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# “God Himself shall be Their God”

(Convention Address)

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” — Rev. 21:3.

EVERYBODY loves a happy ending. It is unfortunate that these are often associated with fairy tales. So many fairy tales finish “and they lived happily ever after.” The association is unfortunate because fairy tales are untrue and ought not to be believed. It would be better if happy endings were seen to relate to God’s plan because both the plan and the happy ending are true, and ought to be believed — “Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” — Psa.145:16.

The much loved passage Rev. 21:3-5 adds some detail to the promise in the Psalm. It must refer to the Ages to Come at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, because of the words “no more death” — “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful!”

The purpose here is to concentrate on that part of word-picture of the Ages to Come described — “and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” In particular, we will be thinking of God’s role as God, but firstly some thoughts on God being with them could be considered.

There seems to be an implication that God will be present in a way not previously possible. This is to be when the New Jerusalem is on earth, and the tabernacle of God is with men. The R.S.V. uses “dwelling” instead of “tabernacle.”

God’s omnipresence was well known in Old Testament days. In Psalm 139 David went into some detail in describing how God is everywhere at the same time. The New Testament supports this with expressions like — “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” — Heb. 4:13. Indeed, a very special form of presence was mentioned in John 14:23 — “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

It may be that God’s special indwelling of the members of the Body of Christ, coupled with the role of that Body in the Ages to Come, is somehow involved in the probably different but yet undisclosed way in which God will dwell with men at that time.

What we do know is that God will not be present in the same manner as human beings are at a place or in a dwelling. Solomon recognized that God’s nature would not permit any containment of God — “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” — 1 Kings 8:27. The first definition of “contain” in one dictionary is “to hold within a fixed space or fixed limits, to enclose.”

The Bible declares that with God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning — James 1:17. It follows that His future dwelling with men cannot involve a change of His nature. It is inconceivable that God could be contained or restricted in a place or even a planet or galaxy which He, Himself, caused to be created.

This poses the question — If God does not change, how will His dwelling with man in the Ages to Come, be different from His omnipresence now or in the past?

It is suggested that the difference will be in men. Mankind will know God and be aware of His presence. Heavy emphasis should be put on that awareness. Even those who love God now, cannot be aware of His

presence to the extent which will be possible when men are more than decaying earthen vessels.

The word "aware" seems to be a good one to describe being forward in the active part of the mind. The contrast is not with the sub-conscious, but with the background information stored in our minds, upon which we draw as we have need. Our conscious mind does know and love God, but our current activity takes precedence.

The type of thought which hinders our awareness of God concerns simple everyday things like:

The objects which come into view as we walk along; Concern for the thoughts and well-being of those to whom we are speaking; Reaction to sound, or for that matter, any of the senses; Careful attention to any work we may be performing. There is nothing wrong with any of these things in this present world, but they do cloud our awareness of God's presence.

Have you ever considered the profound effect that a real awareness of God's presence can have on a human being? Boy Scouts are taught to pray "Let the assurance of Thy Presence save us from sinning; strengthen us in life, and comfort us in death" — dying would be a better word.

Might it not be that the different way in which God will be with mankind in the Ages to Come, will be that man will be aware of God's presence. The most active thought in his mind could be that awareness.

Let us move on, then, to God being their God or the role of God as God. Obviously, it is not appropriate for the creature to examine the Creator in any sense of defining God's functions. Equally it would be wrong to endeavour to delineate that which cannot be encompassed.

However, in several places the Bible is emphatic about God being a God to people. It does seem reasonable that we should consider what is entailed in that role as a guide to the proper response. Perhaps the best known occasion is in the promise of the New Covenant in Jer. 31:33 referred to in Heb. 8:10 — "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Our passage in Rev. 21:3 has much wider application. It seems to refer to all mankind rather than merely to the House of Israel — "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God"

The study of God's nature in general is always profitable. Properly understood, it would remove most of the errors from Christendom, and with them the fears and greeds of the world. The subject of God's role must pre-suppose sufficient knowledge of God's nature to enable us to concentrate on the interaction between

God and man. That relationship in the texts quoted is still future. For our part, however, we ought now be seeking to make God our God in every sense of the word.

Zech.8:8 establishes ground rules — "And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." Truth, in that context, implies the utmost sincerity. Elsewhere it is used as an ascertained fact or reliable doctrine. It is also used by our Lord Jesus in John 14:6. However, when associated with righteousness in this way it must mean conforming to fact and reality to the utmost extent that these are discernable by the human mind.

