

July - September 2010

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



Will You Remember?

Will You Remember • Transformation • Abigail • Humility

Understanding Revelation

By : Rene D. Corpuz

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And he sent and signified it by His angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the Word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:1-3, NKJV).

So opens the book of Revelation. It is supposed to be a "revelation", but why is this book difficult to understand? To the majority of 20th century Christians, the book is very far from being "revealing". How can one be blessed when he "reads, or hears the words of this prophecy", and even more so, how can one "keep those things which are written in it" when it is hard to understand?

The answer is as simple as it is intriguing. It appears that Revelation was not meant to be understood by all, but only by those to whom it was given. Surprised? Don't be, after all, the revealer is Jesus Himself. Jesus didn't always speak directly. There are many occasions when He didn't intend for some of His listeners to understand what He meant except to those He intended His message to reach. To get a better grasp of the mind of the Lord, we have to review what He told Peter and the other disciples in Matthew 13:11-14.

"He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'HEARING YOU WILL HEAR AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE (NKJV).'"

As surprising as it may seem, Jesus meant every word of that statement. While He desires to save everyone, there are times when He hides His intent on purpose. Thus, while the "book" of Revelation is aimed to "reveal", it was not meant to be understood by everyone; it was only meant for those whom Jesus considered to be "His servants."

But there is good news! We can understand Revelation. There are those among us who have been given the gift to understand the prophecies contained in Revelation. All it takes is for us to know who they are and where they are. Revelation is a prophetic book, written under God's inspiration, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter wrote: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit "(2 Peter 1:20-21).

Paul clarifies that if we are to understand spiritual things, we must have the same spirit:

"But as it is written: "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

[Continued on page 13]

ARMOR OF GOD

July - September 2010 Volume 1, Number 9 Circulation : 10,000

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by the Church of God, International (Philippines). It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of the **Church of God, International**.

Publisher: Rene D. Corpuz
Editor-in-Chief: Eleno S. Mellomida
Editorial Staff: Winston S. Co
 Rene D. Corpuz
 Eleno S. Mellomida
 Melchor P. Arcinas
 Marilou G. Sanchez

Contributing Writers: Ferdie S. Padilla
Layout: Mel Joseph S. Diegor

PHILIPPINES

Church of God International, P.O. Box 2450
 MCPO Makati City, Metro Manila 1264 Philippines
 Phone: (632) 995-0294 • Fax: (632) 995-0577
 Website: <http://www.cgiphils.org>
 E-mail: info@cgiphils.org
 Mobile: (63917) 811-6365

UNITED STATES

Church of God International
 P.O. Box 2525 Tyler, TX 75710
 Phone: (903) 939-2929
 Website: <http://www.cgi.org>
 E-mail: info@cgi.org

AUSTRALIA

Church of God International
 P.O. Box 171 Boonah, QLD 4310
 Phone: 011-61-7-5463-2949
 E-mail: h-thaupt@bigpond.com

CANADA

Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St. East
 P.O. Box 33034 London, Ontario N5Y 5L4
 Phone: (519) 741-0455
 Website: <http://www.cgicanada.org>
 E-mail: johncoish@rogers.com

JAMAICA

Church of God International,
 P.O. Box 776 Kingston 19 Jamaica
 Phone: 1-876-925-2260

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|----------|
| 3 | Will You Remember | 10 | Abigail |
| 8 | Christian Transformation | 14 | Humility |

Will You Remember ?

Will the Resurrected Saints recollect the memories
of their earthly life?

By Winston S. Co

Will the Resurrected Saints recollect the memories of their earthly life?

This is one of Christianity's most frequently asked questions that stands out above the rest. I am certain this question has on occasion crossed your mind, and has made you ponder on what is to come! It may be a simple question yet crucial to many believers. It demands a straightforward answer. The answer is a simple "Yes". The resurrected saints will remember all their earthly deeds and exploits; they will recognize the faces of their loved ones and friends, and be fully aware of their individual identity knowing exactly who they are. We have the assurance from scripture that we will not lose our memory but will definitely know who we are. As a person, we are made up of the sum of the total of our whole life's experiences. Our mind records all these experiences as memories. Everything we have learnt; our feelings, attitude, behavior, habits, predispositions, mental framework, thought processes, education, philosophies, and idiosyncrasies will define our individuality. All these are stored up in our memory bank, and will all be intact in the mindset of our consciousness; being the essence of our whole being. Our individual identity is what makes us unique as a person; everything we have done is encoded in our mind and forms a memoir that makes us who we are. Therefore, our memory is the archive of the life we live, the personal history that defines our very unique existence.

