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Romans 15:13a



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What We Believe

1. There is One God, Who is the Creator and Father of all mankind. Isa. 44:6-8; Eph. 4:6; I Cor. 8:6
2. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he died for our sins, was buried and rose again from the dead. John 20:31; Acts 8:37; I John 5:5
3. The Holy Spirit is the power of God working in believers through Jesus Christ. Rom. 8:9,14
4. The Bible is God's inspired Word which shall be the guide and practice of the Christian. I Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:16,17
5. Man is wholly mortal and only through Christ can man receive the gift of immortality. I John 5:12; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 6:23
6. God's love and grace offers to man a plan of salvation through Jesus Christ including complete forgiveness of sin and immortality at the return of Jesus Christ. John 3:16; Phil. 3:20,21; John 1:7-9
7. Man's response to God through Jesus Christ will be: believe the gospel, confession of faith, baptism by immersion in the name of Jesus, growth in Christian life. Rom. 6:4-6; Acts 2:38
8. Jesus Christ is coming again to resurrect the dead, bestow the gift of immortality upon all believers, and establish the Kingdom of God. I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-57; Rev. 11:15

CONDITIALISM VS NATURAL IMMORTALITY

By Paul Duncan

Man has always wanted to live forever. There is just something about living forever that seizes man's imagination and desires almost to the point of obsession. To put it simply man does not want to die (stop living). That is why Ponce de Leon searched for the fountain of youth. That is why man constantly strives to come up with something that will "stop the aging process" and allow him to continue to live. It is just hard for mankind to accept the fact that they do not last forever and eventually they cease to exist. Thus, most of the religious belief systems of mankind have some concept of a man living forever in spite of the fact that at some point in time he dies and no longer exists. There just has to be something about man or his existence that will allow him to continue to live; something that will validate his immortality. There are two main ideas concerning immortality are conditionalism (or conditional immortality) and natural immortality. Thus, a comparison of these two ideas, their origins, and their biblical basis is in order.



The prevalent belief held by most of the world today is that of natural immortality. The concept of natural immortality simply holds that there is a part of man, the real man usually called the soul, which never dies but continues to live even though the body which housed it dies and deteriorates away. And since the real man lives on after death there must be some place of existence which is different from the conscious, living world of his previous existence. In fact, this belief mandates that there must be two different places for this immortal part of man to live or exist. There must be some utopian place of existence for those who were good during their lifetime in this tangible, physical world and there must be a place of punishment for those who were bad or wicked. Some variation of this belief can be found in almost every religion that has ever existed, including today's Christianity

The other belief which is called conditionalism or conditional immortality is held by Judaism and a small minority of Christianity. The concept of conditional immortality holds that man is mortal (i.e. he dies or ceases to exist) and gains immortality only if he meets the conditions that have been set forth by the most high God, the creator of all things. Since the real man is mortal and dies, the resurrection of man is necessary for him to be given eternal life or immortality. Those who have met God's conditions of righteousness and holiness will live forever in the earth which has been regenerated into its original paradisiacal conditions. Those who have not met God's conditions will cease to exist and will never exist again.

Oddly enough, both of these ideas have their basis in the Bible. The view called conditionalism is based on God's statements in the second and third chapters of Genesis along with Jesus' statement to Nicodemus in the book of John. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17) Then after Adam disobeyed God, God told him that he would return to the dust from which he was taken (Genesis 3:19)

and then drove him from the Garden of Eden so he could not eat of the tree of life and live forever. (Genesis 3:22-24) From these statements we can conclude that man is mortal and subject to death. Then Jesus made it plain that the only way to have everlasting life (eternal life or immortality) was by believing on God's only begotten son (John 3:16). The view of natural immortality has its basis in the words of Satan as he tried to convince Eve to disobey God. Satan said, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Since Satan is telling Eve that she will not die, he is implying that she has immortality. So, do we want to base our beliefs on what God and His Son Jesus said or on what Satan said?

