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Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word

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The Ryburn Christian Clarion, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552, U. S. A.;
ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net; www.godslivingroom.com

Unless otherwise stated, all passages are quoted from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible. All explanatory remarks by a writer within scripture verses are enclosed in brackets [].

INSIDE AT A GLANCE

SEEING THAT IT is God Who is our source of strength, and our sufficiency, we press onward, undeterred. We invite those of you who love God, and His Word, to move ahead with us. Let's go!

"ENDURANCE RUNNERS FOR GOD" looks at a few of the many New Testament scriptures that deal with patience, longsuffering, and endurance. Our God has given us untapped wells of strength to carry us through the adversities of this life.
by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief.....1

"GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD" reminds us that we are called to have a working knowledge of the entire Word of God. **"The Recipe Of God"** invites us to taste what our Father, from Genesis to Revelation, has cooked up for us.
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ENDURANCE RUNNERS FOR GOD:

Getting Our "Second Wind"

PERSEVERENCE, PATIENCE, AND PERSISTENCE: these are all terms used in the opening article of our last issue, and they link us to this new installment of the *Clarion*. To be sure, these qualities enhance our prayer lives, as we noted before, but God has made them abundantly available to us at ALL times through the resources that reside within the spirit He has given to us.

"...In the world," Jesus told His disciples, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33b) "Tribulation," in this verse, means "mental pressures," and, boy, do we have them at times!

Sometimes the pace of modern life gives rise to what has been called "stress." This is caused by the demands that everyday responsibilities make on our time and energy. At other, more difficult times, we may find ourselves enduring slanderous remarks against our character, the betrayal of a close friend, or even the sudden, unexpected death of a brother in Christ. Through it all, however, we have the constraining love of the Lord Jesus reminding us that He has overcome the world, and now abides within us.

Hebrews 2:18 says, "For in that ["For wherein"] he himself hath suffered being tempted, he [Jesus Christ] is able to succour ["strengthen"] them that are tempted." The

continued on next page...

Lord Jesus Christ faced, and bore up under, every trial that a human being might ever face, and overcame them all. He even overcame death itself! As a result, the spirit of this resurrected Lord now lives in those who believe in Him. (Col. 1:27) This gives us some power in life, not only to minister the things of God, but, to face and overcome our own trials.

A look at some verses in the New Testament will demonstrate our Father's encouragement to stand through adversity, as well as the provisions He has made to enable us to do so. In II Corinthians 4:1, we are told that we have received the ministry of The Word and, thus, should "...faint not;..." Galatians 6:9 further exhorts us to not "...be weary in well doing..." promising that we will reap benefits "...if we faint not." Throughout His Word, God challenges His people to persevere through the mental pressures that the Lord Jesus said we would face. How, then, is this done?

According to II Corinthians 3:5 and 6, as we have often noted, God has made Himself our source of sufficiency and ability. In doing this, He has made us "able" to deal with, and conquer, whatever hardships come our way. (Rom. 8:35-39) In addition, Ephesians 3:16 states that we can be "...strengthened with might by his [God's own] Spirit in the inner man;..." No matter how deeply we need to draw from this spiritual reservoir, the strength to continue on will be there, because it is supplied "...according to the riches of his [God's] glory [or "manifested power"]..."

Colossians has some exciting details to add to our understanding of this matter. Chapter 1, verse 11, informs us that believers may be strengthened with "...all might, according to his [Once again, it's God's] glorious power [*dunamis*, in Greek; potential power]..." The saint, in times of need, has the full, potential power that God has provided in Christ from which to draw the strength necessary to patiently bear up under anything. Has God not promised that He will not allow us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear, but, instead, will make a "way out," that we "...may be able to bear *it*..."? (I Cor. 10:13) He has not left His children ill-equipped.

Returning to Colossians 1, let's conclude our look at verse 11. The Word says it's available to be strengthened with ALL might, and that this is according to the full reservoir of potential power that the Heavenly Father has provided through the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ. If you think that's thrilling, look at how the verse ends. All this spiritual strength and power is available to us with a view toward or "...unto all [ALL] patience and

[AND] longsuffering..." You would think that God made this tremendous power available for the working of mighty signs, miracles, and wonders, but that's not what the Bible says. The Word declares that this strength and power is "...unto all patience and longsuffering..." Can we then deal with the harshest of circumstances in life and still come out on top? God's Word says we can!