Amnesia

Amnesia, or loss of memory, is the term that describes a condition that gives a person the inability to remember past experiences. It can either be short term, intermediate or chronic (long term). A classic example of this is found in the movies

where a guy gets hit on the head, develops amnesia and forgets who he is. Later on, he gets hit a second time, suddenly gets better and finally remembers everything.

In real life, amnesia is an extremely scary condition. How would you feel if in one instance, you lost your memory, and your identity; when there is no more recollection of your whole life's experiences? You are conscious but you don't know who you are. You exist, but you are clueless of everything. You are alive but you are helplessly lost and confused, just like a newly-born infant. You feel as if you had just appeared into the world and feel completely bewildered, without knowing who you are; what to do, where to go, and unable to recognize every face you see; every one is a total stranger to you.

One of our personnel in the office met with an accident; his motorbike collided with a delivery van along Aurora Boulevard at the corner EDSA, Cubao, Quezon City, with an impact so forceful that he was thrown off the bike. He crushed his head against the pavement, and sustained severe head injuries. He fell into a coma and had to be put on life

support. The doctors feared the worst and felt sure there was no hope. After two long horrifying months, he regained consciousness, but the collision had caused serious brain trauma. He developed amnesia and couldn't recognize the immediate members of his family, friends and associates. He had no idea of who he was; didn't even know his name or his profession. He had completely forgotten his identity.

I am sure everyone would agree that it is a scary thing to lose one's memory and identity. Can you imagine yourself being in such a condition - with no recollection and memory of the past? Not knowing who you are? You are who YOU are today, but tomorrow you are not who you were anymore? In a state of amnesia, a person forgets and loses his precious and unique identity.

A person with amnesia has to re-learn and re-construct his new life. His old self is gone and forgotten. The movie "The 6th Day" with the lead role played by Arnold Schwarzenegger had as its theme the process of cloning. In the movie, crucial to the cloning process is the memory of a person, being the storeroom of the experiences that



makes us who we are. Another movie titled "50 First Dates" shows a character named Lucy, played by Drew Barrymore, suffering from a short-term memory loss, who can't remember each individual day. Henry, played by Adam Sandler, falls in love with Lucy. Since she can never remember him, Henry has to romance Lucy every single day which helps her recall the past with him by producing a video clip each day, and showing it to her each morning to help her remember her life.

At the Resurrection

Can you imagine having amnesia at the resurrection? Think of yourself now as a resurrected saint and yet you do not know who you are! You do not know yourself, your family members, friends, heroes of the Bible, and even Jesus Christ!

When you come to Christ you would approach and ask Him: "Who are you?" When you meet Abraham you will ask, "What did you believe in?" When you see Moses you will ask him, "What did you do?" Upon meeting Paul you will ask, "What did we do to deserve to be here?" When you see the Archangel Michael you will ask, "What is this place?" Don't all these scenarios seem strange? Everyone you meet, from Jesus Christ to the patriarchs to your friends, will be a complete stranger? Even to your own consternation, you don't even know how you got saved, or even have the slightest inkling what made you qualify to be in the Kingdom of God!

Imagine not having any concept of right and wrong, of repentance and baptism, and of grace and salvation. Most importantly, you don't know why you were resurrected in the first place! The concept of resurrection is that we go to sleep (die) as who we are, and we wake up (resurrection) as who we are. We will not be complete strangers to ourselves when the resurrection dawns upon us.



At the resurrection, it is only the body that changes and not the mind. The same mind, the same you, is given a new incorruptible spiritual body.... a glorified body that will inhabit eternity. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:42 "...with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Continuing, Paul emphasizes in verse 49: "... (We) shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven." Further he explains in verses 50-53, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality."

It is very clear in Paul's declaration that what changes at the

resurrection is the body; the body changes from a physical being to a spiritual being. The mind, along with all its experiences and memories as well as the true essence of our identity, will remain intact. Therefore, the resurrected saints will retain their memory and identity.