Righteousness must always be seen as God's objective for man. The first step towards God's righteousness is to recognize our state apart from Christ — "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" — Isa. 64:6. God Himself has provided the remedy for that state — "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." So the basis of God being our God in truth and in righteousness is of or out from the Father, by or through the Son. How often do we find 1 Cor. 8:6 puts things in perspective for us — "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him: and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

The fact that God will be their God quickly excludes many of the gods which prevail today. Materialism is one of the worst. It includes not only money or wealth, but all the possessions man worships. Sometimes the object of worship has little or no intrinsic value. Perhaps there may be value from the maker's artistic ability received from God. To the extent that it is worshipped, anything is a god and usurps that which belongs to the true God.

Others worship the acclaim of men. This is more subtle than materialism, but equally in error. "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" — 1 Pet. 5:5. Similarly, power consumes many. A little power, perhaps in the workforce, perhaps social, often political seems to take hold of its possessor. Step by step a little more power or influence is sought.

Anything which claims men's hearts, taking them away from God, is stealing that which belongs to God. The Bible says — "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" — Prov. 23:26. Our Lord Jesus said — "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's."

These problems will not exist in the Ages to Come. Our text tells us that God will be their God. Praise the Lord. His plan will have succeeded. Mankind will know the folly of pseudo gods and turn from them. On

the positive side this means that every person will worship God as He ought to be worshipped.

As a consequence, those characteristics and attributes seen praiseworthy in God will be emulated. Every action will be designed, not toward some personal craving, but in proper altruism toward that which God wants. God's Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God is love. Accordingly, love will be the attitude which will pervade all activities of mankind.

Early in the Bible we have very clear instruction on the relationship between God and man. It is the relationship between Creator and creature. God himself stated that it should be taught to Israel — "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD; And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" — Deut. 6:4,5. This will always be the case. There can only ever be one God. Our Lord Jesus has been given a name which is above every name — "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" — Phil. 2:9. Yet He did not seek to be equal with God. Indeed the Bible tells us that even Jesus will be subject to God — "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" — 1 Cor. 15:28.

Mind you, there is a certain degree of equality. Even when Jesus was a man, His reference to God as His Father claimed equality up to a point. John gave this as one of the reasons for the Jews seeking to kill Him — "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" — John 5:18. This amounted to putting Himself on the same plane — a family plane — with God. He certainly did NOT claim an equal position within that plane.

Such unequal equality can be illustrated by an analogy from our own society. Each of the children of our queen is said to be royal. Only the queen is a monarch, but everyone of her children is royal, 100% royal. They are equally royal but not equal in rank.

Similarly, distinction has to be made between several types of likeness. We loathe the unbridled ambition of Lucifer who sought to be like God. He did not want character likeness, but a likeness to God's pre-eminence. On the other hand, we rejoice in the declaration that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is — not as He was. Seeing Him is given as a proof or explanation of our being like Him. Surely this refers to a likeness to His nature as a spirit being or spiritual body. To be like our Lord in this way does not suggest any usurpation of His Headship.

There are great and precious promises whereby ye might be partakers of the divine nature. The part to be taken is not defined. Even without the remainder of 2 Pet. 1:4 — "having escaped the corruption that is in

the world through lust," one should perceive that the part taken would include God's righteousness. The Church is to be conformed to the image of God's Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. But our Lord Jesus will always be the older Brother and God, Himself, will always be God.

In the past we have been reminded that the expression Divine nature is related to our word "native" and indicates natural attributes in the sense of not acquired. With this knowledge 2 Pet. 1:4 must mean that some of the attributes which are 'native' to God are to be partaken of by others. With those who acquire them, these attributes could hardly be said to be "native." The promise is still great and precious because none who really worship God would seek to receive His exclusive place.

In the Ages to Come all will know God and will understand the role of the true God. He will be no longer the God of Hope. This is not because God has changed. Quite simply, it will be because "hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

But in those days they will worship Him for what He is:

The Creator of all matter;  
The Originator of all love;  
The Centre of all wisdom;  
The Artist of all beauty;  
The Designer of all harmony;  
The Controller of all energy;  
The Maintainer of all justice;  
The Justifier of all sinners;  
The Basis of all security;  
The Requirer and Enabler of all righteousness;  
The Source and Purpose of all life.