In sharing the Scriptures concerning the need to endure and stand through tough situations, I could hardly conclude my remarks without taking a look at Hebrews 12. Verse 1 challenges, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about ["encompassed" or "surrounded"] with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight,...and let us run with patience ["endurance" or "calm courage"] the race that is set before us,..." The great "cloud of witnesses" is the record of Old Testament saints revealed in the preceding chapter. In chapter 11, we have the testimonies of how they believed God and were delivered from an array of distressing trials. Their examples show us the faithfulness of God to uphold His Word and deliver His people.

Hebrews 12:2 continues the Godly instruction by advising us to look "...unto Jesus...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising ["mentally subjugating"] the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The Word then tells us, in verse 3, to "...consider him [Christ] that endured such contradiction ["hostility"] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds [*psuche*, in Greek; "souls"]." Here, again, God indicates that there is something we can do so we do not "faint," or give up. We are to "consider" the Lord Jesus Christ, Who endured His trials and temptations "on account of," or "because of," the joy that was "...set before him..."

Jesus Christ understood the ramifications of His obedience to God, and the exalted position the Father had reserved for Him, beyond the cross. We, too, as His brethren, have great joy set before us. Romans 5:2, regarding our future life in Heaven, declares that we "...rejoice in [the] hope of the glory of God." Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation ["mental pressures"];..." We can endure mental pressures, drawing upon the full reservoir of strength God has provided, by looking beyond any present difficulty and focusing on the joy set before us, namely, the hope of Christ's return. Hebrews 6:19 calls this "hope," and all that it entails, "...an anchor of the soul,..." As such, it will keep us from drifting, and will help us endure as we, getting our "second wind," run to serve our God.

-----by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief

GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD:

A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life

(This column features a wide range of subjects from God's Word as they are set forth by a host of preachers and teachers from differing avenues of Christian thought and various areas of Biblical study and concern.)

“The Recipe Of God”

by Rev. Stephen J. West, Th. D.

I CAN REMEMBER, when I was ten years old, traveling with my mother on what seemed like a very long and grueling drive, from Dayton, Ohio, to my grandparents' farm in the rolling foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains just outside of Booneville, Kentucky. My grandfather was a short, lean man, at least by today's standards. He spent the major part of his life working that farm to support his family. My grandmother, Rose, reared fourteen children and prepared an endless number of meals on a wood-burning stove that stood prominently just inside the back door of the kitchen.

Although it seemed like a very long drive, one of the things I liked most about going to their farm was the food Grandma cooked. Oh, my goodness! I cannot even begin to describe the wonderful aromas that filled the air. There was the smell of skillet-fried chicken, apple pies in the oven, freshly baked breads, green beans with garlic, and so many other delicious wonders. There were times when I just stood at the counter and watched in absolute amazement as Grandma prepared her meals. It was like watching a well-choreographed ballet. She moved so gracefully to each spot in the kitchen and gave such care and attention to every detail and ingredient that went into her various recipes.

Now that I have grown older, I have come to realize that God has also given *us* a “recipe,” and in *His* recipe, His Word, the Bible, He addresses every aspect of our lives. At the same time, I have come to realize that “religion” tries to change the Word of God from a recipe to a “menu.” It tries to walk into the “Restaurant of God,” sit down, pick up the menu, and decide what it will or will not “eat.” Religion wants to establish rules of its own and make its own determinations as to whether something is fit to eat, or whether or not it should be sent back to the “kitchen.”

For the children of God, the Bible is the Heavenly Father's recipe for a more than abundant life. It contains His plan of salvation; it makes God and His will known to us. Because it is the “Recipe

of God,” we, as His children, do not have the option of adding extra ingredients, omitting ingredients, or even changing the amount of an ingredient to suit our own tastes.

