

The Marvelous Works of God

*“I will praise thee;
for I am fearfully
and wonderfully
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that my soul
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—Psalm 139:14

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE

Psalmist David speaks of the wonderful creative works of our Heavenly Father, who is the source of all life. His power is marvelous and beyond the ability of our finite minds to fully comprehend.

Reflecting on this, we realize

that our loving God has created his human family with the ability to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Man is also able to think for himself and to know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and love and hate. Father Adam was also created perfect and with the ability to worship his Creator.

A SYMBOLIC BODY

The human body, which David said was ‘fearfully and wonderfully made,’ is indeed a marvelous and intricate creation of divine wisdom, love, and power. The great God of the universe has thus very fittingly used it in the Scriptures to illustrate the

body of 'The Christ.' This symbolic body is composed of our Lord Jesus as the head, and his faithful followers as members of his body. It is also called a New Creation of God because the members of this body are being called from among the human family and are being developed during this present Gospel Age.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul directed the brethren's attention to this symbolic relationship. He told them, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."—Eph. 2:19-22

A NEW CREATION

The work of preparing this New Creation for a place in Christ's future kingdom has been taking place throughout this present Gospel Age. Paul spoke of the specific work that some of the members of the body would be engaged in. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—Eph. 4:11-13

Further to this, the apostle addressed the harmonious relationship that would prevail among the people of God. He wrote, “Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—vss. 15,16

PAINSTAKING NEEDLEWORK

In the psalm from which our featured scripture was taken, David used symbols to illustrate the various points he was making. He wrote, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”—Ps. 139:14-16

The words translated ‘curiously wrought’ in this scripture mean ‘to embroider.’ The same Hebrew word has also been translated ‘needlework’ when used to describe a weaving of beautiful and colorful threads. (Judg. 5:30) It is also the word used when speaking of the bride of Christ. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness

and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace."—Ps. 45:13-15

Needlework requires careful, patient, and painstaking effort, and thus symbolizes the character development that takes place in the Lord's people. It points to that which is being curiously wrought in the lives of the faithful members of the body of Christ. The majority do this while dwelling in the lower strata of earth's society.

THE SON OF MAN

God's Word teaches, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John 3:13) "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."—Phil. 2:7,8

Jesus could have come to earth as a perfect man and kept himself separate from the fallen human race. The sacrifice of his perfect human life could have provided the ransom price even if he had never mingled with mankind at all. Even though he did associate with the earthly creation, it was to a large extent with the lowly and humble.

From the scriptural account, we read, "It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. 9:10,11) It was long before prophesied by Isaiah who wrote, "He made his grave with the wicked,

and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”—Isa. 53:9

GLORY FOR MANY SONS

Jesus' death as a perfect human being provided the ransom price for the whole sin-sick world. However, his association with the sinful world and the painful experiences he endured in connection with it, had much to do with his own development as a New Creature. It also served in the spiritual development of his body members. Paul explains, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”—Heb. 2:9-11

Jesus and his body members are all developed as New Creatures. Even of Jesus we read, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” (Heb. 5:8) This does not imply that Jesus was not obedient to his Heavenly Father as the Logos before he left his heavenly home and came to earth. By his descending into the ‘lower parts of the earth’ he learned what it meant to be obedient to God under adverse and very trying circumstances. By taking on the body of flesh it cost him much in the way of suffering, ignominy, and finally death on the cross.

Yet these experiences perfected Jesus as the Captain of our salvation, and to be the Head over the members of his faithful body. This process prepared him for the great work ahead for the blessing of all mankind under the administration of his future kingdom. It is true, also, of each one of his body members who are being developed by the Holy Spirit of God in their walk in newness of life. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."—Rom. 6:3,4

Our Lord Jesus was also prepared to assist his body members who are being called from the fallen human family. They have inherited the weaknesses of the fallen flesh and require his patient and loving help. We are thus assured, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—Heb. 4:15

OBTAINING MERCY

Because of our interaction with other members of the human family and with the world, we are subjected to the same tests of obedience as Jesus was. However, being imperfect we are not 'without sin' as he was, and we need special provisions which the Heavenly Father has given us for our development as New Creatures in Christ. Prayer is one of these special gifts. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16)

By taking advantage of this blessing, it is possible for all the members of body of Christ to be developed for a place in his future kingdom.