When all this is appreciated in the forward active part of the mind, true worship must follow. Then will all mankind want to join in David's prayer — "Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name" — 1 Chron. 29:10-13.

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### "Gifts of Spirit — True and False"

A booklet bearing the above title has been printed, and a copy is being supplied to all friends receiving this issue of "Peoples Paper." Extra copies are available, supplied through the General Tract Fund to all who can use them to advantage.

### Nambour Convention

The Nambour Convention is to be held (D.V.) on July 28th and 29th in the Staff Room, State School, Coronation Drive, Nambour, to which interested friends are invited. Further information from:— Mr. G. Tosh, Paynters Creek Rd., M.S. 1536, Nambour, Queensland, 4560.

## *The Institute's Work*

WITH the close of April, another year's work has been completed for the Berean Bible Institute. We are very thankful to our Heavenly Father for all His blessings in connection with the efforts undertaken throughout another year, and this brief review of the work is now presented.

Many of our Australian and overseas brethren have co-operated very well again over the year past. This is most encouraging, and sincere thanks is expressed to all who have assisted so well. The extent of the work has been of a similar nature to recent years, by the Lord's overruling providence, and all opportunities for service are esteemed as so many privileges, by the Lord's grace.

Our bi-monthly "Peoples Paper" has continued to provide a helpful contact with our Australian and overseas brethren and friends. Appreciation of the messages in our "Paper" has been received throughout the year again. This is encouraging, and to all who have contributed to the pages of our journal sincere thanks is expressed for this good assistance in the service of the Lord. The main object of our "Paper" is to build up all readers with the spiritual truths from God's Word.

Some increase in printing costs has been met over the year past, as well as the postage expense with increased rates. Subscriptions to the "Peoples Paper" continue at \$1.00 per annum, and the postage \$1.80 per annum throughout Australia and up to \$2.40 for overseas despatch now applies. This high postage cost is covered by the General Tract Fund which is well

supported by many of our brethren. A number of subscribers cover the postage cost with their subscriptions, and this help is much appreciated.

The publication of the "Peoples Paper" is possible only by a deficiency in cost being covered from the General Tract Fund. This in turn is largely compensated by the "Paper" being provided free to many new friends over various periods, to encourage their interest in the truths of God's Word. Some of our Melbourne friends continue to give willing and valuable assistance with typing of addresses, checking and proof reading for the "Peoples Paper," also with shorthand for articles, etc., all of which is greatly appreciated in the service of the Lord.

Some new booklets were produced throughout the year and were supplied free with the "Peoples Paper" to all readers, and were appreciated generally. Extra supplies were provided for wise distribution by all who desire to witness with the Lord's message of hope and encouragement in these days of world distress.

Continued advertising of suitable booklets in popular magazines has been possible with encouraging responses from all Australian States and areas overseas. Amongst the many who have responded, some new friends show good interest, and we ask God's blessing upon all sincere seekers for His truth. Samples of the "Peoples Paper" are also supplied with the booklets to all who respond. Some new friends attended our recent Memorial Service in Melbourne as a result of the advertising. This witness work will continue as seems good, in the Lord's providence.

The statement of items in the General Tract Fund shows the financial position of the Institute in its work. The voluntary contributions of our brethren and friends throughout Australia and overseas have enabled all expenses to be fully met, in the Lord's providence. Sincere thanks is expressed to all who have so willingly sacrificed earthly good things to assist the work so well, realizing that all has been rendered as to the Lord, for His service.

From year to year there is definite deterioration in world conditions and this has certainly been the pattern in the past twelve months. Bible students are well aware that the passing of "this present evil world" is under way. This would be most tragic did they not know that this is a necessary part of God's Plan to establish His Kingdom of righteousness on a clean foundation. As the Lord's people we must truly be thankful for the assurance that His Kingdom will more than compensate for the reign of sin and death throughout the period of human history. We should also feel honoured that we have been blessed with His truth, and His call to discipleship, and have the privilege of serving the Lord now through His people in hope of the heavenly Kingdom, by His grace. The prayers of our dear brethren are requested that the Lord's guidance and blessing may direct His work in our hearts, and all that is undertaken in His name, to the praise of God.

