

DON'T STOP - IT'S TOO IMPORTANT

Q U A R T E R L Y

Issue 81
Autumn 2005

I have been meditating on the book of Nehemiah in recent weeks, and I think there are many lessons that are relevant to Reachout Trust and its supporters. I just want to underline two here and relate it to what is happening in these days.

Chapter 1 opens with Nehemiah in the service of a foreign king but his heart is still taken up with God's plan for the city that is very close to His heart. It strikes me that we are living in a world that is affected by a foreign king and all what he wants is seen around us, but what is central to our hearts? Is it our own desires or plans, that relate to what we can see and touch around us, or is it what is close to the heart of God?

Nehemiah's heart condition led him to fast and pray and then eventually to action. There are many things that can divert us from God's will and heart, and if His desires are not central to our thinking, then other things will scream louder than the heart of God, and we will be led to concentrate on secondary issues.

What is the heart of God for you? And obviously for those involved, what is the heart of God for Reachout? Having answered the question, these are the issues that should be the centre of our intercession, and maybe fasting too.

Nehemiah, despite his heart being taken up with the things on God's heart, could not fulfil them himself; someone had to intervene and bring the possibility of action to him. This is our security - as we intercede, we do not need to rush around to try to fulfil God's plan for Him, but we wait until He begins to act within our lives and gives us the opportunity to act.

It was never going to be easy for Nehemiah, as the following chapters show, but once being given the opportunity, he commits himself to the will of God and does not allow anything to dissuade him.

That's the second lesson I want us to be aware of in these days - what-

ever the enemy seeks to do we will not stop, but be willing, whatever the cost, to move on in the centre of God's will. This culminates in the verses recorded in chapter 6 verses 1-3 when Nehemiah will not stop and meet the enemy because of the great work he was doing, fulfilling the will of the Lord.

Even if you have never had a specific calling, we all have the general calling of sharing Christ with others. If you are involved in the work of Reachout Trust, this may well be sharing the gospel with those who are involved in cults and false religions.

There is no question in my mind that, if the Incitement to Religious Hatred Bill is passed through Parliament, our sharing Christ with such people will be severely hampered and may even lead to the authorities taking action against us. Should we stop? No, we are doing a great work being involved in the will of the Lord. We will intercede that the doors of opportunity stay open, but if this is the time that they start closing then we must trust Him to have His way, whatever that means for you and me.

Daniel 6:10 is a tremendous encouragement here - when the bill was signed Daniel kept doing what he had been doing - serving the Lord. Am I willing to do that? ☐

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2005 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Reachout Trust is an international Christian ministry that equips the church, upholds evangelical biblical truth and builds bridges to people in the cults, occult and new age.

We aim to:

Examine in the light of the evangelical Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult, new age and all not upholding evangelical biblical truth.

Train and equip Christians to explain the evangelical Christian gospel in a relevant way.

Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.

Present the evangelical Christian gospel.

Work with organisations who will help achieve these aims.

A detailed information pack that shows how you can be involved in this ministry is available from head office.

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Many will remember that we were at Wycliffe for a number of years, but since then they have undertaken many improvements and we are really looking forward to being there again.

We visited the site in _____ There are ensuite

January and it will be very suitable for our weekend. Some may feel that it will mean extra travel but the Centre is better located just off the M40 and for most, not much extra travel.

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Doug's Diary

Doug Harris will be involved in training at the following seminars. An updated list can be obtained either on the web site or by ringing Head Office for further details.

Those marked * may have a restricted attendance.

SEPTEMBER 2005

18 Dagenham
28 Brentwood

OCTOBER 2005

2 Tooting *
8 Lancaster
10 Greenock
13-15 CRE - Edinburgh
18 Prayer & Bible Battersea

NOVEMBER 2005

6 Arlesford
11-13 High Wycombe Convention
20 Dagenham

DECEMBER 2005

20 Prayer & Bible Battersea

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WATCH THE TOWER



2005/3

The Watchtower, April 15 2004, p.6, contains an article "When God's Will is Done on Earth". In it the Watchtower Society repeat two statements that are part of their 'trademark'. First, they talk about the new heavens and new earth as just a new system of government and not to be taken literally. They then quote Revelation 21:3, 4 in this context but do not see the error they are making. In this article we want to challenge these statements and put the other side.

New Heavens and New Earth

This is a teaching that has been around for many years and has often been treated in detail.

Reasoning from the Scriptures, p.113, asks the question,

"Will God himself destroy the earth by fire?"

In answer they quote two Scriptures: 2 Peter 3:7, 10, and Revelation 21:1, from the King James version. They then argue that we must take these verses in context and discover that it is not a literal burning up but a symbolic one.

It is that symbolic 'earth', or wicked human society, that is 'discovered'; that is, Jehovah will sear away as by fire all disguise, exposing the wickedness of ungodly human society and showing it to be worthy of complete destruction. That wicked society of humans is also 'the first earth', referred to at Revelation 21:1 (p.115).

This teaching was amplified in *The Watchtower*, 1 November 1974, pp.665-667, and can be summarised as follows:

1. The story of Noah is a prophetic picture. Noah = Jesus Christ. Noah's wife = the remnant of the Bride of Christ still on earth. The sons and their wives = the great crowd. The ark = spiritual paradise into which God has brought worshippers.

2. The fire that is coming is not all literal, although part of it may be. The earth will be cleansed and become a perfect place to live.

3. 'Heavens' and 'earth' are not

literal, but represent 'systems of governments'.

4. The fulfilment of this 'prophecy' began in 1919.

5. The ark = spiritual paradise = Jehovah's Witness congregations.

What Does the Bible Teach?

2 Peter 3:1-13 compares the judgement of Noah's flood with the judgement of fire in the last days.

Verse 5 shows a literal heavens and earth existed in the past

Verse 7 shows a literal heavens and earth exist now

Verse 6 shows that literal water was used as a judgement

Verse 7 shows that literal fire will be used as a judgement

Verse 6 shows that everything in the world (*kosmos*) was destroyed

Verse 7 shows ungodly men will be destroyed

Verse 10 shows that the heavens and earth will be burned up

Everything was literal at the flood and everything will be literal in the last days. The Greek words used for heaven, *ouranos*, and earth, *ge*, are used in Scripture for the literal earth and the literal heavens. There is nothing here to suggest that the words should be spiritualised as a 'system'. There are three sets of 'heaven and earth' mentioned and each set is literal.

Verse 5. The original ones created by the Lord

Verse 7. The present ones instituted after the flood

Verse 13. The new ones yet to come.

The heavens will pass away and the elements will be destroyed. The earth, with its entire works, will be burned up. As with the flood, all the inhabitants are to be destroyed unless they are in the 'ark' of the New Testament.

The Greek word for 'new' used in these verses is *kainos*, which has the meaning of 'new in quality not time', and of 'a different nature from of old'. The very heavens and

earth will undergo a change, which could never be brought about by a thousand years of work by all the Jehovah's Witnesses. It is an essential change of character that only the miraculous working of God can produce.

The 'ark' to the Jehovah's Witness pictures 'the spiritual paradise into which God has brought His worshipers today'. But the ark only enabled Noah and his family to ride out God's judgement, it was a temporary dwelling place. 1 Peter 3:20 shows the ark as the means of salvation, not a place of long residence.