The memories of how you responded to God's calling, the steps you have taken from conviction to repentance, from repentance to baptism, are indelibly etched in the innermost recesses of your mind. The trials, hardships and the experiences of overcoming and growing in grace and in the knowledge of God, are all amassed in our memory banks. All our good works and performances as a true Christian will not be relegated to the waters of oblivion. Everyone will remember how sinful he was, and how merciful God was to grant him repentance leading to eternal life. Acts 11:18 tells us: "When they heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted repentance to life to the nations." At the resurrection, we will rejoice to see each other, having no confusion at all, for we will know exactly what is happening. Jesus will return in glory with the

host of angels and we shall see and know it. We will see the heroes of old: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, the Apostles, and all the people of faith. All the saints will be pulled towards each other. Imagine what a tremendous feeling it will be when we see our friends, loved ones, the entire Christian brotherhood, and those whom we have had the opportunity to work with in this lifetime. Each one will be joined together in the greatest reunion ever! We shall gather together as we ascend to the heavens to meet Christ and will all beam with unspeakable joy as we see each other again and share each other's company.

Christianity is a way of life – a way of righteousness and godliness. In Hebrews 3:19, we are told to hold on to our belief: "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." We are then told to have endurance unto the end in Matthew 24:13: "But he who endures to the end, the same shall be kept safe." What a privilege we possess! After that, we are told to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, molding and developing our character to reflect the image and likeness of Christ. By then, we will never lose or forget what we have learnt when we have truly qualified for salvation. These are the virtues that make us who we are; they will give us our personal identity for all eternity!

Jesus Sets the Precedent

How do we know this will indeed happen? Jesus Christ Himself became our example. After His resurrection, He had a perfect memory of all His earthly life and teachings, appearing to the same disciples, giving them the same commission and the same promise. Mark writes in Mark 16:14-15: "Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart

because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them; 'Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" Luke then recorded: "Then He said to them, "These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. Thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance

and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold I send the promise of My Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with the power from on high" (Luke 24:44-49).

Yes, Jesus remembered who he was, the names and faces of His friends and disciples, and more importantly, the work of the ministry that was yet to be done. Like Jesus, the resurrected Christians will have



their memory intact, and their personal identity unchanged, except for their physical bodies which will be transformed into a glorious body like that of Christ as we can read in Philippians 3:21: "Who shall change our body of humiliation so that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working of His power, even to subdue all things to Himself."

Relationship

As we contemplate about life, death and the resurrection, one of the most valuable things to consider is our relationships. Relationship is one of the two most important things we can bring with us to the Kingdom; it refers to our relationship with God, with our immediate family members (parent, siblings, spouses, children and relatives) and with each other in the household of God.

No one wants to be in a strange place with strange people. We want to be with the people we love; with everyone who shares the same ideals, principles and sentiments; with the men and women whose lives we touched and those whose lives touched us, who recognize us for what we are, so that we can continue with the same wonderful relationship we have had in this life. The fond experiences and warm memories spent together in this physical life will continue to be shared for all eternity. And this relationship of kindred spirit is one important trait we can bring with us into the Kingdom of God.

Talking about His future rendezvous with the apostles at the resurrection, Jesus, during His last hours on earth said: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me maybe with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me from the foundation of the world" John 17:24. Jesus clearly looks forward to

a continued relationship with His disciples for all eternity. The friendship, affinity and relationship will be there. Jesus apparently values the bond and relationship forged here on earth, in this physical lifetime. And this relationship is expected to last throughout eternity. Again, Jesus assuredly said in John 14:2-3, "In My Father's house are many mansions... I go and prepare a place for you. And I will come again to receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you maybe also."

Relationship is important; hence Jesus reminded us that we should love one another deeply from the heart. This becomes completely evident in the following passages of John 13:31-35: "Then when he had left, Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall immediately glorify Him. Little children, I am with you yet a little while. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, Where I go, you cannot come, so I now say to you. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this all shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love toward one another." And 1 John 4:7-11: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God. The one who does not love has not known God. For God is love. In this the love of God was revealed in us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation concerning our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

We can only bring two things with us to the Kingdom; what are they? Well, they are our character and our relationship. And so we shall bring to the Kingdom the best of both of them and YES, we will remember!

AG

"Father,
I desire
that they also
whom
You gave Me
maybe with
Me where I am,
that they may
behold
My glory which
You have given Me
from the
foundation
of the world"

John 17:24



Christian Transformation

By : Eleno S. Mellonida

Almost everyone knows that Jesus is a Savior. This information is not new even among non-Christian organizations, but whether it is wholeheartedly believed in, or nonchalantly viewed, is a different matter altogether. But for those who sincerely want to avail of His saving power, Jesus has more to offer than what most devout religionists probably expect.