**General Tract Fund**

To Credit Balance 1/5/83.....	\$2,160.06
" Donations, Legacy, Bank Interest.....	19,655.05
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By Deficiency "Peoples Paper" and Free Tracts.....	\$1,931.00
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" Travel and Sundries.....	232.00
" Banking Tax.....	17.15
" Credit Balance 1/5/84.....	4,540.74
	<u>\$21,815.11</u>

*Memorial Observances*

**Melbourne**

IT was a pleasure and privilege for the Melbourne brethren to observe Christ's Memorial again this year on the anniversary of the sacrifice of our dear Saviour, who — "by the grace of God tasted death for every man" — Heb. 2:9.

Previous Class studies on Isaiah 53, and 1 Cor. 11:23-29; 10:16,17, proved very helpful in refreshing our minds and hearts on the great love of our Heavenly Father in the gift of His dear Son to be the Redeemer of humanity. Also the willingness of our Lord Jesus to lay down His perfect humanity as He delighted to do His Father's will, caused us to feel increased admiration toward our Saviour, in keeping with the Apostle's later declaration " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" — 2 Cor. 5:19.

While Christ's sacrifice will in due time provide a resurrection hope of lasting life for every member of the human family on the restored earth, we realized that the Memorial of His death was instituted especially for our Lord's devoted followers of this Gospel Age — those who are called of God and delight to walk in the steps of their Master. This was particularly stressed in our study of 1 Cor. 10:16,17, where the Apostle Paul was used of God to present the deeper meaning of our Lord's Memorial — that of participation in the death of Christ, if we would participate in His resurrection. On the basis of full faith in the merit of Christ's sacrifice, His followers consecrate their lives to God, to sacrifice in His steps — "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" — Phil. 1:29.

For the Memorial Service we were pleased to have visiting Christians join us, some for the first time, and the Lord blessed the gathering in His name. The suitable hymns and appropriate Scripture readings, with prayers of thankfulness to God were followed by a helpful address, after which we partook of the unleavened bread and wine. These emblems pictured our Lord's body broken for us, and His life poured out in sacrifice. Thus we reverently remembered our dear Lord's great sacrifice for us, as He requested, and manifested our desire to faithfully fulfil our own covenant of sacrifice in His steps, by His grace.

**Adelaide**

Each year we find that it takes several weeks to concentrate our thoughts on things pertaining to the Memorial, to the extent that the importance of the occasion demands. In this preparation the formal details as to time and manner are interesting but insignificant when compared with things like the extent of love both of the Father and our Saviour, the place of Christ's sacrifice in God's plan, the purpose of Christ's death and additionally His earlier suffering and what was achieved on the Cross.

This year chapters 18 and 19 of John's Gospel were chosen and divided into three Memorial studies. Of course, these took us to many related Scriptures. Foremost in the passage is the ultimate in human suffering endured by the perfect Man when He who was without sin was tortured and died as a blasphemer of God. But this was for our sins — Isa. 53:5; 2 Cor. 5:21. The most immediate effect on us should be ever greater constraint in the direction mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:14,15. The revulsion we feel from the conduct of those present must be directed where it belongs — against sin. Surely the lesson our Father wants us to learn from the Cross, as He wanted the ancients to learn from the animal sacrifices, was the high cost of redemption so that we come to hate sin.

When we gathered for the annual remembrance, our thoughts centred on the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. How we rejoice in God's merciful provision of counting us all as condemned in Adam, so that it was possible for the single Great Sacrifice to redeem us all as Adam's progeny. Yet we must deplore the fact that our personal sin added to Christ's burden. This repentance should make us hate sin all the more.

Partaking of the emblem of our Saviour's body, reminded us of the fellow participants under the same Head. Some of these are quite close to us, others not even known to us but we do know that they are all one in Christ Jesus. The cup, the emblem of His life's blood, also was taken in remembrance of Christ. Although we need and are thankful for the righteousness of God imputed by faith in the faithfulness of Christ every day of the year, we can see the wisdom from Above in requiring our special con-

centration on the sacrifice, central to God's plan, once a year.

### Perth

Our brethren prepared themselves for the Memorial by studying from Volume 6, "The New Creation," from page 457 on "The Passover." This was on the Sunday previous. Then on Memorial Day we had a study beforehand on John 17:14-26 recalling our Lord's intercessory prayer just before His betrayal and death.