The worst part of this typology is that their 'ark' is being a baptised member of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society and actively associating with the local congregation. This is blasphemy, because they have placed themselves instead of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 3:18-22 shows Jesus Christ is the Ark that will bring us safe through God's judgement into eternal life.

Part of this typology actually destroys their belief. According to them Noah's wife, representing the remnant of the 144,000, and the sons and daughters representing the 'great crowd', were all in the same ark and all went to the same place! Without realising it, they have stumbled on the truth. All who are in the true 'ark' are brought to one place! There is no two-tier salvation.

Revelation 21:3, 4

That last statement is very important when we read these verses. For a Jehovah's Witness, they must speak of two distinct places - heaven and earth. In the one will be Jesus and the 144,000 and in the other the Great Crowd; but is that what Scripture says?

Revelation - Its Grand Climax at Hand says about these verses,

"John tells us further: 'With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with

them.” (Revelation 21:3) When Jehovah made the Law covenant with the then new nation of Israel, he promised: “I shall certainly put my tabernacle in the midst of you, and my soul will not abhor you. And I shall indeed walk in the midst of you and prove myself your God, and you, on your part, will prove yourselves my people.” (Leviticus 26:11, 12) Now Jehovah is making a similar promise to faithful humans. During the thousand-year Judgment Day, they will become a very special people to him.

“During the Millennial Reign, Jehovah will ‘reside’ among mankind in a temporary arrangement, he being represented by his royal Son, Jesus Christ. At the end of the Thousand Year Reign, however, when Jesus hands the Kingdom over to his Father, no royal representative or intercessor will be needed. Jehovah will reside spiritually with ‘his peoples’ in a permanent and direct way. (Compare John 4:23, 24.) What a lofty privilege for restored humanity!” – p.303

Residing with His people means that He will be with them on a temporary basis. They will be a very special people but only enough in the end for Jehovah to reside spiritually with His people. I see nothing about spiritually or temporary residence in the text; I wonder where they get that from?

If God is with mankind surely He is with them, and if He resides with them, surely that is a permanent arrangement? What can we glean from these verses as to the meaning?

The picture given is of the Tabernacle of old. This tent was at the centre of the encampment and all the tribes had their positions around the Tabernacle. Once again God is going to be in the midst of *all* His people – Jew or Gentile.

It is said in the Greek that He will reside or dwell with His people. The idea is abiding, staying with, and there is no sense of it being spiritual. In the age we live in, God’s abiding is spiritual, by His Holy Spirit within us. But the time described here is different.

When you go back to the beginning, God dwelt with Adam in the Garden. He walked with him and He talked with Him and there was no separation between God’s ‘home’ and man’s ‘home’. Sin was to change that and the realms were separated. However, when we get to Revelation, sin has finally been dealt with; there is no separation between

God and man and once again, God’s ‘home’ and man’s ‘home’ become one. Heaven and earth are rolled into one; there is one King and one Kingdom – not two. Once again, man lives, abides, dwells with *all* – not just a select few – of His people. How tragic that thousands of people today are being offered a second-class salvation.

What a different picture these verses actually paint from the one shown regularly in *The Watchtower*.

The Watchtower, June 15 2004

In the article entitled, “Be Guided by the Living God?” we read on p.20 about *God’s* Guidance re blood. I put God in italics because I would dispute that God’s Word forbids blood transfusions.

They quote the verses from Acts 15 re blood and state,

“Plainly, the governing body viewed ‘abstaining from blood’ to be as morally vital as abstaining from sexual immorality or idol worship. This proves the prohibition about blood is serious.”

What it actually proves is that the Jewish church in Jerusalem realised that the Gentiles should not be put under all the law but they felt that there were four things that were necessary, and one of these was abstaining from blood. So what these words prove is that abstaining from blood was seen as an important part of God’s law but is “abstaining from blood”, and “do not have a blood transfusion”, one and the same thing?

It is obvious that what the leaders in Jerusalem wrote was not understood as “don’t take blood transfusions”, for the simple reason that they were not even invented; to put that meaning on these Scriptures is taking them totally out of context. What did they mean?

This was written in the light of the Old Testament law on *eating* blood and the sacrifices. This is what it meant then; is it any different now? When did this verse change to include blood transfusions? It never has; this is something that the Society have added to try to boost their case.

If there is no justification in this New Testament Scripture, the Old Testament ones to which they refer need to be read in the context they were given.

Genesis 9:3-4

Though they could now eat meat, it had to be dead, without life left in it. *The Watchtower* makes this connection, even if accidentally.

“Jehovah God the Creator is responsible for the existence of all flesh, and for its life... Originally, vegetation and fruit, and not flesh, were given man as his diet. But after the Flood God added animal flesh, commanding, however, that flesh with its soul - its blood – you must not eat... Cannibalism, the eating of human flesh, naturally was repugnant to the human mind, was abhorred by God and his ancient covenant people Israel.” *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. I, p.840.

Remember that we are dealing here with animals and animal blood. This was not to do with human blood but with the way that animals should be killed, before they were eaten. Incidents such as in Saul’s day (1 Samuel 14:33) show that they should not eat the meat with the blood. There is no way that you can take God’s law of not eating animal meat with its blood and make it say that God forbids blood transfusions.

Leviticus 17:10

The Society say that they are no longer under Mosaic law, yet they continue to use this law. The law respecting blood also states:

“It is a perpetual statute throughout your generation in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood.” Leviticus 3:17.

The Watchtower Society do not teach ‘no fat’ but why not? It is part of the same law.

Leviticus 17:11

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”

The animals sacrificed on the altar, and especially the Passover Lamb, symbolised the coming of Jesus, ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). Hebrews 9:20 says if there’s no shed blood, there’s no forgiveness. After Jesus shed His blood there were to be no more animal sacrifices on the altar, to make atonement, else we would be saying that Christ’s death was not sufficient. Therefore, sacrifices

passed away along with the pouring out of blood (Lev 17:13).

Much is made these days of the dangers of viruses in the blood and the innovation of bloodless surgery. However, these do not prove anything. Whatever is happening in the world today does not alter God's Word – what did He say and what did he mean?

Finally, in this issue, we want to look at one or two Scriptures that the Watchtower Society use and see if there is another side to the story.

1 Corinthians 8:6

This is a verse that Jehovah's Witnesses want to bring up to disprove the Trinity. However, I think the following, which I discovered on a Copyright Free Bible Study programme I have, gives a clear and precise answer.

But to us there is but one God, the Father,.... In this Christians and Jews agree with the best and wisest philosophers of the Gentiles, that there is but one God; which is clear from the perfections of God, as necessary existence, eternity, infinity, omnipotence, all-sufficiency, goodness, and perfection; from one

first cause of all things; from the government of the world; and from the writings of the Old and New Testament: so that to us believers this point is out of all doubt; but who this one God is the Gentiles knew not, and the Jews are very ignorant of; but we Christians know him to be "the Father"; by whom meant either God essentially considered, the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, called the Father, not in relation to any person in the Godhead, but in relation to the creatures: so this one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is the Father of spirits, the creator of angels, and the souls of men, the God of all flesh, the Father of all the individuals of human nature, the Father or author of all the mercies and blessings the children of men enjoy. Or else personally considered, and so designs the first person in the Godhead, who is called so in relation to his Son, who is styled the only begotten of the Father: and when he is said to be the one God, it must be understood, not as exclusive of the Son and Spirit; for if the Son stands excluded in this clause from being the one God with the Father, by the same rule of interpretation, the Father, in the next clause must stand excluded from being the one Lord with Christ;

but as dominion or lordship belongs to the Father, so deity to the Son, and also to the Spirit.