Psalms 119:103

How sweet are thy [God's] words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

If we want to fully enjoy the Recipe of God, His Word, we have to understand in what order *He* wants us to add ingredients, in what amounts *He* wants us to add them, and when *He* wants us to add them. It is like a parent who warns a small child not to touch the hot stove; some of us, of course, just had to find out why we were not to touch the hot stove. The Recipe of God does not establish rules that restrict our lives, but, rather, is given to us by God as guidance to protect us, and that we may receive the greatest benefit.

Jeremiah 15:16

Thy [God's] words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was [“became”] unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Part of the Recipe of God includes coming to terms with the truth that God loves each and every one of us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as a full payment for all sins. Understanding His great love and sacrifice for us is the first and greatest ingredient in His recipe.

John 6:35; and 10:10

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus Christ] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

When we follow the Recipe of God, we will experience the more than abundant life. If you are not attending a local church or home Bible fellowship, I want to encourage you by asking, “How are *your* ‘recipes’ working for you?”*

(Rev. Stephen J. West, Th. D. has been ardently studying and applying the principles of Biblical research since 1991. He has

earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Wright State University (Dayton, Ohio), a Master of Theology from Andersonville Theological Seminary (Andersonville, Georgia), and a Doctorate of Theology from Christian Bible College (Rocky Mount, North Carolina). Currently, he serves as chairman of the board of directors and senior pastor of Akribos Theological Fellowship. Feel free to contact him at saints@akribos.org. Rev. West and his wife, Rhonda, presently live in Huber Heights, Ohio.)

INVESTIGATING CREATION SCIENCE

(In this column, which appears in every spring and fall issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, members of the Clarion’s research team explore the timely and unfolding evidence that supports the Biblical assertion concerning the Divine creation of all things, visible and invisible. Join us as we take a journey into scriptures and science alike to investigate the latest, compelling proofs.)

“ ‘To Give Light Upon The Earth’ ”

by Keith Jamison

IN AN EARLIER ARTICLE in this column, “**Shedding Some Light On The Matter**” (Spring, 2006; Vol. III, No. 3), we gave a general overview of “light.” Now, we will focus on the “light givers” of Genesis 1:14-18, that is, the sun, moon, and stars. Why did God give them to us, and what purpose do they serve? What do they mean in our lives? We’ll look at how the Bible answers these questions.

In the article we’ve just mentioned, we observed that God, in Genesis 1:3, first “restored” light (*owr*, in Hebrew; *phos*, in Greek; meaning, “illumination in every sense and in the widest application”). It alone is fundamental to everything that was subsequently repaired. Lucifer’s expulsion from Heaven removed the light from the creation, contributing to the devastation revealed in Genesis 1:2, for the “Light Bringer” was no longer the source of light upon the earth. During the six days wherein God restored order (Gen. 1:3-2:3), He prepared “lights” (*maowr*, in Hebrew; “light givers”) to serve in the fallen Lucifer’s stead. On the fourth day, these lights were made to serve as a temporary measure in order to give us light (for there will come a day when they are no longer necessary, as noted in Revelation 22:5). Let’s begin by looking at Genesis 1:16.

Genesis 1:16

And God made two great lights [maowr]; the greater light [maowr] to rule the day, and the lesser light [maowr] to rule the night: he made the stars also.

The “greater light” is obviously the sun, and the “lesser light” is the moon. The sun is brighter and larger, and gives off its own light, while the smaller moon reflects to us the sun’s light. These are the greatest lights in the sky from our point of view on the earth, but what about the stars? In the King James Version, the English translation makes the stars appear

almost like an after-thought. Oh, yeah! God did this, as well. Near the end of verse 16, we find the words “*he made*” in italics, showing that the translators added them. Their effort was meant to clarify the text, but if the italicized words are removed, “the stars also” becomes directly linked to the words “God made” at the beginning of the verse.

In the Hebrew texts, the word *eth* is used four times in Genesis 1:16. It is used to point out more definitely the object of a preposition or verb. In this usage, it has no English equivalent and is, therefore, not represented in English versions. It is used just prior to “two great lights,” “the greater light,” “the lesser light,” and “the stars also.” These are the objects of the verb “made,” emphasizing that “God made” them all.

