A New Creation in Christ

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
—II Cor. 5:17

THE NEW CREATION IS THE mystery of God, and this marvelous mystery has been revealed by the Holy Spirit to those who have committed their lives to the doing of God's will. "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."—Col. 1:26,27

Paul said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom

of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Eph. 3:8-11

The mystery which was hidden by God 'from ages and from generations,' was not disclosed to anyone until Jesus Christ arrived upon the human scene to unveil and clarify the eternal purpose of God. He brought "life and immortality [the Divine nature] to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10), and taught us concerning God's design to create a Divine family—a New Creation. Paul reaffirms that "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:32) This was our Heavenly Father's plan from the very foundation of the world.

GOD'S NAME

In his Word, God reveals to us that he always was, and always will be, "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Ps. 90:2) His very name means the 'self-existent, eternal one,' and can be applied only to himself. The Father alone is the self-existent one, the inherently immortal one. Self-existence is one of the qualities possessed by God alone. There is nothing on which he has to depend for his existence throughout eternity. He always existed—he now is, and always will be, without beginning and without end. This is impossible for us to comprehend. We cannot even begin to imagine what it means. Although we understand its necessity, we cannot understand how it is so. We believe it, because we take his word for it, and because it is necessary that the cause of all things must always have existed without a beginning.

The first creation of Almighty God was the Logos. He was the "beginning of the creation of God" (Rev.

3:14), and "the firstborn of every creature." (Col. 1:15) At his origination, he was alone with the Father, even as we read in the first chapter of John. "In a beginning was the Word [Greek—*Logos*, meaning 'the mouthpiece of the Father,' or 'his representative'], and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word. This was in a beginning with the God." (vss. 1,2, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott, interlinear translation*) What a close, beautiful relationship there must have been between the Father and his only begotten Son, the Logos. We have our Lord's own words for this, as prophesied by Solomon concerning Jesus. We read, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."—Prov. 8:22,23,30

The Apostle John informs us that "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3) The Logos, the representative of his Father, had the honor of carrying out God's plan. All things are of the Father and by the Son—"God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:9) Under the direction of the Father, there were created angels, cherubim, seraphim, the stars, our earth, Adam and Eve. "Let us [the Father speaking to his Son, the Logos] make man in our image, after our likeness."—Gen. 1:26

"He that built all things is God" (Heb. 3:4), the Apostle Paul assures us. How gloriously everything was made. All about us, we find overwhelming evidences of the attributes of our Creator. His greatness, his wisdom, his power, and his glory are manifest

in all his works. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." (Ps. 19:1) Jesus speaks of the universe as "my Father's house." (John 14:2) The Lord, speaking to Job, referred to the time when he laid the foundation of the earth. He said, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), after witnessing, step by step, the orderly development of earth as man's home, and finally, man himself created in the Divine image.

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Man was the supreme creation in the material world of the universe. He was made in the image of God. Man is superior to the solar system, or any other creature here on earth. He is the highest form of material life, and possesses conscious purpose—the ability to think, to plan, to decide.

As glorious as all these creations are, they are secondary when compared to the greatest work of all time, the development of the New Creation. The New Creation is God's eternal purpose. This would give us the thought that even before the creation of his Son, the Logos, the New Creation had been planned by God. The Apostle Paul wrote, "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18) The New Creation had been specifically designed by God with his Son in mind, "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head."—Ps. 21:3

When we consider all the wonderful works of his hands, why would God desire to have a New Creation? We think of our Heavenly Father as being

absolutely perfect, all-sufficient in himself, and this is certainly true. Also, we read of our Father that "God is love." (I John 4:8) Love is the expression of his being and he delights in the exercise of love on a Divine scale. The psalmist tells us, "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." (Ps. 145:9) God desires to love, and he desires to be loved.

God said of Adam, while he was yet perfect in the image and likeness of his Creator, "It is not good that the man should be alone." (Gen. 2:18) God saw his need for loving fellowship with someone who was his equal. Adam needed a companion with whom to share his work and his hours of meditation; his plans for the future; someone to walk with in perfect harmony of heart and mind.

The perfect man, Christ Jesus, too, desired the love and companionship of others who possessed his Spirit. All God's intelligent creation are to love the Father. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," is the chief commandment. (Matt. 22:37) But the capacity of men and of angels to receive the fullness of the Father's love is comparatively small. Only those who share the Divine nature can perceive and receive the fullness of the Father's love. God desired a Divine family. He desired a creation, a New Creation, with his own Divine nature, that he might exercise the fullness of his Divine love, his longing for Divine love and for Divine fellowship.