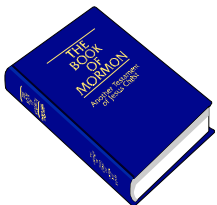
Jude

Verse 9 tells us that Michael had a dispute with the devil concerning Moses and said "The Lord rebuke you". What is interesting is the way that Jude uses the term "Lord" in the rest of the letter.

In verses 4, 17, 21 and 25, he shows that when he uses "Lord" he is referring to Jesus Christ. In Verse 9, therefore we must also come to the conclusion that when Michael refers to "Lord", he is referring to Jesus. Thus this makes it impossible for Michael to be Jesus, unless of course he is talking to himself!

1 Corinthians 1:13

The literal translation in the KIT reads, "Has been parted the Christ". Most versions treat this as a question, as the context would seem to indicate - "Has Christ been divided?" But the NWT translates this, "The Christ exists divided". Maybe that explains why the Watchtower Society is often changing its mind!



TRUTH RESTORED - 44



BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

The Mormon Church is marking the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth and, in the eyes of many onlookers, making a little too much of Joseph Smith. Mormons insist that they do not "worship" Joseph but simply revere him. In this anniversary year many are asking the question, "In Mormonism, is Joseph equal to Jesus?" How have Mormons come to make so much of Joseph? It's all in the plan.

SENSATIONAL DISPENSATIONALISM

To Mormons, God is an exalted man, who became God by obeying his God, and men can become gods. To a Christian, God is sublimely different, "other" than us, Whose ways are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:8), different in quality. To a Mor-

mon, God differs from us only in that He has grown so much further than us, and is different only in capacity. While Christians regard Christ as God the Son, the creator-God come in the flesh, Mormons use similar phrases to describe an entirely different Jesus, who is different only in that he has "progressed" further than us. *God is a man and Joseph is a man.* The only difference between them is that of magnitude and sphere of existence - note that word 'sphere'; we will come across it again.

To a Mormon, God has a "great plan of happiness" and *Jesus has a role* in that plan just as *Joseph has a role* in that plan. Mormonism isn't about God but about the plan. Everyone is subservient to the plan, even God himself. For it is by keeping to the plan that God became

God. The Mormon priesthood is executive power to administer the plan. Each dispensation is administered by those holding this priesthood. Even God is subservient to the priesthood, for it is by the priesthood that He had "authority" to create the world. Christ carried out His office by the power of the priesthood and could not be our Saviour without it. In this scheme - where God and His Christ are only greater than us in development, and priesthood and the plan are greater than all - it seems natural to say in one breath that Joseph is acting under the authority of Christ, and in the next to say that we must have Joseph's permission to enter heaven. He is at the head of this last dispensation and holds the executive power for it. Because of this they have no problem ascribing to Joseph the role of judge as they do.

Here is Brigham Young:

"If I can pass brother Joseph, I shall stand a good chance for passing Peter, Jesus, the Prophets, Moses, Abraham, and all back to Father Adam, and be pretty sure of receiving his approbation.... If we can pass the sentinel Joseph the Prophet, we shall go into the celestial kingdom, and not a man can injure us. If he says, 'God bless you, come along here'; if we will live so that Joseph will justify us, and say, 'Here am I, brethren,' we shall pass every sentinel."

Here is a pyramidal structure in which people must pass a series of dispensational key holders to gain heaven. Joseph, Peter, Jesus, the prophets, Moses, Abraham, Adam. In the Mormon temple, prior to 1990, those attending learned the handgrips and passwords "to pass the angels who stand sentinel". Although God stands at the head of this structure he is not at the head of everything, for his God has progressed beyond him, as has his God, and on into infinity. No one in Mormonism is ever all in all, the prime mover, the uncreated creator of all things. They know no such being.

Brigham Young said,

"If we can pass the sentinel Joseph the Prophet, we shall go into the celestial kingdom, and not a man can injure us. If he says, 'God bless you, come along here'; if we will live so that Joseph will justify us, and say, 'Here am I, brethren,' we shall pass every sentinel."

How can Joseph's passport guarantee us entry? What of all the others mentioned in the list? The authority of every dispensation from Adam onwards is conferred upon Joseph Smith. This is what Joseph Fielding Smith had to say:

If all things are to be restored, and if the dispensation of the fulness of times is made up of, and is a uniting of, all dispensations, with their keys and powers, since the days of Adam, then those who held the keys of these various dispensations would have to confer them upon the head of one who stands at the head of the last dispensation, and the prophet Joseph Smith is that one. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol.3, p.97.)

In this scheme the idea that men and gods are the same species gives a completely different view of things. It doesn't seem so audacious for Mormons to make such incredible claims for Joseph. Indeed, they are not incredible at all if God is

only a greater man than us, Christ is playing his, albeit greater role, and Joseph playing his, and all progressing to even greater glory. Again, read Brigham Young:

"He (Joseph) holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation - the keys to rule in the spirit-world; and he rules there triumphantly, for he gained full power and a glorious victory over the power of Satan while he was yet in the flesh, and was a martyr to his religion and to the name of Christ, which gives him a most perfect victory in the spirit-world. He reigns there as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity, and calling, as God does in heaven." (That word "sphere" again).

PRAISE TO THE MAN

There is a hymn lauding Joseph in the Mormon Church. I recently asked two Christians of long-standing for their thoughts on it, one an experienced chorister, the other a pastor in a local Baptist Church. Without comment or preamble, I simply handed them a copy of the Mormon Hymnbook. They leafed through it, impressed to find such familiar hymns as "Onward Christian Soldiers", and "Now Thank We All Our God". Then I pointed them to hymn 27 where they found the following:

Praise to the Man who communed with
Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that prophet and seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him and nations revere.

Praise to his memory he died as a martyr;
Honored and blest be his ever-great
name!
Long shall his blood, which was shed by
assassins,
Plead unto heaven while the earth lauds
his fame.

Great is his glory and endless his
priesthood.
Ever and ever the keys he will hold.
Faithful and true, he will enter his
kingdom,
Crowned in the midst of the prophets of
old.

Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of
heaven;
Earth must atone for the blood of that
man.
Wake up the world for conflict of justice.
Millions shall know "Brother Joseph"
again.

Chorus:

Hail to the prophet, ascended to heaven!
Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vein.
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his
brethren;
Death cannot conquer the hero again.

One asked "Is this about Jesus?" The other, on reading the fourth verse, expressed surprise that Mormons made so much of Joseph of Egypt. It just didn't sink in until I simply said, "This is Joseph Smith."

Responding to the chorus, one said, "But there is only one who plans for us, that is Jesus." He drew a parallel with the Catholic view of Mary as co-redemptrix. The pastor asked where Jesus was in all this.

"They are worshipping Joseph", he said. I objected that all faiths have their heroes, Christians have their "Saints", Peter, Augustine, etc. He didn't see it that way. "We don't 'praise' them, we don't 'hail them' like this," he said.

"Whose blood are we talking about here?" one asked.