Those believing in natural immortality might say that God was only talking about the body dying; the soul leaves the body and continues to live. After all, the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 12:7 that a person returns to the dust but the spirit (soul) returns to God. Let us examine exactly what the soul is and whether or not the spirit which returns to God is that soul. In Genesis 2:7 we find, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." We note immediately that the thing that God formed from the dust of the ground, the body, became a living soul when God put the breath of life into his nostrils. The soul is the body which has had the breath of life breathed into it.



We note also that this scripture does not say that the soul was put or breathed into the body, but the breath of life, the spirit or life giving force of God. This is plain when we look at the Hebrew word for spirit used in Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew word is ruach and is the same word that is translated breath in Psalm 146:4 "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" and in Psalms 104:29 "thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Thus it is plain to see that the spirit which returns to God who gave it is nothing more than the breath of life which God breathed into him causing him to become a living soul. Additionally, we find that the soul can die (Ezekiel 18:4; Rev 16:3), can be destroyed (Lev. 23:30; Josh. 10:28), and can be smote with the edge of the sword, destroying it and not leaving it to breath (Josh. 11:11). Thus it is evident that the soul is the body which has had the breath of life breathed into it and is not immortal, but mortal. Further, we are told that in death there is no remembrance of God (Psa. 6:5), that our very thoughts perish (Psa. 146:4), that we know not any thing (Eccl. 9:5), and that there is no work, knowledge, device, nor wisdom (Eccl. 9:10). Jesus classified death as a sleep (John 11:11) and indicated that he would raise his people out of their sleep at the last day (John 5:25-29; 6:39-40). Thus, we see that even if man were to continue to live, he has no thoughts or remembrance of God or any other type of activity until Jesus calls him forth in day of the resurrection of the dead. That would not be much of an existence, would it?

At this point I would interject my own experiences with these two beliefs. I remember as a young boy, hearing my dad and the deacons of our church offering over the radio a thousand dollars to anyone who could find the words "immortal soul" or "never-dying soul in the Bible. My best efforts to earn that money yielded only firm belief that man was mortal and gained immortality only by believing on Jesus Christ and being baptized in his name and thus become an heir to God's coming kingdom here on earth. This understanding of the scriptures was verified for me while studying for my undergraduate degree

in mathematics at the local Lutheran college. Having been required to take courses in Old and New Testament, I had resigned myself to the fact that I would probably be taught things that directly contradicted my personal beliefs. You can imagine the shock I received when the professor, a noted Lutheran doctor of divinity, responded to a question about the immortality of the soul by saying that the doctrine of the immortality of soul was not biblical and the reason it was taught by the Lutheran churches was nothing more than tradition.

If the doctrine of natural immortality is only mere tradition, just how did such a strangle hold on the Christian church occur? It is apparent from the writings in the New Testament that Christ and his apostles held the view of conditionalism. Dr. John Roller, in his booklet entitled "The Doctrine of Immortality in the Early Church," examines the writings of the early church fathers prior to the Nicene Council. His findings were that the early church leaders up through the mid-second century church were "Conditionalist." During the second century the Platonic (Greek) view of the soul was introduced to the church by Athenagoras of Athens and was popularized by Tertullian of Carthage. It was embraced by more and more of the church leaders until finally in 1513 AD, the Fifth Lateran Council of the Roman Catholic Church officially condemned Conditionalism as heresy. Thus, the doctrine of natural immortality was entrenched in the Christian church of today.

The words "immortal" and "immortality" are only found a total of six times in the Bible. Twice it refers to God as "the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God" (1 Tim. 1:17) and "who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16).

In 2 Timothy 1:10, we are told that Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." In 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, we are told that immortality is something that the mortal shall put on. And finally, in Romans 2:7, we are told that immortality is something that we are seeking by patient continuance in well doing.

