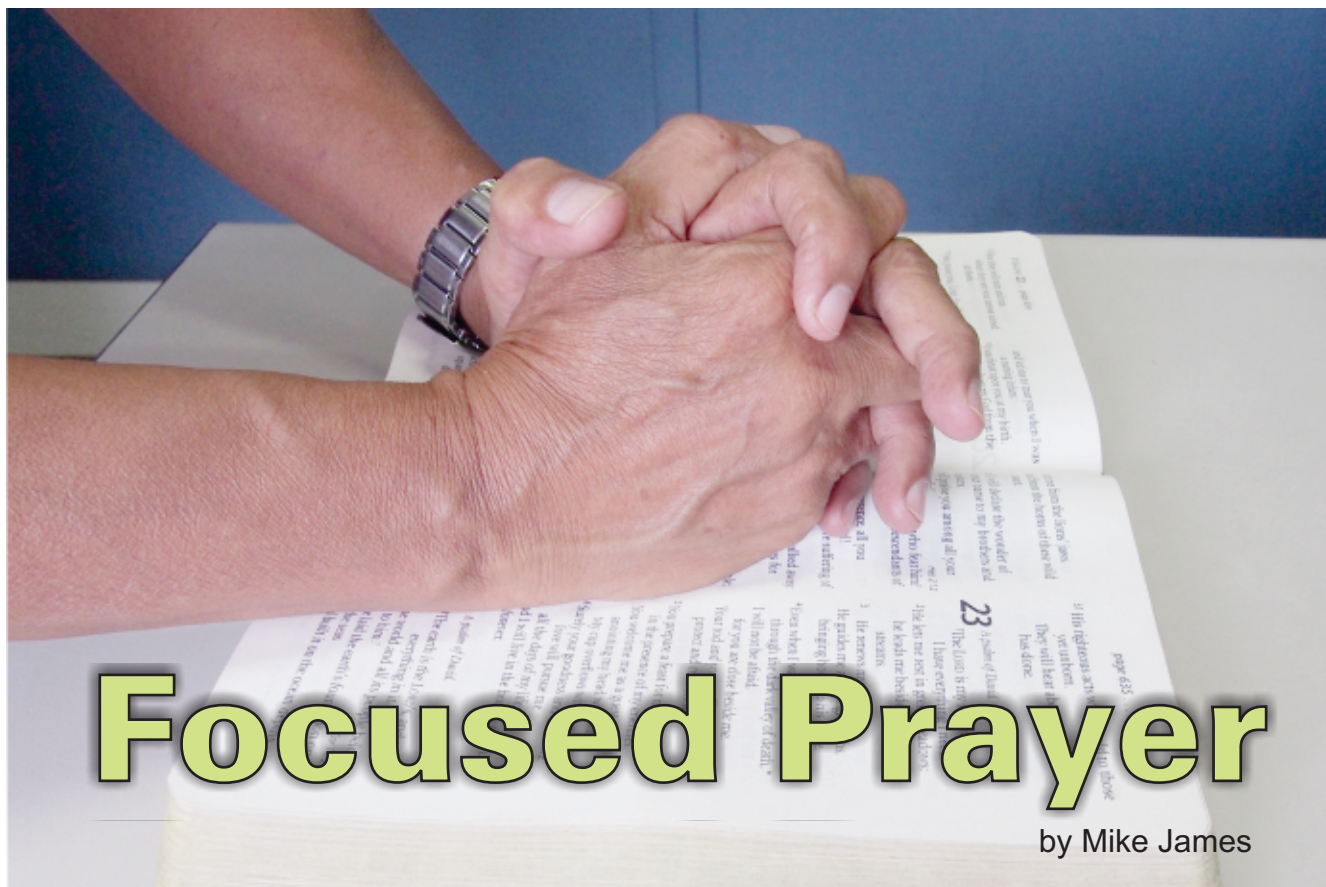
b. Jesus had been preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God. As a preacher, Jesus was brilliant and had no equal. The clarity and the authoritative language in the way Jesus preached created more impact compared to the rabbis, the priests, and the Pharisees. Thus, people were easily drawn to listen to him.

c. In John's account, we are given a third reason: these people were likely headed toward Jerusalem for the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (John 6:4). Jesus is also going to the feast and they may have "coincidentally" taken the same route. In His three-and-a-half year ministry, Jesus exemplified obedience to the laws of His Father written in the Old Testament, some of which included the feast days of God.