"Joseph's", I replied. "This is shocking", said the pastor. "I knew they weren't right about some things but I had no idea they were this wrong."

I asked the chorister whether he, in his many years of experience, had come across anything like it in Christian hymnology. He spoke of hymns that praised God for certain men, prayed to God for people, even told, in song, stories from the Bible but nothing that praised, extolled, revered a man.

I think Mormons, who are so inured to this way of thinking, have no idea how shocking it is to people who know only the orthodox, traditional Christianity. These men were experienced Christians and they were stunned. If you were to ask a Christian who it was that fitted the main elements of this song,

Someone to be praised and honoured and whose name is "ever-great";

Who is to be extolled and revered by
kings and nations;

Whose blood pleads to heaven;
Whose priesthood is endless;
Who will enter into and be crowned in
his kingdom;

Whose death must be answered for
by the world;

Who has ascended to heaven;
Whom death cannot conquer;
And who plans for his brethren

What name do you think they would come up with? ☐

Angels

There appears to have been an increase in angels lately, not that I have seen them and counted them but I have found myself bombarded with questions and information concerning a number of apparent angelic practices. What seems peculiar to me is that no one who gets involved appears to give any consideration to the fact that angels could be 'bad'; they are always accepted as good and helpful. This, of course, ignores the clear biblical warning:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. - 2 Cor 11:13-14.

There are indeed fallen angels who would try to trick and deceive you and would certainly not be for your good. What is worse is that the Bible tells us that these 'bad' angels could, at first glance, appear to be 'good' and so we can find ourselves tricked into believing the opposite about them.

BIBLICAL POSITION

As already mentioned above, the Bible shows that there are evil angels who rebelled against God and became the messengers of Satan rather than God. However, what does the Bible teach about the positive side of 'good' angels?

- Angels are part of the heavenly supernatural creation and are in God's presence serving Him - the very name 'angel' means messenger. (See Psalm 148:2-5)
- They are not as great as God because they are created and are therefore subservient to Him. (See Colossians 1:16)
- Angels are therefore mighty creatures and are able to do things that seem miraculous to man, but they are not Almighty. (Psalm 103:20 and 2 Peter 2:9-11)
- There is clear evidence in Scripture that angels do protect man and they can minister to and defend God's servants. (See Hebrews 1:14, Acts 8:26 and 12:7.)

In all this, one thing is clear; these angels are servants of God and therefore what they do will be in accordance with the will of God and for His glory. This seems to me, to sum up the two crucial tests for the many different groups that are advocating angelic involvement:

1. Is what is being taught in accordance with the revealed will of God within Scripture?
2. Does the outcome bring glory to the Almighty God or lift up the angelic being in the eyes of the user?

If the answer to question 1 and the first part of question 2 is 'no', then any angelic involvement must be from fallen angels, who seek to bring in the doctrine of their master, Satan, and divert any glory away from the Living God.

ANGEL CARDS

Members invited to a local Diet and Fitness Club Christmas Party - held in a Church hall - had the opportunity to receive "angel readings" at the special price of £5 for 15 minutes. The person offering the readings was said to run, "monthly workshops to connect people to their angels".

The information about these readings included the following description:

"Angels are messengers to and from the divine. They are pure spirit and are created from the 'love' energy of God. When we pray to God he sends his angels. We all have a guardian angel who lovingly watches over us as well as many other angels close by depending on our life and circumstances.

"By asking our angels for help and following their guidance our lives can start to be transformed. Guidance may come in dreams, intuitive thoughts, a chance meeting, a book, a radio, a magical meeting with your angel or through using angel cards.

"Angel cards are a divination tool which allow the seeker to receive messages from their angels. Whether you need help on work, health, relationships or other personal issues the

angels will guide and support you to make the best choices."

Any Christian, knowing their Scriptures, reading the above, should have one or two alarm bells ringing. Let's look at what was said in a little closer detail.

"Angels are messengers to and from the divine." Notice first, the definition of God is not the almighty, all-powerful personal God of the Bible but simply, 'the divine'. You can make of God what you want, indeed you can have any belief you like as long as it involves accepting some divine higher power than you. This, by very definition, is not therefore the true God of Christianity.

"They are pure spirit and are created from the 'love' energy of God." The angelic realms that come from God were not created by any 'love energy'; that is the description of a New Age type "impersonal force God". God created the angelic realm by His word.

"When we pray to God he sends his angels." The Bible does not say this. Angels indeed are not shown in Scripture to bring answers to our prayers; that is the job of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"We all have a guardian angel who lovingly watches over us..." This again is the New Age pantheistic view that God is in everyone. What the Scripture actually says is:

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" - Hebrews 1:14.

In other words, it is not the inheritance of all, but for those who know true salvation in Christ.

DIVINATION

"Angel cards are a divination tool..." This makes the clearest possible statement that shows that angel cards have nothing to do with the true God.

According to Greek Scholar W.E.Vine, in the New Testament the Greek word for divination is *pythōn* which in English is Python. In Greek mythology this was the python guarding the oracle of Del-

phi that was slain by Apollo. The word was applied to diviners and soothsayers regarded as inspired by Apollo. (See *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol.1., p.328.)

This was the spirit in the slave-girl that Paul met, as recorded in Acts 16:16. This same spirit Paul commanded to come out in the name of Jesus Christ; obviously, then, a spirit that was not for Christ but against Him.

These cards are to be used in that same type of divination. The deck that we have is entitled "Messages from Angels" and they are called 'Oracle Cards' (see Delphi above). When you read the instructions, you discover that they are nothing more than Tarot cards with different pictures on them. People will use them and believe that what is being said comes from an angel where, at best, it simply comes from their own imagination and at worst from a *puthon*.

We read in the instructions to these cards:

"Every card that you draw out of the deck comes to you for a reason... since your future stems from what you think and do, these cards accurately predict your future."

How dangerous to build your future on the turn of a card that could easily come from a malevolent angel.

There is much more that could be said to reinforce this position, such as the belief that other people's energy can affect the readings, and burning herbs to clear the cards after someone else has touched them.

Whichever way you look at these cards, they are a divination practice that Christians are told to have nothing to do with, and those that do allow the cards to 'speak' to them, are

in danger of listening to *puthon*.

ANGEL FAMILY TREE

I received a letter from the "Angel Life Guild", informing me that I could get to know 11 of my angels that would, among other things, protect me and bring me health, riches and power.

There follows two 'testimonials' of satisfied customers and then I am told that the writer has started the research into my very own personal Angel Family Tree Revelations. I am assured that no one else has the same angels as they were determined at the moment of birth and it applies only to me. However, there must have been others born at the same time as me in this world!

All I have to do is to send, at no risk, £22.25 and I'll receive the personal messages from my angels. Angels that have been waiting since the very moment I was born. At that moment Destiny planted my angel tree in heaven.

Once again we are back to divination, using angels instead of anything else. However, it is not even very good divination because I gave a false name and birth date but still my angels would reveal all my secrets. (See footnote)

Just because you receive one of these types of letters and it mentions angels, do not be fooled: it is divination by a different name.

ANCIENT SECRETS OF ANGELS

This 12-page book also comes from the, "Angel Life Guild". It is full of 'helpful' information as to how to get to know your angels. Again we see that it is the angels that are the centre of attention; they are the ones who will tell you

the future; they are the ones you need to get to know. This immediately shows that again this is divination using angels and has nothing to do with the glorious angelic creation of the Living God.