In conclusion, Paul the apostle tells us that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of god is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). How can God give us something that we already have? The Bible is plain that the soul is not something that is placed inside of man, but it is the man himself. The soul only has life when it breathes and takes in the breath of life (the life-giving force or power) one breath at a time. When

he dies, he breathes out and does not take it back in again. Thus, he ceases to live. The concept of natural immortality is not found in the Bible except in the words of Satan when he was trying to deceive the woman! Man (the soul) is mortal and seeks for immortality. Immortality comes at the resurrection when the dead soul that was placed in the ground is raised from the dead and all believers are changed from mortality to immortality/corruptible to incorruptible at the last trump.

When we know the truth about the soul and eternal life, we understand that Christ had to die to bring us salvation and life and that we need of him as our savior. We therefore believe on him the only begotten Son of God and are baptized so that we will not perish but have everlasting life. After all, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.



IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD...



By Pastor Michael Brown from Pastor Michael's Blog -
The Good News Herald <https://thegoodnewsherald.wordpress.com/>

John 1 In the Beginning was the LOGOS and the LOGOS was with God, and the LOGOS was God. 2This was in the Beginning with God. 3Through it everything was done; and without it not even one thing was done, which has been done. 4In it was Life; and the LIFE was the LIGHT of MEN. 5And the LIGHT shone in the DARKNESS, and the darkness apprehended it not.

14And the LOGOS became Flesh, and dwelt among us,—and we beheld his GLORY, a Glory as of an Only-begotten from a Father, —full of Favor and Truth. (The Emphatic Diaglott, Benjamin Wilson)

You'll notice that the above scriptural quote has a Greek word that is used in place of the English word that is usually printed in most translations and paraphrased versions of the Bible. In a word, it's "the word," LOGOS.

Jesus was in God's plan from the beginning of time....

LOGOS is the Greek word for "the Word" cited in most English translations. LOGOS is about Jesus Christ but is not a substitute for his name. In other words, it's not correct to say, "In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God...." Rather, LOGOS ("the Word") signifies speech, doctrine, or reasoning. And, therefore, Jesus was in the reasoning of God's plan from the beginning. "For in him were all things created....and on account of him and for him," (Colossians 1:16, New European Version), in accordance with God's LOGOS.

Jesus came into being when God's LOGOS was manifested in the flesh in this world. John 1:14 says,

"And the LOGOS became Flesh, and dwelt among us—and we beheld his GLORY, a Glory as of an Only begotten from a Father—full of favor and truth." (ibid.)

For us to appreciate the Good News of Jesus Christ and his birth, we focus on the fact that had it not been for the LOGOS, we'd be lost in the darkness of sin, resulting in the final death. On the other hand, it's on account of the LOGOS that we're found in the Light of Christ who brings the gift of eternal life to all who accept him into their lives (John 8:12).

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (New American Standard Bible, NASB; See also Revelation 21:1-8)

That Jesus Christ was in God's plan to save us and give us the hope of eternal life is what the LOGOS represents. In essence, LOGOS is the idea that literally "became flesh" when Christ was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. It fulfilled God's infallible Word spoken long ago when he, himself, created the world: "God said..." (Genesis 1:3; 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29).

What God "said" in Genesis 1 is referenced in Psalm 33:6, 6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their lights. (NASB) (See also Psalm 148:5; Hebrews 11:3)

In the Old Testament, a word that closely corresponds with the New Testament Greek word, LOGOS, is the Hebrew word, *dabar*. It means, "Word, matter, thing, speech, command, promise." (Bible Hub)

Thus, it was according to God's *dabar* ("Word") that believers can rejoice. Why? Because God's thoughts are based upon his grand plan, "full of grace and truth," which John describes in John 1:14, speaking of the birth of Jesus.

Dabar ties in with Isaiah 55:10-11 where the prophet quotes God as saying,

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,

And do not return there without watering the earth

And making it produce and sprout,

And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11 So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;

It will not return to Me empty,

Without accomplishing what I desire,

And without succeeding in the purpose for which I sent it.