Note that they were all “made” and not “created,” indicating that existing material was used of which they consist. (An entirely different Hebrew word is used for “created,” and carries a different meaning.) Also, the Hebrew word *maowr* is used three times in the verse, which implies divine completeness; God left nothing undone in this act. Furthermore, the four uses of *eth* show that this was done to benefit the earth specifically, since the number four in the Bible represents the terrestrial earth. The verse highlights the prominence of the sun and moon, and also emphasizes the significance of the stars in relation to the earth.

Genesis 1:14

And God said, Let there be lights [maowr] in the firmament [“expanse”] of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be [“become”] for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

The first reason stated for these lights, or light givers, is to divide the daytime from the night. The sun rules the day; the moon rules the night. This is simple

and straightforward. The second reason given is for the measuring of the passage of time; these luminous bodies comprise a celestial calendar. The movements of the sun, moon, and stars are the basis of all forms of timekeeping. Because of them, we've been able to track the events in the seasons and years of our lives.

Genesis 1:15, 17, and 18

And let them be for lights [maowr, "light givers"] in the firmament of the heaven to give light [owr, "light in every sense and in the widest application"] upon the earth: and it was so.

And God set ["arranged"] them in the firmament of the heaven to give light [owr, "light in every sense and in the widest application"] upon the earth,

And to rule over [mashal] the day and over the night, and to divide the light [owr] from the darkness [choshek]: and God saw that it was good.

These light givers were made "to give light upon the earth." This phrase is used twice in quick succession to dramatically illustrate a great truth: the sun, moon, and all the stars were designed specifically to serve and benefit the earth. In fact, beginning in Genesis 1:2, the earth becomes central to God's activity, and it alone (and the life upon it) becomes the recipient of God's benevolence. Perhaps the most fascinating truth of these verses is that these light givers (*maowr*), which obviously give off visible, physical light, are described in the original languages as being made to give "light in every sense and in the widest application upon the earth."

In both occurrences of the phrase, "to give light upon the earth," the Hebrew word for "light" is *owr*, the same word used in Genesis 1:3, where God said, "...Let there be light [*owr*]..." This word is equal to the Greek word *phos*, which is what is used in the Septuagint, also referring to light in its fullest sense and widest application. Additionally, *phos* appears in I John 1:5, where the Bible states, "...God is light [*phos*]..." These light givers were not only to shed physical light upon the earth, but were made to radiate light in every sense and application, which includes proclaiming to those on the earth the nature and will of God, Who is light. They were designed to provide enLIGHTenment!

Genesis 1:18 concludes the immediate context by telling us again that these light givers were made to rule

over the day and night. The Hebrew word *mashal*, which means, "to rule, to have power or dominion over," is used in this verse. It is the root of the word *memshalah*, meaning, "to rule," which is used twice in Genesis 1:16.

In verse 14, we see that the light givers are to divide "...the day from the night..." however, in verse 18, they divide "...the light from the darkness:..." These physical luminaries are to divide or separate the light in its fullest sense and application (*owr*), which, as we have seen, includes the knowledge of God, from the darkness (*choshek*). *Choshek* is the Hebrew word used to represent physical as well as figurative (or spiritual) darkness. These light givers were originally designed to show a distinction between God's enlightenment and spiritual darkness. They proclaim The Word and will of God, as verified by Psalms 19:1-6.

It is interesting to note that *choshek* is used in Genesis 1:2, for it shows that after the earth "...became without form, and void..." physical as well as spiritual darkness was "...upon the face of the deep." It also appears in Genesis 1:4, where God "...divided the light (*owr*) from the darkness (*choshek*)." Light in every sense and in its widest application (*owr*), which also applies to God Himself, was separated by God from physical AND spiritual darkness (*choshek*). This could be a cloaked reference to the expelling of Lucifer and his minions from Heaven.

In closing, we must acknowledge that light is so fundamental to us that we often have trouble seeing its importance. We are naturally creatures of the day and of the light. Sight itself is our most prominent sense. A larger proportion of our brains is used in seeing than in hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. Without light, physical or spiritual, we cannot see. We seek it. Even those who work at night do so in pools of artificial light. Sunlight itself is important to our sense of well-being. A prolonged lack of it can affect our physical and mental health. Light, then, is basic to our nature, and God, Who is light, made light givers to shine upon us. The sun, moon, and stars exist to give us light, and enlightenment, in which to live out our lives.*

(We invite you to join us in every spring and fall issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion for "Investigating Creation Science.")