Only a creation in the express image of the Father's person can receive the exceeding riches of his grace. This is what the New Creation will be, a Divine family of beings like God himself, "Far above all

principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. 1:21) We have our Heavenly Father's own words expressing his loving desire toward the development of his special family. "The LORD hath chosen Zion [which is another name for the New Creation]; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. 132:13, 14) How humble this thought should make us feel.

THE LOGOS

The Logos, the beginning of the creation of God, did not originally possess the Divine nature. Nevertheless, according to the eternal purpose of God, it was with this object in view that the Logos was created—not merely that he should be the Logos, but that he might ultimately be the firstborn of God's Divine family. Before the Logos could receive the Divine nature, he must be thoroughly tested and tried. His loyalty, his love for the Father, and his principles, must be proven unmovable through suffering brought upon him as a result of his loyalty to God under evil conditions.

The testing of all his creatures as free moral beings is a principle with our Heavenly Father. In the Old Testament, we read, "The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 13:3) Only the New Creation, who receive the highest reward, will be required to prove their love and loyalty to the Father under the most adverse and evil conditions possible, before they are deemed worthy to receive the crown of life, immortality.

It is obvious why this is so necessary. One of the properties of the Divine nature is that those possessing it cannot die. "On such the second death hath no power." (Rev. 20:6) Since the Father will not permit any disloyal being to mar the beauty of his perfected kingdom, those who ultimately will have part in the New Creation must be thoroughly tested before they are given life which cannot end.

This was true even of the Logos. Although he had been perfect through all the untold ages—he had been with the Father before the world was, perfect in being, in mind, in heart, in spirit; perfectly loyal to the Father—this had been under the most advantageous of conditions. Heaven was in complete harmony with the Father, and all heavenly beings were in tune. No discord of even the slightest kind had occurred. No unkind or unjust words had ever been given utterance; no cruel deeds had ever taken place.

However, when Jesus voluntarily humbled himself to be made flesh and to manifest his loyalty to God as a perfect man in a sinful and condemned world, under distressing and evil conditions, it was an entirely different situation. Here he was able to prove his loyalty under the most adverse conditions. Here he could be put to death by evil, unjust men, in a way which would never have been possible or permitted in heaven among those who loved, respected, and worshiped him. Here he could faithfully lay down his life in sacrifice as a ransom for the forfeited life of Adam, suffering ignominy and shame, persecution and suffering, even to the point of death.

A FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

By his undaunted faithfulness under the most extreme kinds of suffering, he qualified to be our merciful and faithful High Priest, and to be the Head of the New Creation. We read, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our 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) This joy was not only the joy of doing the Father's will; the joy of redeeming mankind; of restoring all who will to perfection in both heaven and earth; but also the joy of attaining God's ultimate purpose that he should be the Head of the New Creation.

At Jordan, when he was baptized of John, we began to behold this glory—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) There he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power. Jesus said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) This further baptism was completed at Calvary, and as a result of his obedience and faithfulness, Jesus became the firstborn of the dead. "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:9,10

Jesus Christ was appointed by the Father to be the Head of the New Creation. If there is a head, surely there are also those who are directed by the

head. If there is a firstborn, there are those to be born afterward. So it also becomes evident that God intended to have other members in this Divine family. In this regard, we are informed that the Christ has, or consists of, many members. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. . . . But now are they many members, yet but one body."—I Cor. 12:12,20

The Revelator tells us that there are 144,000 members of this New Creation. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." (Rev. 14:1) We have a description of the Lord's purpose to take 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, totaling 144,000 in all. (Rev.7:4-8) Since Revelation is a book of symbols, we understand this to mean "Israelites indeed" (John 1:47)—spiritual Israelites. As we read, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:29

GOD'S MASTERPIECE

The New Creation is God's masterpiece, called "the perfection of beauty" (Ps. 50:2), and the "joy of the whole earth." (Ps. 48:2) It is also spoken of in the Scriptures as the elect, a little flock, the church, the bride of Christ. Each member is to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29), and this work is to take place during a specific, fixed, limited, period of time—the present Gospel Age. "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." (Ps. 139:I5) Again, "Ye see

your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (I Cor. 1:26,27) These scriptures indicate that God is secretly working out the call of this New Creation. The world does not recognize these insignificant and meek ones. They are not chiefly the prominent, or wealthy, or powerful, as esteemed by this present world. They are known only to God, and to others who have received God's Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—I Cor. 2:14