The Stack Exchange network has this interesting comment about "*dabar*" and "*logos*" (I've put the Bible references in red and underlined them for you to click on and read.):

The word, *dabar*, in Isaiah 55:10-11 is similar to the word/*logos* in John. Rain/*dabar*/word is a gift sent by God, it brings life, the word is sent, the word /rain will not return to God empty, returns to God when its purpose is accomplished. Now consider the similarities in John 8:23, "I am from above"; the Father sent the Son so those who will believe will have life, John 3:16. Jesus did the work the God sent him to do, John 17:4, Jesus ascended to the Father, John 20:17.

However, there is no God the word or a *logos* Creator in the Old Testament or even in the New Testament, if that is the Old Testament equivalent term that this question is looking for. The phrase, "the word of the LORD" appears hundreds of times in the Old Testament, but it does not say nor hint that the word is a distinct person equal to YHWH. That is why Jesus said that his Father is greater than all, John 10:29. Jesus included, John 14:28. Psalm 33:6 says the

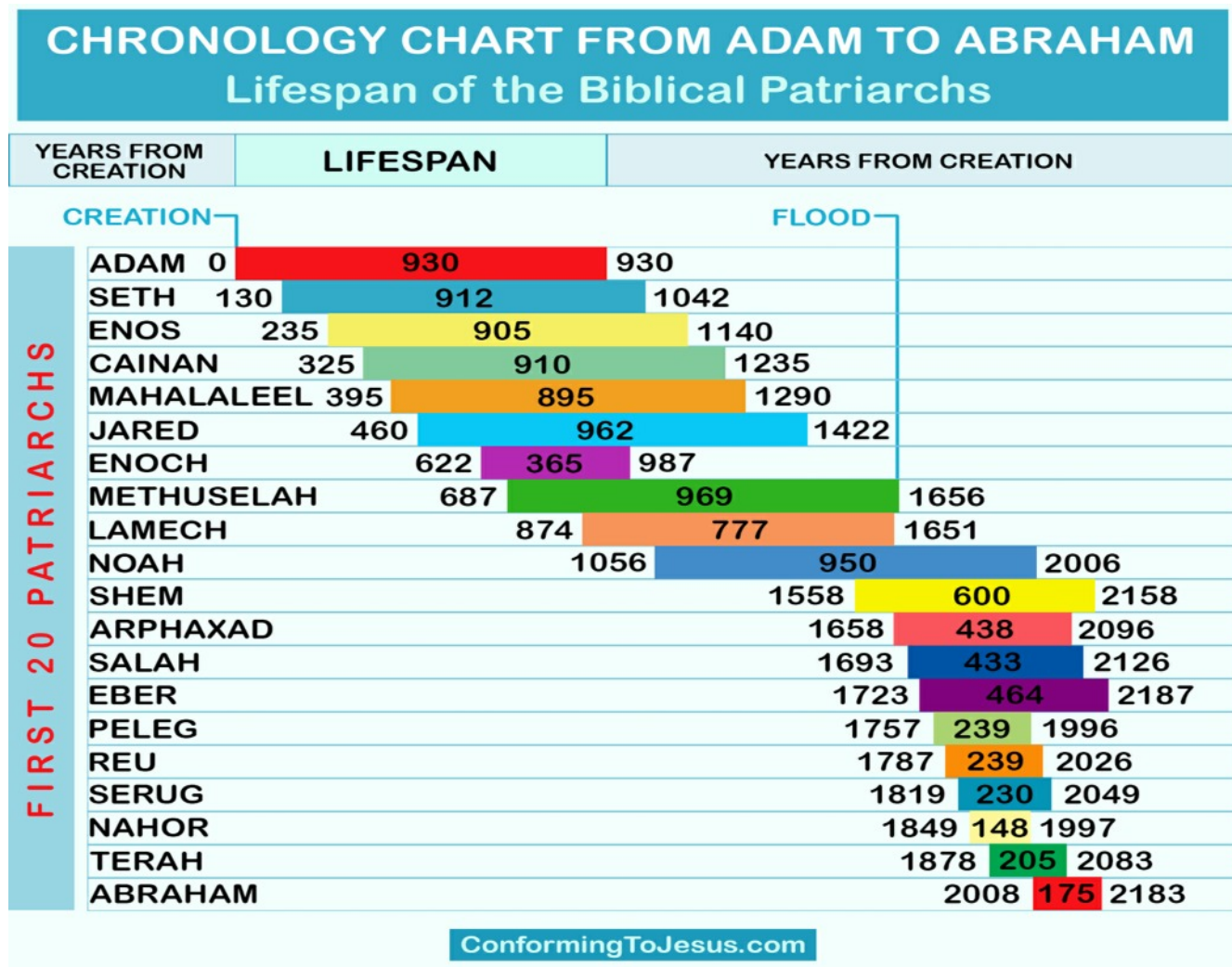
heavens were created by YHWH's word. That is why Jesus ascribed creation to his God and not to himself, Mark 13:19.