As a group we observed our Lord's dying wish to remember His death as a yearly Memorial observance, and a heart searching of our own hearts as we examined our own faithfulness in endeavouring to follow in His footsteps. Recalling the last few days leading to our Lord's crucifixion, and the betrayal itself, we were impressed again with the love and sympathy our dear Redeemer had for us all, in suffering so much as "a ransom for all," but especially as the Passover Lamb which has saved the Church of the Firstborns during this nighttime of sin. Praise the Lord!

### Nambour, Queensland

We gladly met together again, as in past years, to remember our dear Saviour's life so willingly given for us and for all mankind. By God's grace all the members of our small group were privileged to be able to attend, as well as some visitors.

Our Service opened with the singing of the lovely words of hymn number 59, after which prayers were offered that we might have the Lord's presence and guidance throughout our meeting. A Study was then taken in John's Gospel, chapter 15. We appreciated the helpful illustration given by our Lord of the vine and the branches; we realized what little strength we have of ourselves; it is only by remaining in the vine and receiving of its strength that we can make any growth at all. How pleased we are that the Master has said He will never leave nor forsake us. Our Lord's new commandment "to love one another, as I have loved you," shows the special bond that should exist between all the Body members, all the branches in the vine.

Next, a very helpful address was given on — "Remembrance." What a wonderful thing memory is; it is one of the good gifts from God. Through memory we are able to re-live the pleasurable experiences of our lives, and also those that were not so pleasurable, such as our misdeeds, short-comings and failures. If we have been rightly exercised by these, remembrance can assist our development and growth, and God can make them stepping stones to better things.

After this, we partook of the emblems of our Lord's broken body and shed blood with grateful and appreciative hearts, with thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for the gift of His only begotten Son, and to Jesus for giving His life in our stead that we might live.

May God grant each and every one of us the strength and will to continue laying down our lives daily in His service for the brethren, being broken with our dear Lord and Master. Our Service closed with the singing of hymn 414.

## *"Looking Unto Jesus"*

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" — Heb.12:2.

THESE words — "Looking unto Jesus" — given by the Apostle Paul in his masterly exhortation to the Hebrews, well illustrates the whole of his own personal Christian life. All Christians well know of the Apostle having persecuted the followers of Jesus in his earlier life, and his apprehension by the risen Lord on the Damascus road. The record of this encounter with the Lord is most extraordinary! There has never been anything like it before or since! As he journeyed to Damascus to apprehend sincere followers of Jesus and bring them bound unto Jerusalem he was apprehended himself, by the power of the risen Saviour.

The record of Paul's encounter with the Lord (his name was then Saul), is found in Acts 9:3-6, and reads — "As he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Here was Paul prostrate on the ground and he finds himself — "looking unto Jesus" — for mercy and help, and for the whole of his earthly life henceforth, he was continually "looking unto Jesus" — not in the terrified manner of that first encounter, but in confidence and trust, in the same spirit which he desired to impart to the Hebrews and us, in our text.

Paul was apprehended by the risen Jesus for special service. We might think that he would be about the last person suitable for discipleship, about the last one the Lord would choose, but the Lord knew otherwise. We note the words of Jesus to Ananias, who was sent by the Lord to instruct Paul what he was to do — "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" — Acts 9:15,16.

Then, as Paul engaged in the commission to serve Jesus, he reviewed the circumstances which led to his apprehension before king Agrippa, as found in Acts 26:9-19, which reads — "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of

Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou. Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Where upon. O king Agrippa, **I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.** Thank God, that Paul was not embittered by that experience: he was thoroughly humiliated, as he continued "looking unto Jesus."

During Paul's ministry he was continually mindful of the Lord's condescension and favour to even consider him for discipleship, as he wrote to Timothy in the words — "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" — 1 Tim.1:12-16.

When we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is little wonder that the Apostle commences his letter with the words — "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." God had certainly spoken unto Paul by His Son, all right — "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." — and throughout this Epistle the Apostle was writing as one fully forgiven respecting his former conduct, and he was continually "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith," as a true servant of the Master and High Priest, as he ministered to the members of the under-priesthood.

We note Paul's encouraging words to the Hebrew Christians in chapter 3, as follows — "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" — Heb.3:1,2,5,6. "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we" — that is, God's sons of both Jewish and Gentile Christians of the Gospel Age, to whom the Apostle continues to present such encouraging exhortations throughout his letter to the Hebrews. For instance, his message in chapter 6:13-20, which reads — "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things (God's word and His oath), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." These lovely lessons which Paul brings out for all Christians give us a thrill indeed, as we are continually "looking unto Jesus."