(Mr. Keith Jamison is the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion's Research Department. He regularly develops material for the "Investigating Creation Science" and "From The Research Department" columns.)

AN INVITATION TO SHARE!

*If you are interested in submitting an article for our "God's Matchless Word" column or, perhaps, an essay, some original Christian poetry, or a testimony for our "For Your Spiritual Enrichment" column, please note that it is best to send them on a 3½" floppy disk, using a standard Microsoft™ Word® format. You may also e-mail your submissions, in a "plain text" format, sending them to ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net. If you desire, you may send a fax to (937) 276-5534. For more information, feel free to call us at (937) 275-3316. If you would like to send a letter to the editor, you may use our e-mail address or fax number, or simply write **The Ryburn Christian Clarion**, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552. If you would like to support our outreach work financially, please make your offerings payable to "The Ryburn Christian Clarion," and mail them to the same address.*

FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT

Book Review

(This column offers our readers a variety of inspirational and edifying submissions. In this "grab-bag," appearing from time to time, you will find essays, book reviews, testimonies, poetry, compositions, letters, and other things designed to exhort and comfort God's people.)

No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective

by Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr.

DURING THIS PAST DECEMBER, I received a package from Florida. It came unbidden and was, to say the least, a complete surprise. The package contained a book. As a matter of fact, it contained the book we are reviewing, and I was immediately intrigued by the title. *No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective* appeared to be in harmony with the Bible, at least as far as the title was concerned.

Many years ago, I learned that everything in life has a spiritual cause or influence behind it. I learned early that concepts like luck, chance, fate, destiny, and fortune are nothing but elusive ideas that people use to explain what they consider to be unexplainable. I endeavored to alter my vocabulary to eliminate such terms. I even recall thinking it would be useful if someone would put what God's Word says about such notions in a book so all that insight would be readily available to God's people. Such vague and ill-defined concepts, I thought, should be exposed for what they are so God's children don't attribute the outcomes of events to them. *No Such Thing As LUCK!* does just that.

Through chapters like "The Origin Of 'Luck Theology,'" " 'Fickled' Fate," "Destiny's Deception," "Fortune's Fallacy," "Chances Are? There Are No Chances Are!," "Luck's Real Meaning," and others, the author takes you on a journey into the Scriptures, and into the mists of antiquity, to discover the distant beginnings of these seemingly innocent ideas.

Starting slowly in chapter one, "Introducing Luck's Controversy," which shows the prevalence of "luck" thinking and expressions, the author leads us in an investigation of the Word of God, uncovering the Biblical evidence of luck's dark inception. Even before the third chapter is reached, the reader is realizing the deception of belief in luck, chance, and the like, and the evil intent behind such a worldwide farce. Ultimately, the mystique is stripped away and luck's true essence is exposed in the brilliant light of The Word. It becomes clear that ascribing good events to "good luck" only serves to rob God of the praise that is due Him, while

attributing bad things to "bad luck" simply shields the Devil from the blame that is rightly his.

"Luck Theology" thus blurs the workings of both the True God and the Devil in the affairs of men. In reality, it turns God Himself into a vague concept and obscures the nature and methods of Satan altogether, elevating other unseen forces to take the credit or blame for events in life. Fundamentally, it promotes idolatry, for it fosters trust in some "thing" other than God.

Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr., in this wonderful work, has ably put years of scriptural study into a 297-page, hardbound volume that is eminently readable, and includes endnotes (after each chapter) and a scripture index. Additionally, speaking as a long-time editor who deals daily with people's inability to spell or understand grammar, I found the book's editing quite satisfactory.