First, He is the author of the body of beliefs true Christians hold on as the truth that leads to salvation (Hebrews 12:2). By His ultimate sacrifice, He wiped out the death penalty hanging over our heads (Romans 5:6-10). He removed the barrier that stood between man and God the Father. He demolished the dividing wall separating Gentiles from Israel, thus allowing everyone access to the promises God made to the descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:11-19). These are few of the things Jesus did for humanity, and most especially to those who have decided to follow Him.

Our Expectations

In addition to that, Jesus vowed to return soon (Rev.22:12, 20), and promised to "transform our vile body like that of His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21), so that this corruptible body that we have right now will be changed into one which cannot die. Death, then, will be rendered powerless over true Christians; they will conquer death

through a resurrection from mortality to immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-56), and eventually as a primary task, assume rulership with Christ for a thousand years on earth (Revelations 2:27; 5:10; 20:5-6).

These are commitments that a God who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18) promised to deliver at His own appointed time. And God expects everyone who truly believes in Him to set his heart and mind permanently on them all the time (Col 3:1-4).

But in reality, all these are still to happen in the future. As of this moment, we only have an idea of how it is to be immortal. It still is a mere concept that has never been tried by us personally; we don't feel how it is like to live without drawing breath to keep us alive; we don't know how not to get hungry even without taking in the elements needed to sustain us; we don't know how fast we can transfer from place to place; we don't feel yet the aura of confidence in possessing tremendous powers over the nations as God promised we will have, once we made it to His kingdom.


All these constitute the basis of the hope that God has set before us in the coming times of which we are not exactly aware when. What we are advised right now is "to watch and be ready" (Matthew 24:42, 44).

The Here and Now

What is it then that we can claim with certainty that God's system

works among His people now; something we have tested, affirmed and confirmed that God's miraculous powers are truly undeniable because we are its firsthand witnesses? Did the power of God's Spirit and the wisdom of His word introduce changes in your life that otherwise would not have been possible apart from it? If God's word is the "lamp unto my feet and light unto my path" as David said, it will tone down our carnal-driven approach in life so that godly virtues will gradually set in. This may not come easy because within this period, the Christian becomes a 'host' to two opposite ways of life.

Paul explained: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another. Now the works of the flesh are evident which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:17-23). But, if we are guided by God's Spirit which He bestowed upon us at baptism, we will find the spiritual strength to resist the pulls of our carnal nature. And the victory, Paul said, can be ours through Christ (Rom.8:1-2) This is positive proof that God's promise to work with us from beginning to end is true (Mat. 28:20). This evidently confirms that He has indeed written His laws in our hearts (Heb.8:10). To enable us



to internalize His will in this life. This is a confirmation that God fulfilled His word now; adding confidence to our hope that God will deliver all His promises in the future.

Transform Now

There are two phases of transformation: The first phase starts upon baptism – upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The second transformation shall only happen when Jesus returns and “transform our vile body like that of His glorious body” (Philippians 2:20-21), when we are already clothed with immortality (1 Cor.15:53-54). This is what we earlier labelled as futuristic. Something we haven’t felt or experienced yet, so meantime we leave it at that and save it in our repository of hope.

Our main focus now is the first stage of transformation because this has everything to do with everyday life. It is a process that involves tuning in our minds to God’s wavelength in order to be in harmony with His mindset. If this is happening now, then we can have the assurance that the next phase will come to fruition since the source of the ongoing transformation is God Himself through the Holy Spirit. This is the first transformation that will enable us to qualify for the next - the one that will finally seal our being a spirit-born son and a full-fledged member of the God Family.

Bear in mind that immortality is endowed only upon those who have at least to a degree, developed and acquired the character traits of God in this life. This can only be done through continuous rejection of Satan’s and our own carnal way, which almost everyone has long been subjected to and tied up with. It becomes an incessant effort, if not an obsession, for Christians to resist the way of life that leads to permanent death. It is a decision embedded in the mind of every true Christian on a day-to-day basis.

Paul entreated: “I beseech you

therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but you be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Therefore, as a matter of obligation, Christians must depart from the world’s traditional approach to life which is highly influenced by Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and start living according to God’s will. This transformation has to happen now. The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalms 95:7 thrice for us to consider the instruction seriously: “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:8, 15; Heb. 4:7). Real Christian transformation will undoubtedly expose us to difficulties, but faithfully upholding God’s way shall, in the end, propel us to victory.