### **Believe in Jesus**

The apostle John recorded this encounter so that we would see the similarity between this miracle and the raining of the manna from God to feed Israel in the wilderness, that we may know that Jesus is the kind of "elder brother" who tests his "younger" brothers and sisters, and to emphasize that Jesus faithfully keeps the festivals of God!

What is expected from those who read the gospel of John? It is written so that we may not ignore the day-to-day events we encounter in this life as they could be tests purposed by God that we needed to pass; and following the example of Jesus, we must be faithful feast-keepers; and finally, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). **AG**



How do you pray?  
When we think of  
prayer, we are  
talking about  
communicating with  
God. Do we need to  
pray in a certain  
way or have met  
some preexisting  
conditions to make  
our prayers viable?

**S**ome amazing discoveries in science are giving us a greater understanding into how the brain works. Since the brain is so connected to our mind, consciousness, and spirit, we need to take heed of what these discoveries are. I believe some of this new information can help us understand prayer in a much deeper way.

Neurons, specialized, impulse-conducting cells, assist the various parts of the brain in communicating. Neurons communicate with each other through a type of electrochemical signaling driven by the movement of ions (an atom, group of atoms, or molecule). These ions travel through passages in the brain that at their narrowest point are only a little wider than an ion.

This means the brain is a quantum environment, subject to all the laws of quantum physics. One of these laws is the Quantum Zeno Effect (QZE).

The QZE is related to the observer effect of quantum physics. The observer effect states that the position of any quantum entity like an atom, electron, or ion appears to change when that entity is observed. In other words, matter at the quantum level can be changed by observing or putting focus on it. Numerous experiments have been conducted over the years verifying this. As we experience reality at the macro level, we are unaware at how different matter operates at the quantum (micro) level. But keep in mind that all matter, including you and me, is made up of this quantum matter

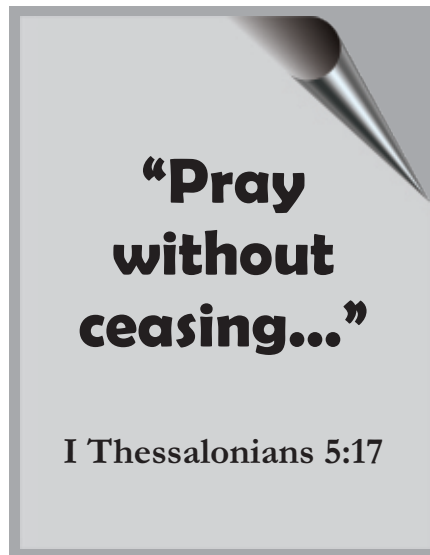


that operates in inexplicable ways.

In the QZE, when any system is observed in a sufficiently rapid, repeated fashion, the rate at which that system changes is reduced. One experiment in regard to this involved observing beryllium atoms that decay from a high-energy to a low-energy state. The experimenters found that as they increased the amount of times they measured the change in beryllium, the beryllium changed less. In other words, let us say the beryllium changed from high energy to low energy in 10 hours on average. The document I studied did not give a base line rate of breakdown. And let's say during those 10 hours the experimenters measured the breakdown four times. If the experimenters had measured the breakdown eight times, the beryllium would not have changed in 10 hours, but 15 hours. And if they had measured the breakdown 12 times, the beryllium would have taken 20 hours to change to the low-energy state. Think of this as similar to the old adage that a watched pot never boils. One possible implication of this is that reality can be altered by observation or focus. And this brings to mind the scripture in I Thessalonians 5:17, "pray without ceasing." Could it be God wants us to maintain focus on what we are trying to change? Could that focus have something to do with the power of our prayer? Remember Jesus' prayer in Luke 22:44? If that is not focus, I don't know what is.