For those who love a mystery, *No Such Thing As LUCK!* offers the unfolding of cultural affectations that have roots stretching back into the dim days after Adam and Eve. For those who love God and the greatness of His Word, this book (published in 2005) will prove to be a much-needed addition to their Biblical research libraries. It nicely fills a gap that has not been adequately addressed until now. Available for \$14.95, with discounts for orders of 20 copies or more, we believe the investment to be well worthwhile. We would give Charlie Johnston's work a "thumb's up," but that expression probably has pagan roots, as well. Instead, we'll simply say, "We approve."*

-----by Rick Heeter, Book Reviewer

(Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr. started out teaching History in the Georgia school system, and later was a successful businessman for years. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from William Carey College (Hattiesburg, Mississippi), and took pastoral training for three years with Baptist Bible Institute (Graceville, Florida). In the early 1960s, he was ordained to the Christian Ministry, serving in several small, southern churches. Rev. Johnston and his wife, Carol, presently live and fellowship in Greenwood, Florida. For more information about No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective, or to order online, please visit www.johnstonpublications.com. If you desire, you may write to Johnston Publications, 3667 Northside Church Road, Greenwood, Florida 32443-2143, or call (850) 592-8769.)

Fax your submissions to the *Clarion* at (937) 276-5534, or e-mail them to ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net.

FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

(This column, featuring the work of Keith Jamison, examines God's Word and how its application in our Twenty-First Century lives has been influenced by mythology, philosophy, and tradition.)

“He Whom The Heavens Must Retain”

WHEN SAUL OF TARSUS was on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), having obtained authority from the high priest to arrest and bring the Christians there back to Jerusalem, he was “met” on the road by Jesus Christ. He was blinded, became born again, got healed, and ultimately became an apostle of the Lord Jesus. The account of Saul’s conversion is often retold, however, we have noted, in recent years, statements by well-meaning clergy that go beyond the Biblical record. When this occurs, we are dealing with men’s opinions and not the accuracy of God’s revealed Word. Some have stated that Jesus Christ literally descended from the right hand of God to personally intercept Saul in his journey. Others have said that Christ appeared to Saul in His “resurrected body.” The question is, “Just how did Saul ‘meet’ Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus: in person or in a vision?” Let’s look more closely at The Word to find our answer.

Acts 3:20 and 21

And he [God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Whom [Jesus Christ] the heaven must receive [or “retain”] until the times of restitution [or “rectification”] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The “whom” spoken of in Acts 3:21 is the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ ascended, the heavens received Him. The word translated “receive” in this verse is the Greek word *dechomai*, which means, “to receive subjectively; to accept, embrace, or receive hospitably; to admit, approve, allow, or retain.” In fact, The Amplified Bible renders *dechomai* here as “retain.” Heaven took possession of the Lord Jesus, for as Mark 16:19b declares, after He ascended into heaven, Christ “...sat [*kathizo*] on the right hand of God.”

A thorough study of the word “sat,” including its cultural significance, throughout the Scriptures

(beginning with its first use in Genesis 2:2, where it is rendered “rested”), indicates a sitting down and “abiding,” or “remaining,” because a task is completely finished. Just before He gave up His life on Calvary’s cross, Christ declared that His work was “finished.” (John 19:30) His work is *done*, and those who believe on Him have now been called to carry on “...the ministry of reconciliation;...” (II Cor. 5:18b) There is no need for Him to descend from His exalted station at God’s right hand, for the Father has made other arrangements for the furtherance of the Gospel.

There is additional scriptural evidence to establish that the Lord Jesus “abides” or “remains” in Heaven until the events of the Book of Revelation begin to transpire. On the other hand, the record of Saul’s heavenly encounter is first related in Acts 9. As the Apostle Paul, he later recounts the events in Acts, chapters 22 and 26. Starting in Acts 9:3, we are told that “...a light from heaven...” shone around him, and a voice spoke to him. This voice identifies itself as “Jesus” in verse 5. Verse 7 goes on to describe how the men who were with Saul heard the voice, but did not see anybody, or “...no man.” Later, when, as the Apostle Paul, he recounts the experience before the people in Acts 22, he says that the men with him saw “...the light, and were afraid...,” but did not hear the voice (verse 9).