God's desire is that we may know Him, the only true God, John 17:3, thus, the significance of his words. Communication between God and man are either heard or written through His word. Hence, we go to the Bible to look for the equivalent term. The Hebrew word for "word" is *dabar*. In Psalm 107:20, we read, "He sends His word and heals them, | And delivers [them] from their destructions." (Literal Standard Version)

In John 3:16, God sent his only begotten to save those who believe.

Sticking strictly to what the Bible says, there is no *dabar*/logos/word as a person in the OT. There is also no God the word or God the son in the OT and the rest of the Bible if that is how some interpret the logos of John.

God's Word, the LOGOS, truly gives us the reason to rejoice as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God's powerful Word was fulfilled according to his promises from the time Jesus first arrived on the scene in Bethlehem. But what's even greater is the hope we have when he arrives again—this time in great power and glory to fulfill his Messianic role as King over all the earth. And we have God's sure Word on that, too.



By James Mattison

IS THERE a difference between immortality and eternal life? Will the faithful of these times of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25) be exalted so much higher than faithful ones of ancient days? Will some have eternal life in natural bodies, while the saints become spirit beings, dwelling in the “new heavens,” while the others mentioned will dwell in the “new earth”? Matthew 5:5 says: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”? Is it true it does not refer to the church of the living God?

We were confronted with these questions. The whole plan of salvation is challenged by these questions.

The Basic Law of Faith

“Without faith” no man can please God reads Hebrews 11:6. “By grace are ye saved through faith,” reads Ephesians 2:8. It is our understanding of God and His Word that one basic law God has given men of all ages, if they want to please Him, is to “have faith in God.” Believe Him! Believe He means what He says when He asks us to do certain things, like “be baptized.” Of course, He has required different tasks of different men. Abraham was asked to offer his son. The Israelites were commanded to be circumcised. We are asked to be baptized. Yet, if any will be saved, it will be because of their belief in God (which is all-inclusive). If we believe, we will act accordingly.

This Law Was Known to Ancient Men of God

“He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; James 2:23). The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The faithful ones who lived long ago were very careful about obeying God. This respect and obedience, because of belief or faith, accounted them “worthy” in God’s eyes.

What Provision Did God Make for Ancient Saints to Be Saved?

God made provision for their salvation by offering them eternal life, eternal blessing, and eternal inheritance on the earth. They shall be changed and given eternal life at resurrection, the same as the church.

David, a man after God’s own heart, said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15). Daniel recorded, “Many... shall “wake, some to everlasting life.” Psalm 133:3 speaks of the time God commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. Even in Luke 9:30, 31, in vision Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, talking to Jesus.

Paul said, “There shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust.” Notice those who are called just in the Scriptures - Noah and Joseph being among them!

If the saints rise in the first resurrection, and the rest of the dead rise not till after the thousand years, when do the ancient worthies rise? They will rise in the first resurrection, for they are righteous. Luke 20:35, 36 speaks of those who shall be accounted worthy by faith of entering “that world.” It then immediately speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We read elsewhere, “Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28-30).

James 1:21 tells us the engrafted Word of God is able to save. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by God's Word. Can you say the Old Testament saints are accounted not quite so worthy in God's sight as the church of the New Testament? Daniel 12:1 speaks about some of the old faithful ones having their names written in a "book." What book? We understand "book of life." The words "saved" and "salvation" occurs many times in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. God will fulfill His promises.