In a 2005 paper published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (U.K.), physicist

Henry Stapp and Jeffrey Schwartz linked the QZE with what happens when close attention is paid to a mental experience. For the purposes of this article, I'd like you to think of the mental experience as prayer. In neuroscience, the QZE states that the mental act of focusing attention stabilizes the associated brain circuits. Concentrating attention on your mental experience, a thought, an insight, a fear, visualizing something in your mind, or PRAYER, maintains the brain



state arising in association with that experience. Over long periods of time, paying enough attention to a certain brain connection keeps the relevant circuitry open and dynamically alive. These circuits can then become not just chemical links, but stable, physical changes in the brain's makeup.

Now think for a moment about the implications of this in regard to the Sabbath, holydays, and Bible study. If you consistently and repeatedly do these things, your brain (where I believe your spirit is involved) begins to alter and change in

relation to these thoughts. Listen to what the neuroscientists have to say about this:

*Attention continually reshapes the patterns of the brain. Among the implications: People who practice a specialty every day literally think differently, through different sets of connections, than do people who don't practice that specialty. In business, professionals in different functions—finance, operations, legal, research and development, marketing, design, and human resources—have physiological differences that prevent them from seeing the world the same way.*

What science is discovering is that the brain changes as a function of what you put your attention on. In other words, there is power in focus. Now when we look at faith in relation to attention and prayer, there are some interesting implications that can be drawn. Remember the great importance Jesus placed on faith. Notice in Matthew 8:5–13 how impressed Jesus was with the faith of the centurion. Also read James 1:5–8. This scripture tells us not to doubt. Yet another scripture on the importance of faith is Mark 11:20–25. And there are many others. Why is faith so important in prayer? There probably are a number of reasons, but from what we are learning about the brain, it could be said that belief or faith can build upon itself in your brain. The more you believe and don't doubt, the stronger that belief and faith will become for you. And from Scripture we learn that faith can go a long way in getting your prayers answered.

Scientists are discovering that your expectations and

attitudes play a big role in your perception of reality. The placebo effect is a great example of this. Numerous experiments have been conducted over the years proving the fact that what you believe may happen to you can happen almost as much as being given something to cause the change. In the placebo effect, patients who are trying to reduce pain are given pills to try and reduce their pain. Some individuals are given an actual pain-reducing medicine like morphine, while others are given a sugar pill (placebo). Many of the patients who get the sugar pill also experience a reduction in pain. One study in 2005 by Robert C. Coghill and others found that “expectations for decreased pain produce a reduction in perceived pain (28.4 percent) that rivals the effects of a clearly analgesic dose of morphine.” Donald Price of the University of Florida has shown that the mental expectation of pain relief accounts for the change in pain perception. The brain's deepest pain centers show systematic changes consistent with changes in experienced pain.

William Teller, a professor at Stanford University, has conducted eye-opening experiments into how mental intentions can alter the structure of systems. Teller has had subjects imprint their mental intentions in electronic devices and then had the devices alter things. One experiment had the test subjects think about altering the pH balance in water. The thoughts were imprinted into an electronic device and then the device was sent thousands of miles away. The devices were placed near water and the pH

balance of the water was altered. Other control devices with no mental intention imprinted on them were also used near other containers of water and the pH balance of that water was not altered. This makes me think of materials that were touched by Paul being taken to the sick and healing occurring (Acts 19:11–12).

But how does praying for someone make that person better? We may have an idea how it makes you better, but what about someone else? Let's look at 1 Corinthians 2:10–16. Here we read that man has a spirit as does God. When you become a Christian, you begin to learn and grow by God's Spirit connecting with your spirit (mind). Romans 8:26–27 also addresses this connection in prayer between God's Spirit and man. Is it possible that this spiritual connection between God and Christians is somehow activating healing in humans? Again, think back to the fact our mind/brain is a quantum environment where amazing things are possible. Could the prayers of the faithful coalesce with God's Spirit which is coursing through all Christians and lead to miraculous events? Scripture does not give us enough information to be sure about how this all works, but I believe our mind/spirit is a very powerful tool in this process, especially when it is connecting with the Spirit of God in us.

Now some may argue that other religions show miracles and healings, too. And I would agree there is some evidence to support there is power in the thoughts and beliefs of others who are not Christian. But we need to remember there is also

another spiritual force in the world that works against God's purposes. Take a look at Acts 19:11–20. Here we see evidence that some will be deceived into going after other spiritual powers in the world that can perform mighty feats. And it is highly likely that Satan is aware of how our brain/mind and its focus can be turned in his direction.