This free book is actually to sell the larger book, *The Celestial Magic of Angels*. It, however, shows again the basis of the book; there is no mention of Scripture of the Living God. Rather, it tells you about;

Chants and actions to get your angel's attention.

Creating a space in your home where your angel can rest.

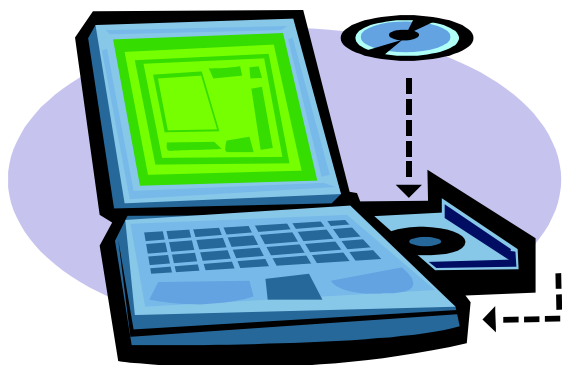
How to write letters to your angels to get results.

Page 9 of the book reveals its true nature, astrology. Because certain astrological houses are in conjunction with each other until September 3 2007, now is my time to get good luck - after that the door closes. I wonder what the booklet sent out in October 2007 will say?

Do not be fooled: there is only one way to know the true future and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not settle for the creation when you can know the Creator. Do not be taken up with divination which comes from 'bad' angels in disguise; rather come to the One Who created the angelic realm and Who loves and cares for you greatly.

FOOTNOTE

What is interesting is that I only used this name to obtain information on the 'angels'. However, a very similar letter, using Tarot Cards as the offer, was also sent to this false name and address. The price is the same and the offer boils down to the same information of having a successful future - one using angels and the other the Tarot. Coincidence? I think not. ☐



If you have purchased the Quarterly CD we can update it for you to include all the articles up to Quarterly 78.

Please return your CD with £2 to cover postage and handling costs.

Ensure you also enclose your updated name and address.

APOLOGETICS -23

Is this 'another' Jesus?

2 Corinthians 11:4 refers to another Jesus; the Greek word for another is *allos*, meaning another of the same kind.

"For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully." (NASB)

Paul has already indicated in this letter that those in the Corinth church were indeed saved, but that many of them had not grown in Christ and they were still 'fleshly' Christians (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). They did accept salvation through grace alone in Christ, but after that, they started following 'another' gospel, which added the need of works to grow in their salvation.

This gospel was preached by the Judaizers (Greek *Ioudaizo*, meaning, "to adopt Jewish customs"). They were a group of Jewish Christians in the Early Church, who held that initial salvation was by faith but growth was by works; circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law were necessary for growing in salvation. Consequently they felt that Gentile converts needed to accept these Jewish customs.

Are we in danger of following a similar message today? Are there groups or individual teachers that, although acknowledging, in words, that salvation is by faith, they have added to this and are preaching 'another' Jesus, which, with a cursory glance, may appear the same but actually it is another?

This is not the message of the Messiah that Paul preached. We believe there are such teachers today and if we follow their message, we may know salvation, but we are in danger of being led astray from the truth as revealed in the Scriptures.

Copeland's Jesus

We have written at length about Kenneth Copeland, and his prosperity gospel, elsewhere, but here we want to concentrate on, who he believes Jesus to be. Does he present the true Jesus as recorded in the gospel or is it 'another' Jesus?

To show his belief, firsthand and in the clearest way, I am going to use the 'Question and Answer' section from the magazine *Believer's Voice of Victory*, April 1996, p.17. However, this is still his current teaching, as can be seen from at least two messages available for free download from his web site, <http://kcm.org/media/mp3/>.

These were originally aired on his TV programme and can now be found in the archive at, <http://kcm.org/media/webcasts/archive.php>. The two specific messages are the one on 18 April 2004 entitled, *The Manifestations of Jesus in the Earth* and 27 March 2005 entitled, *Jesus Triumphed Over All of Hell*. There are probably others listed, but these are two that I have listened to, and know these doctrines are still being taught today.

In the article, the question Copeland is asked to answer is:

"... some time ago I read an article in your magazine in which you said Jesus didn't claim He *was* God, but rather claimed He walked with God and that God was in Him. I'm confused. Does that mean you question the deity of Jesus?"

The two-word answer "ABSOLUTELY NOT!" (capital letters in the original), would be terrific if it was not followed by a page of qualification.

Jesus didn't claim to be God

Copeland affirms the deity of Christ with a clear Biblical quotation from John 1:1, but then goes on:

"The phrasing of the statement you referred to is very important. I didn't say Jesus wasn't God, I said He didn't *claim* to be God when He lived on the earth. Search the Gospels for yourself. You'll find what I say is true."

I am not sure which gospels Copeland is reading, and I wonder if he has searched them in any depth, because what about John 20:28, 29? Here Thomas clearly calls Jesus, God, and this is not rebuked by the Lord at all. Indeed, He then says that blessed are all those that have not seen Him, face to face, but believe. Believe what? That He is God.

What about John 5:18, where the

Jews, (and please remember that Jesus was a Jew and would know how their minds worked), clearly heard Jesus claim to be equal with God? Also note verse 16 where they were 'persecuting' Jesus because of breaking the Sabbath, but in verse 18, they are trying to 'kill' Him, because He was claiming equality with God

Add to this John 10, where again the Jews knew that He was making Himself out to be God.

Also, we would need to take into account many other incidents, such as the fact that Jesus freely forgave sin and gave the dead back their life, attributes that can only come from God.

Referring to such incidents Copeland says:

"During His earthly ministry, Jesus acknowledged that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. He referred to God as His Father (which enraged the Pharisees), but He never said He *was* the most high God. In fact, He told His disciples that the Father God was greater and mightier than He (John 14:28)."

Let's sum up what this teaching is saying:

1. Jesus is the Son of God, but He is just a man.
2. Jesus is not the most high God, but God is His father.
3. God the Father is greater *and mightier* than God the Son.

There are some major problems with these statements, and indeed some very serious implications, not to say contradictions. As the following quote shows, the phrase, 'the Son of God' is not possible to apply to a man.

"The noted theologian and Bible teacher Charles Ryrie writes concerning the title 'Son of God': 'What does it mean? Though the phrase "son of" can mean "offspring of;" it also carries the meaning, "of the order of?" Thus in the Old Testament "sons of the prophets" meant of the order of prophets (1 Kings 20:35), and "sons of the singers" meant of the order of the singers (Neh. 12:28). The designation "Son of God" when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full Deity.' (Ryrie, BT, 248)

"H. F. Stevenson comments that 'it is true that the term "sons of God" is used of men (Hosea 1:10) and of angels, in the Old Testament (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 38:7). But in the New Testament, the title "Son of God" is used of, and by, our Lord in quite a different way. In every instance the term implies that He is the one, only-begotten Son; co-equal, coeternal with the Father.' (Stevenson, TTG, 123)". - *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell, p.152

The relationship between Father and Son is described as a unique relationship with the phrase, 'only-begotten'. This is something that can 'only' be for Christ, and no one else can have such a relationship - it is unique. He cannot be one among many, because there can be no one else like this. If we can be the same as Christ on this earth - a man filled with the Holy Spirit - this Scriptural title would be shown as false.