BAPTIZED UNTO DEATH

The sins of the whole world were on our Lord Jesus' shoulders, as reflected in his statement, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) The Master was witnessing to the divine purpose, and he knew that it would not be fully realized until his baptism unto death had been fully consummated. He had committed himself to a course of self sacrifice, and he could not be worthy to be exalted to the right hand of his Heavenly Father until he had been faithful even unto death. To receive the position as Head over the members of his body, he would be required to endure the ignominious death of the cross. It was the Father's will that he take the sinner's place, and descend all the way into the lowest parts of the earth in death.

DRINKING THE CUP

Near the close of Jesus' earthly ministry, James and John asked him if he would grant them a special favor. "He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?" (Mark 10:36) "They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." (vs. 37) The two disciples were no doubt disappointed with his answer. "Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (vs. 38) James and John did not realize the life of sacrifice that was necessary

to follow their Master. “They said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.”—vss. 39-41

Jesus made it clear that his Heavenly Father would place the various members of the body of Christ as he desired. To follow our Lord means to sacrifice our lives and to accept the Father’s will in all matters concerning our heavenly calling during this present Gospel Age. All of Jesus’ faithful body members must die with him in order to qualify for a position in the Christ. The Apostle Paul proclaimed to the brethren at Rome, “If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” (Rom. 6:5-8) The full development of the Christ Head and body will not be complete until all have descended into death. The faithful must stand every test, learn every lesson, and be profited by every experience that is directed by the Holy Spirit of God.

GOD’S WORKMANSHIP

Paul spoke further of God’s work toward the development of the New Creation and the body of

Christ in his letter to the church at Ephesus. He said, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10) It was the Heavenly Father who raised up Jesus as a New Creature and exalted him to the divine nature, and the apostle explains that we are all being created in Christ Jesus.

"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Eph. 2:1-8

TESTING NECESSARY

The body of Christ as faithful New Creatures in Christ Jesus, are to be exalted to the very highest of all forms of life, the divine nature. Immortality is a condition that is indestructible. If they were raised to such a high position without being severely tested,

they would continue to live forever if not faithful, and be a possible detriment to the other orders of creation. Upon the basis of these tests, God knows that the faithful ones in Christ will always be loyal to him, and to the principles of righteousness that are represented in his perfect laws.

This principle is emphasized by David in our featured psalm. “O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.”—Ps. 139:1-4, *New American Standard Bible*

GOD’S LOVING CARE

This tender supervision is expanded by the psalmist who continues, “You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.”—vss. 5-8, *NASB*

The psalmist points to our Lord who appears to be lost in wonder and praise with the Heavenly Father’s love and care over his special people. This tender guidance and watchfulness is directed from an exalted position in the heaven of heavens, and reaches down to touch even those faithful ones in Sheol [Hebrew, the grave].

This passage is principally fitting to God’s dealings with the Christ, and his presence is especially

with them in death. His ultimate purpose is that upon the basis of their faithfulness unto death, he will give them a crown of life. Their resurrection to glory, honor, and immortality is evidence that he was well pleased with their devotion and loyalty to him. He supervised their consecrated walk in newness of life, and gave them strength to endure the trials and testing necessary for their faithfulness to him. The psalmist continues, "If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me."—Ps. 139:9,10, *NASB*

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a separating work, or setting apart to God and to the doing of his will. Speaking of his faithful followers, Jesus said, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."—John 17:14-19, *NASB*

The sanctification of the body members of the Christ does not mean perfection of their flesh, but rather a full heart devotion and loyalty to God. By heeding the divine call to consecration, we become separate from the world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the

world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:19) “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”—John 16:33

Jesus taught his disciples that although they would experience tribulation because of their separation from the world and its spirit, they too would be able to overcome. This would not be in their own strength, but in the strength of the Lord and the power of his Holy Spirit. Our Heavenly Father discerns between the world and his consecrated people in the world, and works with those who take a stand on his side. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil. 2:12,13

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

It is written, “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.” (Ps. 111:10) Paul taught, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”—Heb. 4:1-3

A proper reverence for the LORD is not only the beginning of wisdom, but those who are truly wise toward God will continue to reverence him by giving careful attention to all he has said, that their lives might be fully pleasing to him.

A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Paul writes, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”—Rom. 8:28-30

The apostle was not speaking about the predestination of individuals, but of the characteristics each individual must possess in order to qualify as a member of the Christ. David wrote, “In thy book all my members were written.” (Ps. 139:16) It was the Heavenly Father’s will for those faithful ones to be written in his most blessed book.

The Prophet Malachi was moved by the Holy Spirit of God to write, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. 3:16,17 ■