Now, we seem to have a contradiction regarding the “voice.” Acts 9:7 says that those who traveled with Saul “...stood speechless, hearing a voice...,” while Acts 22:9, dealing with the same incident, states that these men “...heard not the voice of him that spake....” On the surface, looking to the Greek doesn’t seem to help. The Greek word *akouo* is used in both accounts. This word, however, is a primary verb with two basic meanings: simply “to hear,” which would apply to any sound, or “to be informed, or receive information, through the faculty of hearing.” It would seem, according to Acts 9:7, that Saul’s companions merely heard a sound, while in Acts

22:9, the Bible elaborates by letting us know that these men did not, by the faculty of hearing, receive any intelligible information.

Furthermore, the word translated “voice” in both accounts is *phone*. Yes, as in “telephone.” This word means “tone” or “sound.” In other words, one account simply states that the men heard a “sound,” or a noise, and the other verse adds that they did not receive any useful information from hearing the “sound.” In Acts 22:9, they did not recognize the “sound” as a “voice” at all. This appears to be similar to an occurrence that took place on what we call Palm Sunday. While Jesus was talking to His disciples, according to John 12:28, “...came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I [God] have both glorified *it* [His name], and will glorify *it* again.” Even though Jesus Christ heard the audible voice of God, according to verse 29, the people “...that stood by, and heard *it* [the voice], said that it thundered:...” Christ, through the faculty of hearing, received intelligible information, but the people who stood nearby heard only a “sound” of thunder.

Moving on to Acts 26:19, the Apostle Paul, in rehearsing his conversion experience before King Agrippa, refers to it as a “...heavenly vision:...” The word “vision,” in this verse, is *optasia*, a “sight” or “vision.” This Greek word is always translated as “vision” in the King James Version. It comes from the Greek word *optomai*, meaning, “to see” or “be seen.” From this word, we get our English term “optometry,” which is the measuring of vision, or eyesight. *Optomai* is used twice in Acts 26:16, where the King James Version renders it “have appeared” and “will appear.” Both are tenses of “appear.”

The using of *optomai* concerning a vision also occurs in Acts 16:9. “And a vision [*horama*],” the Bible declares, “appeared [*optomai*] to Paul in

the night; There stood a man of Macedonia....” Do you think the “man of Macedonia” literally stood before Paul? Of course not! While a different Greek word, *horama*, “something gazed at,” is translated “vision” in this verse, *optomai* is rendered “appeared.” This verse shows clearly that something is being seen, but it is not actually there. A look at another word sometimes translated “appear” may help to clarify things.

Phaneroo, a Greek word that means “to render apparent,” is also used in God’s Word. It is derived from *phao*, a root that means, “to shine” or “to manifest.” When *phaneroo* is used, something is being “manifested” in the physical realm for all to see. It is translated as “manifest” in a number of places in The Word. On the road to Damascus, a “vision” which revealed the Lord Jesus Christ “appeared,” or was “rendered apparent,” to Saul of Tarsus. Jesus Christ Himself, however, the subject of the visitation, remained in Heaven, as Acts 3:21 states.

Saul, in a *vision*, “met” Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus, but the Lord Jesus could not have been there in person. As Acts 3:21 notes, the heavens “must retain,” or “embrace,” Him until the proper hour, that is, until the “...times of rectification...,” when “...all things...” are made right, or rectified. Even when He comes for us, The Church, the heavens will still retain Him, for we will “...meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:17):...” Not until the unfolding of the events recorded in the Book of Revelation will He actually set foot upon the earth once again. At that time, all things shall be set right. What a time to look forward to!*

(Mr. Keith Jamison is presently the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion’s Research Department.)

*Articles and columns submitted to The Ryburn Christian Clarion are edited to ensure correct spelling and punctuation, proper grammar, and clarity of expression.

Awaiting The Return...

On Friday, April 13, 2007, our faithful brother in Christ, Clyde Earl Tucker, fell asleep and now awaits the “blessed hope,” the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Clyde was active as a servant-leader in several fellowships, and was loved by saints from Ohio, Michigan, Florida, and elsewhere. He regularly distributed The Ryburn Christian Clarion to a number of locations in Dayton, Ohio, and supported the Clarion’s outreach efforts financially. At the time of his death, he was preparing an article on “hospitality” to submit to this publication. Clyde was a thoroughly decent man, and a loving and giving Christian brother. His absence will be deeply felt.

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