This is the 'only begotten'; no one else can have such a relationship, and it is a relationship that the Son has had with the Father since before time began.

What does John 14:28 actually say?

"You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

It certainly does not say mightier, just greater. As *Robertson's Word Pictures* states of this verse,

"Greater than I (*meizōn mou*). Ablative case *mou* after the comparative *meizōn* (from positive *meγas*). The filial relation makes this necessary. Not a distinction in nature or essence (cf. Joh.10:30), but in rank in the Trinity. No Arianism or Unitarianism here. The very explanation here is proof of the deity of the Son."

If Jesus was a man and His Father God, the difference would be in character, but here there is the comparison of two of the same 'species', and one is greater in 'quantity' but not in 'quality'. This is evident when all the gospels are compared with each other, and not just this one verse taken out of context.

At this point in time Jesus had restricted Himself to living on the same plane as man. Note that these verses in John 14 are in the context of Him going back to the Father. He was saying that if the disciples really understood what that meant, they

would have rejoiced. Once back in His heavenly home, the relationship of Father and Son, with no separation in between, there would be no restrictions and when He came to them again it would be in power and authority without any restrictions.

Could Jesus stop being God?

We have another problem, presented to us from John 1:1; if He was always the eternal God - never being created but always in existence - could He ever stop being this eternal God?

Later in the article Copeland will quote Philippians to say yes to this:

"He was not born with the sin nature of Adam. But, in all other respects, He became a man and called Himself the Son of Man."

What other respects? The very nature of man was sinful; he has need of redemption and could never be the sacrifice for sin. To use this phrase just does not make sense. He goes on to quote Scripture,

"The Apostle Paul verifies that in Philippians 2:5-7:

"Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus....Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God...did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained; But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity] so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being (*The Amplified Bible*)."

Where, in these verses, does it say that He left His divinity behind? Where does it say He became a man? It doesn't, it says He became *like* a man - very different. Note carefully the order and explanation of the events here. First, though, we need to quote verses 5-8 in a different version that is closer to the original text:

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." - NASB

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the

form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." - KJV

1. Jesus was already being - existed (Greek *huparchō*) - in the form (Greek *morphē*) - of God.

The Greek word *huparchō* is found 17 times in the New Testament and is used in the sense of describing what you are by your character and your actions. For instance:

Luke 11:13 - you BEING evil

Acts 2:30 - BEING a prophet

Acts 7:55 - BEING full of the Holy Spirit

Acts 14:8 - BEING a cripple

Acts 16:20 - BEING Jews

Used in these verses it clearly describes what Jesus is, not just 'essentially one', as the Amplified puts it, but being the 'form of God.' This must lead us to ask what the phrase the 'form of God' means.

The Greek word *morphē* only appears three times in the New Testament. Twice here in Philippians and once in Mark 16:12, where it is again used of Jesus, appearing to the two on the road to Emmaus. Notice that this was still Jesus but His outward appearance, the way others saw Him, was different. Inwardly, He was still the resurrected Jesus; He still had the same character.

This is the same in Philippians; He was essentially God. The form is not talking about some hybrid or something not quite there, but actually the outward appearance; how those looking on saw Him.

2. Jesus did not think that being equal (Greek *isos*) to God was something to be grasped (thought it not robbery) (Greek *harpagmos*).

The Greek word *isos* appears 8 times in the New Testament and is used of two things being equal or just like each other. For instance:

Matthew 20:12 - the labourers in the vineyard were treated exactly the same.

Acts 11:17 - the same gift of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 6:34 - receive the same

amount back.

Jesus was equal to God. Just as you get the fact that 4+4=8 so you get the same fact, Jesus=God. What is even more interesting is that the word is in the plural and so we have 'equalities'. It surely is no accident that Jesus can be equal with God in more than one state; in other words, whether in heaven or whether on earth.

The Greek word *harpagmos* only appears here in the whole of the New Testament. *Vincent's Word Studies* tell us:

"Taking the word... to mean a highly prized possession, we understand Paul to say that Christ, being, before His incarnation, in the form of God, did not regard His divine equality as a prize which was to be grasped at and retained at all hazards, but, on the contrary, laid aside the form of God, and took upon Himself the nature of man."

3. Emptied Himself

Copeland says in the article:

"Jesus, the divine Son of God, set aside the privileges and powers of deity for a time and lived as a man on earth. Once you grasp that, it will absolutely thrill your soul!"

The Greek word for emptied is *kenōō* and it occurs 8 times in the New Testament. But just what did He empty Himself of? I think the answer to this can be seen clearly if we look at the rest of the verses and see what He had left.

4. Took the form of a servant

The word here again is *morphē*. This is how people were to see Him and this is what He was. He certainly was not a servant - Greek *doulos*, the common word for a bond-servant - in heaven and so He was going to lay down His rank and privilege and serve those who He had created. Although laying down His rank, there is nothing here that would indicate that He laid down His deity.

5. Made in the likeness (Greek - *homoīōma*) of men

The Greek word *homoīōma* appears 6 times in the New Testament. It literally means resembling or made like something. What it does not mean is become! Here the Amplified Version is heretical! He was not born a human being because if He was, He would have been sinful.

The word is used in the following ways:

Romans 6:5 - we were planted together in the LIKENESS of His death - we were not literally there and we did not suffer literally, but spiritually we have now been made just like that.

Romans 8:3 - Jesus was in the LIKENESS of sinful flesh - He was not full of sin but His appearance was just like the flesh of others.

Revelation 9:7 - describe the SHAPES of the locusts - they looked just like horses but they were NOT horses.

Romans 5:14 uses it of a 'type'. Something that is one thing but it clearly teaches us and shows us about something else.

Jesus, being in the likeness of man, means that He could not be *just* man, but being something else - God - He was made to look like man.

This phrase, therefore, shows clearly that Jesus could not empty Himself of deity and just become man.

6. Found in fashion or appearance (Greek *schēma*) of a man.

The Greek word *schēma* is only used in one other place, 1 Corinthians 7:31, and it is clear that again it is used of outward form, not inward being. The fact that Jesus only appeared to be a man means clearly that He was not *just* man.

7. He humbled Himself.....

Now in this position as God-man, He brings Himself low, He humbles Himself to the point that He is willing to accept death, something that is outside the character of God, and such a death for you and me.

When we look at the Scripture in context, and in its true meaning, these verses show clearly that God DID NOT empty Himself of deity, but rather kept His deity and came to earth in the likeness of a man.

Further on in the article, we are told,

"He ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. You can take Jesus' personal witness in Luke 4:18-19"

I want us to see exactly what is being said here by quoting some statements made in the *Manifesta-*

tion broadcast mentioned above. Copeland starts this tape with the claim that he was:

"Assigned by the Lord... to bring an in depth revelation"

The part that is relevant to us here is as follows. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, Copeland says that He:

"Did not do one miracle as the Son of God... He did it as the son of man. He ministered as a prophet under the Abrahamic Covenant."

So Jesus, who was the Eternal God in heaven, left His deity behind and just became man and a prophet like other prophets under the Old Covenant. However, we have an interesting twist:

"In His ministry when He went to the Cross he did so not as the son of man but as the Son of God."