Then, when we come to the 12th chapter of Hebrews, we find the Apostle looking back over the great "cloud of witnesses" of chapter 11, the individuals who had for the previous nearly 4,000 years exercised abiding faith in the promises of God, and he exhorts all of God's house of sons, which includes all Christians today, to continue "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of **all faith.**" What a helpful thought this is! The word "our" in verse 2 has been supplied by the translators and gives a very limited meaning, for Jesus is not only the author and finisher of the Christian's faith, but of **ALL FAITH.** All faith that has ever been manifested by God's people, long before the call of the Christian high calling has apparently been inspired by Jesus as the Logos, prior to His first advent. Yes, the inspiration for the faith of all the "cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews chapter 11, from Abel down the centuries, came from Jesus at the time of His pre-human existence. What wonderful help we gain as we review the faithfulness of all those Ancient Worthies Paul outlines in that 11th chapter.

An indication of how Jesus could be the author and finisher of the faith of all God's people of the periods

prior to the Gospel Age, is shown by the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness, with Moses as their mediator. In Exodus 17 the account is given of the time when there was a shortage of water for the Israelites who were delivered from Egypt. They were murmuring against Moses, and he appealed to the Lord who told him — "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." — Exod.17:5,6. Comparing 1 Cor.10:1-4 we read — "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." This shows that our Lord in His pre-human existence was the great Overseer of Israel, who were God's earthly people in covenant relationship with Him.

Further, the Apostle seems to imply that our Lord Jesus was not only the author and finisher of the faith of all the obedient of mankind back to the days of Abel, but also, as the Logos, He was the author and finisher of the faith of all the obedient heavenly host, long before the creation of humanity. This is the mighty risen Jesus to whom we are to look, the author and finisher of all faith, including all Christians' faith, the members of God's house of sons.

We note also, in this verse 2 of Hebrews 12, that the Apostle states of our Lord Jesus — "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "For the joy that was set before him" — The joy of delighting to do His Father's will; the joy of redeeming His Bride, to be associated with Him in the great restoration work of the Kingdom; the joy of redeeming "all the families of the earth" from the prisonhouse of death, enabled our Lord to "despise the shame" of the cross, and the words of the prophet will be fulfilled — "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" — Isa.53.11.

The Apostle continues to hold forth the great example of Jesus in his exhortation in verse 3 of the 12th chapter of Hebrews — "For consider him (take note of His faithfulness, as we continue 'looking unto Jesus') that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." To the Corinthians the same Apostle gave a similar encouraging exhortation — "Let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" — 1 Cor.3:21-23.

## *Beginning and End of Bible*

AT the beginning of the Bible, we find a new world — "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth".

At the end of the Bible, we find a new world — "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away"

At the beginning we find Satan entering to deceive and destroy.

At the end we find Satan cast out, "that he should deceive the nations no more."

At the beginning, sin and pain and sorrow, sighing and death find entrance into the world.

At the end there shall be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor sighing and no more death.

At the beginning the earth, for man's transgressions is cursed with thorns and thistles.

At the end, "there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God, and the Lamb shall be in it".

At the beginning we find the Tree of Life in Paradise from which the sinner is shut away from a flaming sword, lest he eat and live forever.

At the end we find the Tree of Life again, "in the midst of the paradise of God", and the blessed and blood-washed ones "have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

At the beginning man was beneath the dominion of death and the grave.

At the end, "the dead small and great stand before God", and the sea gives up its dead, and death and hell are destroyed in the lake of fire.

At the beginning the first Adam lost his dominion and was driven out of the Garden of Eden in shame and sorrow.

At the end we find the Second Adam victorious over sin and death, enthroned as King and Lord of all, reigning in triumph and glory — Selected.

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### REST.

"Upon Thy Word I rest,  
So strong, so sweet, so sure;  
So full of comfort blest,  
So wonderful, so pure—

Thy Word that changeth not, that faileth never!  
My King, I rest upon Thy Word forever!"

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### Melbourne Class New Address

The Melbourne Class now meets at Glenferrie State School, Manningtree Rd., Hawthorn, in building near Wattle Rd. Sunday services are at 11.30 a.m., and 2.30 p.m., to which all interested people are invited for Undenominational study of the Bible.