Hence, it is noteworthy to keep asking ourselves if the first phase of transformation has been going on steadily. Paul warned: “Let him that thinks he stand take heed lest he fall. Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?” (1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor.13:5). Yes, we have to take heed, examine, test and know ourselves whether we are still within the path that Christ wants us to walk through. We do it ourselves because we are the only ones who know the progress of our relationship with God. The result will confirm whether God’s way produced the desired effect.

The Mercy that Never Fails

Ocasional lapses to live up to God’s expectation may happen, but if the determination to follow God has become our primary objective, God’s forgiveness is always available through repentance. John wrote: “If we say that we have no sin,

we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (Who has the truth except true Christians?) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1). Christian’s sin, repent, become forgiven, and then continue to carry on with their obligation; the transformation continues.

Now We Know

The degree of transformation closer to our goal of becoming like Christ can be known. This is our primary objective now, not in the future. It is too late if we expect it to happen in the resurrection. The resurrection has more to do with the change in bodily composition; from mortality to immortality, from corruptible to incorruptible.

Making us immortal even with the same carnal-minded attitude we have had before baptism will just add to the population of God’s adversary. Paul confirmed this: “The carnal mind is enmity (adverse, hostile) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be”, (Romans 8:6-8). God, certainly, would not allow anyone to be part of His divine family with a totally adversarial mindset. That’s why He is so merciful and so loving that He gives us all the chances to undergo the transformation process, and to start bearing the fruits of a true Christian now. On this Jesus assured: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John15:5). **AG**

While Saul was still King, David formed a private army with which he protected the southern part of Israel from the enemies that were coming from the southern borders.

In 1 Samuel 25:1-3, we read: "Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon. A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was surly and mean in his dealings."

This simple narration introduces the two characters David will meet. Here is one of the Bible's great mismatched couples. Since it was the custom during those days to arrange marriages, Abigail had probably been wed to Nabal for his wealth and not for love. While she was a faithful and wise woman, he was not only named "fool" (the meaning of "Nabal"), his actions which we will learn later, showed he was one. In 1 Samuel 25:4-13, the story continues: "While David was in the desert, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, 'Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all

that is yours! 'Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my young men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.' " When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited. Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?" David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. David said to his men, "Put on your swords!" So they put on their swords, and David put on his. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies." David approached Nabal in a most gentle and proper manner. He also instructed his men to be polite and respectful to Nabal and only stressed the good things that David wished of him. Unfortunately, Nabal had a completely different reaction towards David. He was rude and very ill-mannered toward David's men and turned away David's request to give provisions for his men. Actually, David's request was not unreasonable; it was the fact

that Nabal was a very irrational man, who didn't follow the customs of the day. At that time, it was customary to be generous with those who had offered him and his household protection from bandits and marauding raiders.

Nabal, in his foolishness, intentionally offended David by referring to him as a mere servant who had rebelled against his master. This of course angered David and he was looking for a way to punish Nabal for his refusal to give provisions for David's men. So the stage was now set for an impending disaster! The story develops further in 1 Samuel 25:14-17: "One of the servants told Nabal's wife Abigail: "David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him." Recognizing the danger, one of the wealthy landowner's servants knew who to approach. He reported the situation to Nabal's intelligent wife. Immediately, she knew what to do. Abigail understood the foolishness of turning down a polite request for support from the displaced David. She knew that she alone must find a way to make peace with David. The plot thickens as we continue

reading in 1 Samuel 25:18-19: "Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. On the way to David's camp she met the angry "warrior king" and his men. They were heading right in her direction and their minds were set on retribution.

We now continue the story in 1 Samuel 25:20-22: "As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

If you were Abigail, what would you have said to David upon seeing him approaching with 400 armed men ready to punish her household? Abigail's persuasive speech is one of the best recorded in the Bible. It is very short and concise but was delivered with great power. She didn't force the conversation but went to David with great humility, addressing him as 'My Lord.' She took all of her husband's guilt upon herself; but at the same time made it clear that she was not part of her husband's refusal to feed David's men. Abigail distanced herself from her husband by declaring that he was a fool. This began to really create a bond between her and David. Finally, she revealed herself to him as God's emissary. Here is the speech she delivered to David: "When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off the donkey and bowed down before David with her

face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: "My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent. "Now since the LORD has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal. And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant's offense, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD's battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant" (1 Samuel 25:23-31).