So the Eternal God becomes man, and ministers as a man filled with the Holy Spirit, but before He dies He changes back into God! When and how we are not told, but one thing we can be sure of, this is definitely 'another' Jesus that is not seen within the Scriptures.

What Happened at Calvary?

What did Calvary do according to Copeland in this article?

"You, as a reborn child of God, filled with the same Holy Spirit as Jesus was, have the opportunity to live as He lived on earth. And *that* is exactly what He intends. In John 17:18, He said to the Father. "Just as You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them..." (*The Amplified Bible*).

"Jesus has sent you into the world to live as He lived. Through the new birth, He's enabled you to exchange the sinful nature of Adam for the sinless nature of God. He's made available to you the anointing and the in filling of the Holy Spirit, thereby giving you access to the same power He relied on when He walked the earth." (Emphasis added)

Copeland teaches that Adam and Eve were, "just like Him (God) in every respect." - *Believer's Voice of Victory*, April 1994, p.4. Therefore, we can get back what Adam lost in Christ.

The problem with this teaching is, it is not Scriptural. God is un-

created but man is created. Creation is different from Creator and so we are not just like God in every respect - Christ is in us but we are redeemed creatures, not just like the Creator.

Why is Jesus downgraded?

The reason Copeland wants to downgrade Jesus, and upgrade man, becomes evident when he says:

"The truth of this verse hasn't

dawned on most believers. They mistakenly think Jesus was able to work wonders, perform miracles and live above sin because He had divine powers that we don't have. Thus, they've never really aspired to live like He lived.

"I could never live like Jesus did,' they say with great humility.' After all, He had an advantage. He's God!"

"They don't realize that when Jesus came to earth, He voluntarily gave

up that advantage, living His life here not as God but as a man. He had no innate supernatural powers. He had no ability to perform miracles until after He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (see Luke 3:22)."

It's so we can do these and greater works than Jesus. The only way man can be exalted to be able to do greater works than Jesus is to downgrade Jesus. This truly is a false gospel, another Jesus. ☐

The Eternal Begotten-ness of Jesus - 3

By Andy Harrison

In this final article on the Eternal Begotten-ness of Jesus we will be looking at the passage in Proverbs chapter 8 (verses 22-31) more analytically and see even more of God's eternal Father-Son relationship expressed in the original text.

As Jesus says in John 17:24:

'Father...you loved me before the creation/foundation of the world.' (see NIV, NRSV, NKJV, ESV).

In this particular verse we have the preposition '*pro*' meaning 'before'. Jesus speaks to His Father and we know Jesus existed prior to the creation/foundation of the world. Clearly even then the Father was the Father and loved the Son, even before God created anything. That Parent-Child relationship has always been there. One could argue that Ephesians 1:4 has a similar phrase, with the same preposition '*pro*', and so if we are saying that the Father and Son existed as Father and Son then, Ephesians 1:4 must mean that we have also existed ourselves and then to have been chosen by God. But Ephesians 1:4 is not only talking about us being *chosen* before the foundation of the world, but about PREDESTINATION as we see clearly from the following verse (Eph.1:5). Predestination is certainly not the emphasis in John 17:24. The Father-Son relationship existed at the beginning as we will further confirm from Proverbs 8:22-31.

My second article introduced Proverbs 8:22-31. We are now in a position to look at the passage in more depth. I think we are already

in a good position to tackle the translation difficulty in verse 22.

'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.' (ESV)

The Hebrew word *qanah* is translated 'possessed' and it can also be translated 'created'. The context of the verse is time prior to the creation of the universe - before anything was made. The Lord (Yahweh) already possessed wisdom at the beginning. He possessed both the attribute of wisdom and His Son, the 'wisdom of God'. You can 'possess' the Son as Matthew 3:17 shows:

'This is *my* beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' (ESV).

Proverbs 8:22 is reminiscent of:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' (ESV John 1:1-3).

Remember that the Word (Logos) is not just a spoken word, but the very reasoning and thought processes of God (see John 1:1-2 in Reachout Quarterly Issue 68).

So Yahweh possessed Wisdom and He possessed Reason/Thought at the beginning - before He created anything. Shortly, I will show that it is speaking not only of a finite time prior to any act of creation, but prior to (in a manner of speaking) God ever doing anything, i.e., from eternity-past.

The ESV has an alternative translation for 'possessed' in a footnote - 'fathered'. This fits well too, as we already know that Jesus Christ is eternally begotten of the Father. Also in the footnote it says that the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX)) has 'created'. But the Greek O.T. is not the superior text for translating; the Hebrew is. Even so, Brenton does translate this Greek word *ektise* (from *ktidzo*) as 'made' rather than 'created'. We have:

'The Lord made me the beginning of his ways for his works.' (Proverbs 8:22. Brenton).

We already know that the Hebrew *qanah* can be translated 'he created' and we are in the same situation here with *ktidzo*, although it is not essential to translate it 'create' or 'made'. Liddell and Scott tells us that *ktidzo* means:

"to found, plant, build, institute, establish, produce, create, etc." (Liddell and Scott).

A Preposition

Also important in the Greek translation is the fact that the Greek does not have the preposition 'at'. Brenton translates it, 'He made me the beginning of...' rather than 'He made me **at** the beginning of...'. The Hebrew tends to be translated, 'He possessed me at the beginning of...'. In other words, even the Greek does not say God created wisdom **at** the beginning, but rather that He simply made him to be the beginning of the Father's way - i.e., it was through Jesus

that all things began. In fact even the Hebrew does not have a preposition here – it is supplied as, 'in', 'as', 'at', etc. So, wisdom was not **created at** the beginning of his way, but rather **made to be** the beginning of his way. This is reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 1:30 where we read that God made Jesus (to be) our wisdom (see Part 2).

Ellicott even says, relating to Proverbs 8:22, that the Hebrew word *qanah* being translated 'formed' or 'begotten' not only agrees with verses 23 and 24, but also agrees with the Greek word *ktidzo* in the Septuagint Greek O.T. (LXX). The translation 'created' is not necessary or, in my opinion, even appropriate in Proverbs 8:22. (See Ellicott).

Revelation 3:14

This verse is sometimes used to support the translation, 'he created' in Proverbs 8:22.

Here we read that Jesus is:

'the beginning of God's creation' (ESV)

'The ruler of God's creation' (NIV)

'the beginning of the creation of God' (NKJV)

'the origin of God's creation' (NRSV)

Jesus is not the first to be created; He is the first to be born as the Firstborn; Jesus is not the first creature to be made, He is the one from which all things were created; Jesus is not simply the beginning or start of all these things, He is their origin. (See also Colossians 1:18; Revelation 21:6; 22:13).

The Greek word from which we get the translations, beginning, origin and ruler is *arche*. Abbott-Smith gives various definitions:

Beginning, origin

An extremity, corner

Sovereignty, principality, rule

In line with Colossians 1:15-17, Jesus is the originator of the creation of God/God's creation. Metzger points out that 'the creation **by** God' would require the preposition *hupo*. So we **cannot** have 'Jesus the beginning of the creation **by** God' which might imply Jesus was created. Rather, we have Jesus as the original source of God's creation (Metzger).

Actually the Greek Old Testament has the same word for 'beginning', *arche*, in Proverbs 8:22, and so we can be justified in translating it:

'The Lord made me the **origin** of his ways for his works.' (LXX Proverbs 8:22).