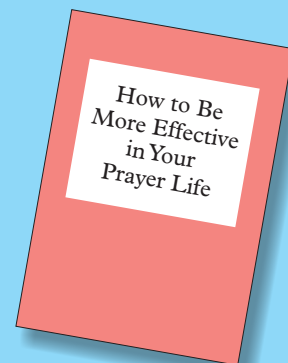
Despite the fact we don't have all the answers to the puzzle of how prayer and communication with God's Spirit works, there are some things we can be sure of. The more faith, focus, and passion we put into God and following His ways, the greater potential our prayers and petitions to God have of being answered. Keep praying, brethren, and pray without ceasing.

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Sources for this article: “The Neuroscience of Leadership” by David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz from *Strategy + Business*, Issue 43, Summer 2006.

The G.O.D. Experiments by Gary E. Schwartz with William L. Simon.

#### RECOMMENDED READING



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# REAL CHANGE

by Ferdie Padilla



**T**hey say that the only constant in this universe is change; as far as the physical universe is concerned, that is true. Stars age and they eventually exhaust their fuel. We grow old. Our physical features change over time. Our hairs eventually turn white. As we age, we can feel a lot of changes in our bodies. Change happens not just in the physical environment but also in society itself. We have experienced social upheavals which have brought forth the changes we now see. Those who initiated such social changes hoped that the end result would be a better one than the status quo. They wanted change.

We, the true Christians of today are also a product of the changes we have faced in our lives. Perhaps, previously, our concept or knowledge about God was shaky at best. We did not know who He really was. We did not know His nature. We did not know that we are supposed to keep His Ten Commandments. We did not know the knowledge that would help us in the salvation process. But today, we know. That's why we lived our lives accordingly. And that was a change from what we used to do.

## Three Things about Change

What does the Bible tell us of changes? Certainly, it tells us a lot about it. But for the purposes of this article, we will list 3 things we can derive from the Bible about this subject.

### 1. Only God does not change.

We read in **Malachi 3:6 (NIV)** "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." This is actually a comforting statement from God Himself. If God changes His mind from time to time, that is to say, He is fickle minded, there would be no continuity in His general plan of salvation for mankind. The end result maybe is there will be no salvation at all for us. That could be the end of us – our destruction. There would be no

consistency in His directives or laws because God Himself is not consistent. This moment we are to observe a certain day as holy. The next time, He will tell us it is no longer necessary since He changed His mind and since He is God, He can actually do that. The result would be disastrous for us. Based on what is existing as law, one can be saved or not. For example, some say the Ten Commandments are no longer in force today, that Christ nailed them to the cross. To some, grace is already sufficient to save us. That would make it "easy" for us to be saved. All you have to do is accept Christ and you are already saved. But what about the time of Moses? During that time, the Ten Commandments (which are branded by some as a "harsh law") were in full effect.

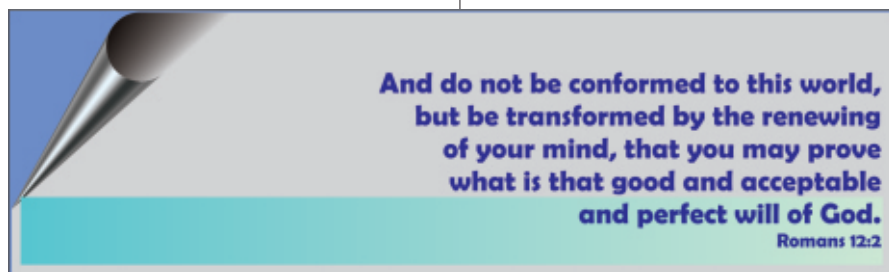
Would they not be saved as a consequence since nobody can really comply with its spirit or intent? How do we go about this then? Can you put your faith in a Being who changes His mind from time to time, who is not consistent? There is one very dangerous thing if God indeed changes His mind from time to time with regards to His laws or to His plan. It only means He cannot be relied upon. What He is saying would always be questionable. But thankfully, that is not the case. The verse

cooperation. We need to change. And that will bring us to our next item on our list.