As God's servant, David must not commit any wrong doing. He should not have plotted to kill Nabal or take vengeance, nor involve Nabal's innocent household; for spilling innocent blood would be a stumbling block for him. Therefore, God inspired Abigail to save David from this error. David fully understood Abigail's message: (1 Samuel 25:32-35) "David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you

today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak." Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request." After all these had taken place, Abigail went home to her husband as we read in 1 Samuel 25:36-39: "When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing until daybreak. Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. About ten

Abigail distanced herself from her husband by declaring that he was a fool. This began to really create a bond between her and David. Finally, she revealed herself to him as God's emissary.

days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died. When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head."

Important Lessons from this biblical story.

Lesson 1: We should always be quick to listen and slow to become angry. From James 1:19-20 we read, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for a man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." David was in no mood to listen when he set out for Nabal's home yet he stopped to hear what Abigail had to say. If he had ignored her, he would have been guilty of taking vengeance into his own hands.

It is good for every one of us to know that no matter how right we feel we are, we must always be careful to stop and listen to others. The extra time and effort can save us pain and trouble in the long run. Remember, in the Bible it is written: 'Be angry and sin not.' As we can see in Ephesians 4:26-27: "In your anger do not sin" Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Lesson 2: A time for Everything. When Abigail went home, Nabal was drunk. So she told him nothing until daybreak. She knew that her husband, in his drunkenness, may not have understood her and may have reacted foolishly. When discussing sensitive matters with other people, timing is everything. Thus King Solomon, in his wisdom, wrote these words in Ecclesiastes 3:1: "To everything there is a season,

and a time for every purpose under the heavens."There is a perfect time for everything! ..."a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

Lesson 3: Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:17-21 tells us: " Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. "

Heart of a Queen

Going back to the story... what happened then to Abigail? Let's continue in 1 Samuel 25:40, 42: David's servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife." Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five maids, went with David's messengers and became his wife."

It was at this point that Abigail moved from a fool's wife to a king's bride. She had the heart of a queen, and she was destined to become one. Although she was married to a total unbeliever, she remained faithful to the Lord. We, like her, should never allow an unsatisfactory relationship to 'prevent us from trusting God.'

Like Abigail, we may find that when we pass through trials and troubles with faith in our hearts, God gives us a better life than we would ever have expected. **AG**

Do not repay
anyone evil
for evil.
Be careful to
do what is
right in the
eyes of
everybody.
If it is possible,
as far as it
depends on you,
live at peace
with everyone.

[Continued from page 2]

Perhaps the question we need to ask is, how can we have that Spirit so that we can understand? Peter gave the answer in Acts 2:38: "Repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the holy spirit..." A change of heart, which is what repentance is, is important. Baptism, the death of the old self, and the birth of a new being, is also as important. Then God grants us the Holy Spirit, which leads to understanding (John 14:16-17, 26).

John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, is one of those who has been given that gift of the Holy Spirit and even more. Because he has also been given a very important message and vision which he wrote for our benefit. In the pages of Revelation lies a message about what the future holds in store for us, and through John, we too, can understand.

God is not just a spectator of the events in the world that He created; He is actively overseeing its course. In Hebrews 2:10, we are told that the reason we are brought into this world is because God planned to "bring many sons unto glory..." The apostle Paul tells us that God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will..." (Ephesians 1:4-5, NKJV). God gave us the free will and the time to write and direct our own personal destinies, but He remains in complete control of the overall destiny of mankind. The time has come for God to take the helm. There is no power that can stop God from fulfilling His original plan for mankind, not even Satan. Contrary to popular belief, Satan is but a tool in God's plan. Hillel, a powerful angel, before he became what we know today as Satan, was created to serve God's creation, to serve in accomplishing and fulfilling man's destiny. Even when Satan rebelled against God and His plans, he still ended up serving God's purpose by becoming an obstacle that every man has to overcome. Thus helping humanity to develop a stronger and more righteous character.

But why God is telling us the future?