We have many scriptures which definitely tell us how we may become New Creatures. The Apostle Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17) But how can we be 'in Christ'? God calls, or invites, those to whom he wishes to extend the privilege of becoming New Creatures. We read that God has "called us with an holy calling." (II Tim. 1:9) Jesus declared, "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14) The Revelator tells us that the New Creation are "called, and chosen, and faithful." (Rev. 17:14) The Apostle Paul addresses his "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1) Again, he says of himself, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) These are but a few of the many scriptures which indicate that the general call for prospective

members of the New Creation has gone out all over the earth during the period of the present Gospel Age, wherever the Gospel has been preached.

God does not call everyone. Jesus explains in the parable of the sower. "On good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." (Luke 8:15) A heart which is open and sincere before God, a heart that is unmovable and inclined toward a love for righteousness, one that is ready to yield itself to the principles of God—to his work, to his will—such the Lord is calling, or choosing. "The LORD looketh on the heart."—I Sam. 16:7

DRAWN BY GOD

In Psalm 65:4, we read, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." When God reveals himself and his plan, by his Holy Spirit, we feel the drawing power of the Divine love. Truly it is written, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3) Again we read, "We love him, because he first loved us." (I John 4:19) We cannot begin to comprehend the fact that the great, all-wise, all-powerful, loving Creator of the universe has chosen us to be members of his New Creation, his eternal purpose.

This privilege will be ours if we answer his call and remain faithful to him throughout our lives. God looked upon our hearts and found something there to cause him to choose us. This thought should make us very humble and gentle toward all. Our loving Father issued an invitation to us phrased in tender and loving words. "Hearken, O daughter, and

consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's [Adam's] house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.''—Ps. 45:10,11

Here is another beautiful expression of this call which the Father extended to us through his beloved Son, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) Again, he beckons us, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'' (Matt. 16:24) He does not hide the difficult conditions from us. He makes it clear that we must share with Christ in his suffering now, that we may also share in his glory as joint-heirs with him.

Our Father's words to us as his loving children are, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." (Prov. 23:26) His precious words ring in our hearts, reminding us of the unmerited favor of the Father toward us since we accepted his invitation with joy. The Father received us with open arms, clothed us with the merit of Jesus Christ, and he has blessed us with the Holy Spirit. He has made us prospective members of the Divine family; he has made us his sons.

From the time that we fully accepted Christ as our Redeemer, and dedicated our lives to the doing of God's will, we are considered by God as New Creatures. Our standing before our Father is as members of the body of Christ. We have no standing of our own, but we are covered with the merit of his

sacrifice. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom deckeeth himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."—Isa. 61:10

THE NEW MIND

Thus adorned in the beautiful garments of our Lord, Christ Jesus, we stand before the Father. Jesus is our advocate, pointing to the Heavenly Father the perfection of our heart's intentions. As the words of our theme text instruct us, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17) This means we have new hopes, new aims, new ambitions. It is this new will, the new mind, that the Father recognizes as the New Creature. The progress and development of this new mind is his chief interest, and it is that new mind which he has promised ultimately to reward.

The New Creature must produce evidence of its love and devotion to the Heavenly Father. This new life must be fed and strengthened by knowledge, and the application of that extraordinary knowledge. This knowledge involves intimate acquaintance with God and what his will is for us; it involves a deepening appreciation of his principles, and a constant striving to apply his principles in all of life's affairs.

Paul describes this process as being "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) The apostle also says, "For which

cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (II Cor. 4:16) Again, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3:10) The New Creature must continue ever to grow under the Father's perfect law of love.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34) Our love should reflect the self-sacrificing love manifested by the Father, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) This commandment goes far beyond the requirements of justice, which was satisfied with the death of Adam. Adam could have remained forever in death and God would have been manifesting perfect justice, but love found a way that Adam and his descendants might live.

The manifestation of such love cost our Heavenly Father his dearest treasure, his beloved Son. This same kind of love was shown by our Lord, Christ Jesus, the Head of the New Creation. He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John 10:17) This same sacrificial love must be evident in the lives of the footstep followers of Jesus if they desire to be part of the New Creation. Their time, possessions, and life, belong to the Lord, and are to be used in serving him and his cause, and the brethren.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ,

and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) The New Creation will be resurrected to the same nature the glorified Jesus now possesses, the Divine nature. How intimate will be the relationship of the New Creation with the Heavenly Father, and with Jesus. "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."—Isa. 62:3