## 2. We need to change.

The second thing we can read from the Bible about change involves us. The message is straightforward. We are required to change our lives; this change happens first in our minds. There has to be a change in attitude and mindset. Whatever happens inside our hearts and minds eventually expresses themselves in our actions. That is why Paul

know this is tantamount to murder. We would have to be completely obedient to God's will in our lives. We have to surrender our all to Him. Our minds and hearts should no longer be rebellious towards our Father in heaven. We would have to keep His Sabbaths. We now give to God the ten percent that is His claim on the increase of our incomes. We now avoid foods that were pronounced unclean by God. We now love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. These would represent clear, concrete changes in our lives. The question now of course is if we have already exhibited those changes in our lives. Why do we have to change? Because our ways are contrary to God's ways. God wants to bring us to His Kingdom. But we cannot enter it if the required changes do not take place. Therefore, for us to qualify to God's Kingdom, we have to conform to His holy ways. We have to change – for the better.



mentioned earlier also says that He remains the same all throughout since the very beginning. There is no sign of “wavering” in His character. There is no change in His most holy, righteous character. What He was from eternity will be the same throughout eternity. As a result, whatever truth is revealed in His holy word will also never change. The truth remains unchanged because the One who declared them remains the same. The physical universe indeed changes but God never does change with regards to His character and consequently His plan. That is one of the reasons why He can be trusted. We can have confidence in what He promised and we can actually put our faith in Him. God is consistent all throughout. Because of that, our future, as He has planned is secure. But for that to happen, He needs our

admonished us in **Romans 12:2 (NIV)** “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” There has to be a change in our mindset and attitudes. We call this repentance. We have to turn our backs from whatever sinful attitudes we may have had before. This means (and it will come as a surprise to many) we have to obey the Laws of God enshrined in the Ten Commandments. If we had the tendency to covet other people's possessions, we would have to change our attitude and be content with what we have or work harder and honestly to gain what we want. We should no longer harbor hatred or unforgiving thoughts in our hearts and minds because we

## 3. The required change in our lives can only happen if we allow God to live in us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Because God knows that we are naturally weak, He saw to it that we are not left as orphans. Jesus Himself promised this! Let's take a look at **John 14:16 - 18 (NIV)** “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” And again we read in **John 14:23**



(NIV) “Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” From these verses, we derive great comfort. Christ and the Father will live in us through the Holy Spirit. This means we are provided with the necessary strength and power to sustain us daily. That is how God deeply loves us. He wants us to change for the better for us to be qualified to inherit His kingdom! And He has provided everything for us so we attain the sought after change. And this change we are referring to will be complete. First, we will have a change in mindset or attitude. Over time, we are supposed to develop Godly character. Over time, love will be our main distinguishing character trait as it is God's distinguishing trait. After some time, our characters would have developed as God intended it to be. The next change that would happen would be the transformation of our perishable bodies to an imperishable one as recorded in **1 Corinthians 15:51 -54 (NIV)** “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” When these things happen, we would have been

changed from mortal to spirit beings. Death would no longer have a hold on us. It's a quantum leap of a change. Can we even begin to imagine how great a change that would be? We would now possess eternal life as promised by God to those who obey Him. And this is made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which serves as a deposit, guaranteeing the promised inheritance. If we do not have it, we will not be changed.

### Conclusion

We ought to examine ourselves if anything needs to be changed – be they wrong attitudes, wrong personal beliefs which we have proven for ourselves to be wrong from the pages of our Bibles thru personal study or any habit that stands in the way of us gaining entrance to the Kingdom of God. If there is, we should ask our Heavenly Father for the courage to admit to ourselves we need to change and also for the strength and staying power to change it. The other side of the change coin is that we should always be vigilant so that we hold on to the true faith once for all delivered to the saints. Remember what we said before? The truth will always be the truth. And whatever truth we have learned from the pages of the Bible should always remain in our hearts and minds. That is one thing that should not change. We should take hold of it and live by it. If we remember these things and remain true to God, real change would come to us. And that is a change we will certainly most welcome. **AG**

**“Thy word  
is a lamp  
unto my feet,  
and a light  
unto my path”**

Psalms 119:105

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