This is a very important and fairly reasonable question. Knowing what will happen in the future affords us many advantages. But if we knew God the Father well enough, we would have realized that His objective is far more than just giving us a glimpse of His plans. Whenever God delivers a message

through His prophets, angels or even through His Son, it has to do with "saving" us from impending doom, misery, and heartaches which are an end-result of "individual sins" or of "collective" or national sins that God is no longer ignoring or allowing to continue. Most importantly, God does have a compassionate heart for the innocent and for those who are under His protection. He will always give them a way of escape. This is one of the recurring themes throughout the Old and New Testaments. God is telling us, or "revealing" His plans so that we can do something about it. While the events in Revelation are already laid out and are not likely to be altered by any action on our part, our "reaction" to the warning bears weight on whether God will spare and protect us, or allow us to suffer the dreadful events and catastrophes we are being forewarned about. In Revelation, John encouraged us with these words: "Blessed is he who

reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it" (Revelation 1:3).

The "Book of Revelation" is about that time when God puts a stop to man's running his own course, a course which brings pain and suffering, and ultimately, leads to death. Revelation, is also about the ushering of God's fulfilling His ultimate plan for humanity. "The whole of creation has been waiting for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption, in earnest expectation and eager wait for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:21, 19). God will not let the rest of the creation wait any longer.

Revelation is not and should not remain a mysterious book. The time has come for it to be understood; its warning delivered and its lessons kept. May God hasten the completion of His great and magnificent plan for mankind. **AG**

The Church of God International regularly conducts Bible studies at various locations in the country. You are invited to attend! Please come to the location nearest you.
Admission is free

BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE

Every 1st Saturday :

| | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| Manila | EDSA Shangri La Hotel, Mandaluyong |
| Iloilo | Grand Dame Hotel, Iloilo City |
| Cebu | The Apple Tree Suites, Cebu City |

Every 3rd Saturday :

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Malolos | Malolos Resort Club Royale Malolos City |
| Negros Occidental | Balay Kauswagan Training Center, Sagay City |

For Details please contact Church of God International: (632) 995-0294

Humility

By Ferdie S. Padilla

Humility is a character trait that is not so fashionable these days, although it is an important element that helps us become equipped in the most serious business of putting out sin from our lives; an integral virtue that will eventually lead to salvation. This attitudinal requisite is deemed of great importance since it starts with the object of salvation - you and me. Sadly, nowadays, humility seems to be a commodity in scarcity; . It is rarely found and very few seem to possess it.

A Story of Pride and Humility

Pride is having too high an opinion of oneself. There is an interesting account in Daniel 4 that summarizes the personal experience of King Nebuchadnezzar, who, during his time, was the most powerful king ruling over a vast empire, the Babylonian Empire. One night, the king had a dream and was greatly bothered. He called Daniel to interpret the dream for him (Daniel 4:4-18). Daniel was perplexed because the dream applied to the king himself. The dream was all about the king being stripped of his royal power and splendor, and was to live like an animal and lose his sanity (Daniel 4:24-25).

Why? The reason is pride. Let's pick up the story in Daniel 4:28 - 33 (NIV), "All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Consider his

boastful words! He had not acknowledged that all these were given to him by God in fulfillment of prophecy. Study the entire chapter of Daniel 2 for context and note verse 37 where it was clearly stated God had given him "dominion and power and might and glory". The greatness he was experiencing at that time came from God but did not acknowledge it. "The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird." All because of his pride, he suffered tremendously and became like a mad man. But eventually, Nebuchadnezzar painstakingly learned the lesson and acknowledged God's supremacy over all. We read in Daniel 4:37 (NIV), "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." The king knew what it was like to be humbled; he learned humility the hard way.

Importance of Humility

Why is humility so important in our Christian lives? Because it opens up a great storehouse of spiritual opportunities for us. Listed below are 4 things that humility can bring us:

1. Humility opens up the door to salvation. When a sinner acknowledges his sin, he is in effect swallowing up his pride. A proud man would never acknowledge that he was or is wrong. Why would he? He, in his own eyes, is perfect. Pride blinds one to the fact that he has been wrong and he needs to turn away from a life of sin. More often than not, sinners are a proud lot. Humility is a first step towards repentance. When a man has a repentant heart or contrite attitude, he adopts a humble position. God will know whether a man really humbles himself before God. When He sees the sincerity of a man's humility towards God, that man will be forgiven. Pride or arrogance does not sit well with God. In fact, He hates it. Why? Because it stands in the way of the forgiveness of an individual. In Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) we read, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

What happens when a man does not repent? His unrepentant attitude will lead him to destruction; it will lead him to death. We must remember therefore that pride is a sin we should purge from among ourselves. Humility will help us do just that. We can then be assured that the door to salvation will be opened up to us as attested in Psalms 149:4 (NIV), "For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation."