The Hebrew for 'beginning' in Proverbs 8:22 can also have the meaning of 'first' or 'chief' in the sense of rank. In square brackets in Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon, it is stated that it is in the sense of, "head of creation, not spoken of as a creature". (Gesenius).

As mentioned, the preposition is absent in the Greek as it is in the Hebrew, and this possible translation confirms 1 Corinthians 1:30 where we see that God made Jesus to be our wisdom (see ESV).

For the Hebrew, Ellicott suggests supplying the word 'as'. He says:

'It is probable that this verse [Proverbs 8:22] should be translated, "He [The Lord] brought me forth as the beginning of His way..." (Ellicott [square brackets added])

In *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament on qanah* we have the following note:

'There does not appear to be any sufficient ground for ascribing the sense of 'to create' to this verb; in all the passages cited for that sense, 'to possess' appears to be the true meaning'. (Gesenius)

Even if we decide it was God creating His own architectural skills for the task at hand, 'brought forth' would be the more appropriate translation. It is more like God positioning wisdom in readiness for creation – as a function of Himself – namely, the Son as one Person of the Godhead (Trinity). After all, how can God create wisdom without perfect wisdom already there?

I have already presented many possible translations of this passage without feeling we ever need to translate *qanah* as 'he created'.

Here are a few of the many possibilities already mentioned:

'The Lord made me (to be) the beginning of his way...'

'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way...' (NKJV)

'The Lord brought me forth as the beginning of his way...' (Ellicott).

Literal Translations

I have chosen several translations respected as faithful to the literal text of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament to look at in this article. Are these translations of Proverbs 8:22 correct? I am hesitant in saying any translation of the Bible is incorrect, but let's look at some examples.

'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old.' (NKJV)

The Lord possessed the attribute of wisdom and actually was 'wisdom' if we see Jesus as the true 'personification' of wisdom. He possessed wisdom at the beginning. The beginning of what? Wisdom has always been there and always been involved from before **anything** was created. This passage in Proverbs takes us on a journey almost, from before creation, until the time after mankind was created and 'wisdom' delighted in it (Proverbs 8:31).

If we take 'beginning' as temporal it has to refer to the beginning of anything! Before anything even started – from eternity.

This translation is literal: 'beginning of his **way**' (Hebrew *derek*). The word means literally 'way' as opposed to 'work'. Yes, the Lord possessed wisdom 'before his works of old' but also before God acted in any way, shape or form – at the beginning of His way! Now, was there ever a time when God did not have a 'way' – thought, action intention, etc.? No. The 'beginning' has to be from eternity because God has been God 'from everlasting to everlasting' (Psalm 90:2 - NRSV).

So wisdom as an attribute and wisdom as the Person Jesus, has always been part of God from eternity. This translation (NKJV) confirms it and so does the original Hebrew. So, relying on the literal translation 'way', it seems to me impossible to justify saying that wisdom was **created** before God created anything else. If God did not do anything at all before he possessed wisdom then who created wisdom? Well, we know who **brought forth** wisdom – the Lord himself! Wisdom therefore was certainly not created! The only way I can accept 'created', while accepting the passage as doctrinally significant (rather than simply proverbial language), is as 'creating from infinity-past (eternity)', if we can accept such a concept.

'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old.' (NIV)

The NIV is basically the same here but is less literal and translates 'way' as 'work'. This still fits. God did possess wisdom at the beginning of His work – creative work

or any activity. The NIV places 'way' or 'dominion' in a footnote. Again God has always possessed wisdom so did so at the beginning of any activity.

'The Lord brought me forth...' NIV footnote

In line with accurate translation of the Hebrew, the fathering aspect of the word 'possessed' is noted as an alternative. This also fits in with the eternal begotten-ness of God.

'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.' (ESV)

Again, the ESV has translated the word for 'way' as 'work'. This is due to the translators identifying that wisdom was part and parcel of the process of creation from the very beginning. However, reading from the original Hebrew, both nuances are clear. You need to see several English translations to get a similar picture. Again, 'way' is noted in the footnote and admits that the Hebrew (our primary biblical authority for the Old Testament) says 'way' literally.

'The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.' NRSV

Again, we have the word 'work' instead of 'way', which is placed as a footnote, identifying that 'way' is the literal Hebrew translation. In this version (NRSV) the Hebrew words behind 'work' and 'acts' are taken as synonyms as though both refer to the *creative acts* of God, but it is admittedly not as literal as it could be (the preface of the NRSV confirms that the translators accept that the Hebrew was the primary authoritative text for the translation). It is unfortunate that they have not only chosen to see 'way' and 'works' as synonymous, but have also combined this with the word 'created'.

The idea that God created wisdom at a finite time is a nonsense, whether you believe this refers to wisdom as Jesus or simply the attribute. Wisdom could not be created from 'nothing' like the universe was (Romans 4:17).

The Hebrew in Genesis chapter 1:1 and its Greek translation (LXX) use different words for 'created'. Proverbs 8:22 has *qanah* (Hebrew) and *ktidzo* (Greek) whereas Genesis 1:1 has *bara* (Hebrew) and *poieo* (Greek). This may well be another hint that 'created' is not an appropriate translation in Proverbs

8:22 since the English word has the wrong connotations.

There was never a time when God was without wisdom as the Perfect Eternal God. God was able to send He who was already His Son into the world as God Incarnate. Similarly, God sent forth His Sonship/Wisdom/Word from eternity for the purpose of creating the universe.

Proverbs 8:23

This verse goes into more detail about *when* God possessed wisdom.

'I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.' - NKJV

'I was appointed (Footnote: fashioned) from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.' - NIV

'Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.' - ESV

'Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.' - NRSV

The ESV and NRSV take it at least as far back as before the creation of the earth, which it was - from eternity past, in fact.

The NIV is right to use 'from eternity' since this is the significance of the Hebrew word, *olam*. Its meaning is: 'a time hidden, indefinite or unlimited' (Davidson). And especially in this verse, where we have no fewer than three synonymous Hebrew words, 'eternity', 'beginning' and 'ancient times' (see Green), there is a clear emphasis not only on the fact that wisdom was 'set up' long ago, but an emphasis on the time - from eternity.

As it says in Proverbs 8:24 and 25: 'I was brought forth/ given birth' (see NIV, NRSV, ESV, NKJV), which confirms everything I have shown so far.

Conclusion

So we can see that wisdom, whether referring to Jesus Christ or not, had to be 'brought forth' in eternity, and since wisdom has always been part of God's nature, He possessed wisdom before all things.

This is a beautiful passage with wisdom identified as Jesus because it shows a wonderful relationship between Father and Son.

Unfortunately, these things can be lost in translation and this is

where a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew helps. Translators cannot know everything about every doctrine and every nuance of meaning and I think the translation 'he created' in the NRSV is an honest translation by a committee trying to be accurate. Unfortunately, in translation you cannot sometimes help 'fixing down' one nuance of the meaning of the original words. This is sometimes inevitable and as a result the meaning is not left as broad as it should be.

I want to end by giving glory to Jesus our SALVATION:

'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col.2:3).

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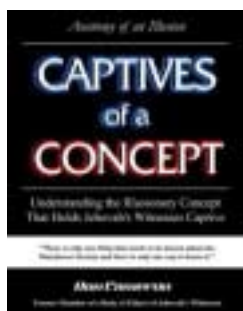
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