No Salvation (Justification) in Sinai Law

Galatians 3:11 and 21 make it plain the law did not offer salvation, could not give eternal life by keeping it. What could, then? Faith, which leads to obedience. Romans 3:28-30 tells us men are justified by faith.

For Whom Did Christ Die?

Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6); for sinners (Rom. 5:8); for all (2 Cor.5:14,15); for us all (Rom.8:32); for the world (John 3:16). Christ died for all men, even those who lived before Him, that He might be Lord of all (Rom. 14:9). Those who lived before Him believed in Him. The Messiah was their light, their hope, their promise. They looked for Him and believed concerning Him.

Did Old Testament Faithful Ones Believe in Christ?

Moses did (Heb. 11:26,27); Abraham did (John 8:56); also David (Psalm 110:1). Many are the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. Job understood Christ should stand on earth in the latter days. And it is written in Acts 10:43. "To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"

The Same God Over All

God is no respecter of persons. Peter proclaimed by God's Spirit, "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Romans 10:12 bears record: "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.."

Who Has Charge of Salvation?

Jesus, of course! Zechariah announced it (9:9). Paul declared that Jesus would come "without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Salvation is for all who are justified. Different rewards will be given different ones according to their faith.

We Conclude

We must not think lightly of the great eternal life God has promised all the faithful. Find it recorded in John 3:16; 17:2; Acts 13:48; Romans 2:7; 6:23. Notice in Hebrews 11 how the faithful ones obtained good reports. Study them one by one.

Abel obtained witness of his righteousness. Noah condemned the world by his building of the ark, becoming heir of the righteousness which is of faith. Enoch pleased God. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than Egypt's treasure houses. The rest, "of whom the world was not worthy," endured sore trials, looking for a better resurrection, that is, the first resurrection.

God has not yet rewarded them, but He has provided something better than that, having us in mind, that they should not be made perfect without us. We shall all rise together to meet Christ in the air, if found faithful. Then we shall live together eternally in the glorious Kingdom of God and of Christ on this earth made new. What a glorious hope! Is this hope yours?



LESSON 12*

KINGDOM PARABLES OF JESUS

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Memorize 1 Peter 2:5.

In John 14, where Christ speaks of preparing a place, where is the preparing going on and what is being prepared? What is the Father's house (1 Tim. 3:15)? This lesson will be studied under three subdivisions: self-examination; consciousness of God's watching eye; and humility.

Self-Examination. In what way does Paul intend that one shall examine self (1 Cor. 11:28)? Do you think it is an examination as to one's faithfulness? Should we be less severe in examining ourselves than we are with others?

Consciousness of God's Watching Eye. 1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 5:21; 15:3; Psa. 139:4; 139:7-12 (it is well to read the whole); Heb. 4:13; Jer. 23:24. Does it help in the spiritual growth to know that the all-seeing eye is watching us? Yes, it is power and strength for you to know "the fear of the Lord is clean" (Psa. 19:9), and it will keep you clean and pure in proportion to the extent you come under its influence.

Humility. Humility is a condition of mind in which one senses his own weakness of understanding and wisdom and is manifested by and accompanied with contentment, peace, and submission to the Father's will. It is a most excellent grace and evidence of the Spirit of God. It is the opposite of pride (Jas. 4:6, 10; Matt. 11:29). In order that we may better understand humility, give some examples of pride. Are we humbled by God or do we humble ourselves (2 Cor. 12:21; Jas. 4:10; Prov. 6:3; 2 Cor. 7:14; 2 Chron. 12:6; Deut. 8:2)? How, if by God? How, if by ourselves? Jesus humbled Himself by obedience to the Father's will (Phil. 2:8). David humbled himself by fasting (Psa. 35:11-14).

What is the value of self-examination?

Define 'spirituality' by the dictionary; in your own words.

Does humility demand that we not recognize our own talents and their results?

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