2. Humility is an avenue whereby we also forgive others. Remember what Christ taught us when we pray? He said that we ask for forgiveness from God the Father as we also forgive others who have wronged us as Luke 11:4 (NIV) instructs, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." Jesus Christ is teaching us to forgive others; He wants us to show mercy to others. He is also saying indirectly, we should practice humility before our Father when praying to Him. It is never easy to forgive others because of pride. A proud person might reason out, "Why should I forgive this person? He has done me so great a wrong and caused me so much pain. I cannot forgive him." If we are too proud to forgive others who have wronged us, then God will not forgive us either. The logic is simple; if God can forgive us our sins, who are we not to forgive others when they have wronged us? Is this not teaching us humility? Are we greater than God that we cannot forgive others? Of course not! The lesson is clear! In forgiving others, we are also practicing humility. Every day is a fine opportunity to practice this lesson. Remember, God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others (Matthew 6:15).

3. Humility is a virtue God wants us to develop in this lifetime. True Christians, the future inheritors of the entire universe, must learn humility for God delights in those who are humble as explicitly written in Isaiah 66:2 (NIV), "Has not my hand made all these things [referring to the entire creation], and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word". God Himself is humble. Humility is mirrored in Christ who is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Paul exhorted the Philippians to adopt this very attitude of humility. In Philippians 2:5 - 8 (NIV), Paul says, "Your

attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!" Could you imagine an all powerful God, emptying Himself of that divinity, offering Himself as a sacrifice for all mankind? What does that tell us, except that this Being was very humble enough to become like one of us just to save us? Humility is one of the attributes displayed here. To reiterate, humility opens up the door for salvation. The first time we mentioned that, we were referring to ourselves — we need to be humble before God; this way, we come full circle. The Author of our salvation was Himself humble and made salvation completely available to all who humble themselves before Him.

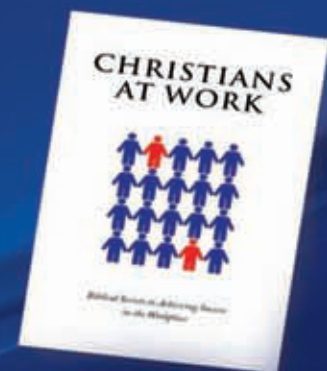
4. Humility makes it possible for us to learn the truth. A humble person knows that he does not know everything there is to know. A proud man would not accept the fact that there are still a lot of things he doesn't know. A humble person who is grounded in the truth would always check out the things he learns. If it is in line with Scriptures, he would gladly receive that truth; he would not be too proud to acknowledge that he didn't know some things or that he still needs to learn. There is an interesting saying found in Proverbs 11:2 (NIV), "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." Do we think we know everything? We are speaking not only of spiritual matters but also of matters pertaining to our daily lives. We should remember this proverb if we think we know everything; if we happen to have a know-it-all attitude, as though we cannot be wrong. Pride hinders learning. A time will come when a proud person realizes that what he knows is wrong and as a result, he suffers disgrace. The humble man? As we all know, he grows wiser as Proverbs

11:2 says. Humility makes it easier for us to learn the truths of God because we empty ourselves of any biases and any preconceived ideas. As mentioned earlier in Isaiah 66:2, God esteems the humble who has a contrite attitude and who trembles at God's Word, the Bible.

There is a solid connection between being humble and learning the truth that leads to wisdom. Now then, learning does not just pertain to mere theories but more so in putting to practice what one learns. Otherwise, we would be shortchanging ourselves if we neglect to apply the nuggets of wisdom in our daily lives. Perhaps, we should all consider this fact; we know a lot of things that are hard to put to practice daily, every hour, every minute, and every second of our lives; this must suffice to humble us. As we stand to gain much by being humble, we must let go of our pride. **AG**

CHRISTIANS AT WORK

Biblical Secrets to Achieving Success in the Workplace



Download your FREE copy at :
<http://www.christiansatwork.net>

***Text for your one-year
FREE subscription!***



Just send your name
and complete address to:

(0917) 811-6365

You may also send
a gift copy to your friend.



Join us in our weekly worship services

**The Church of God International
Meeting Places**

Manila

6th Floor, Peaksun Bldg., Princeton St.
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays, 10 a.m.

Naga

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

Alabang

Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Malolos

Malolos Resort Club Royale
Malolos City, Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Mindanao

Alzon's Palace
Maranding, Lala
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays 10 a.m.