

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

04-70

Dear Reader

For 69 issues we have looked at many things concerning the Lord's Assembly from its beginning till it is His bride in the eternity to come. We have looked at prophetic matters that lead to the Church in heaven and then as the Lord's wife, reigning with Him for 1000 years in administrative responsibility. But we haven't said enough about, or meditated sufficiently on the precious Lord Jesus Himself, the Head of His Assembly. In this 70th issue of the *Assembly Messenger* we want to meditate on our Lord and His love-relationship with God the Father and with us. An article sent us by brother Jake Redekop of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, uses five portions from the Gospel of John (shown in bold) to help us along in this meditation. We trust you will find it uplifting to your mind and spirit. Brother Jake

The Father's Thoughts about the Son

“John answered He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God ... *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life*” (Jn.3:27, 30-36).

We'll start with the words of John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The more the Lord Jesus increases in our thoughts, the more we see Him and correspondingly the less we see ourselves. The Word of God is not only a light for the path, but it is the revelation of God. God has revealed Himself in His own Son and also has revealed His thoughts concerning His own Son. The Lord once asked the disciples, “Who do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Mt.16:13), and men had many opinions. But when the Lord asked His disciples, “Who do *you* say that I am?” (v.15), Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v.16). This was not revealed to him by flesh and blood, nor by intellect, nor by the reasonings of the human mind, but by God.

“No one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt.11:27) and yet the Father was pleased to reveal Him to us. This is the Father's delight, the joy of His own heart. He delights to share this with those He has called to Himself. He delights to reveal His thoughts of His own Son that we too may enter into His joy. What a blessed occupation for the heart this is! So, as we meet together in remembrance of the Lord, the Holy Spirit delights to set before us the Person and the work

of the Lord Jesus, even though we can only feebly rise to the Father's thoughts of His own Son.

“The Father loves the Son.” How beautiful, how touching is this expression. It reminds us of Joseph (Gen.37-50) who, because he was the son of his father's love, was hated by his brethren. He occupied the central place in his father's thoughts, and his father was delighted to display the evidence of his pleasure. It was well known by Joseph's brothers that here was the one on whom their father's love rested. Therefore, they were full of envy and rejected him. It is repeatedly said in Genesis, “And they hated him because of it,” because of Joseph's dreams and his testifying to his father about their evil deeds. It is a feeble type of what we have before us here. The Lord in John's Gospel says, “They hated Me without a cause” (15:25).

They also hated Him because He exposed their evil deeds. In the midst of this scene of darkness, where sin prevails all around, in the world that His hands had made and whose inhabitants didn't recognize Him when He came, He brought glory to God. “The Father loves the Son,” and He would unfold that fact to us. Further, the Father has given all things into His hand.

Much earlier, God gave Adam, the first man, dominion over His creation. What did he do with it? Failure came in, man fell from his sinless state, and through his disobedience, ruin and sin have entered in, and “the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Rom.8:22). But into this groaning scene of creation came One on whom the Father's love rests. The Father looked down on this One and declared to us His councils which were conceived in His heart in eternity past. Between the Father and the Son there is unhindered fellowship. Love flows freely in this relationship which the Son ever had with the Father, and coming in flesh, nothing impaired the free flowing of that love. The One who had come forth could say when here that He was “in the bosom of the Father” (Jn.1:18), enjoying that intimacy and knowing all that was in the Father's heart. That One came here to make known what was in the Father's bosom, and in Him we see the perfect revelation of all that was in the Father's heart, and so He could say these wondrous words, “the Father loves the Son.”

In Abraham we have an Old Testament type enabling us to enter in a feeble way into this relationship. Abraham and his son Isaac in Genesis 22 went along together to where God had directed Abraham. In their conversation we hear the son speaking to the father, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering” and the answer of the

father, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. So the two of them went together." What a theme, what a beautiful picture, what perfect fellowship and what intimacy we see there between the father and the son!

"Jesus answered ... My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. Therefore the Jews sought ... to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus ... said to them ... I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father ... has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (Jn.5:17-23).

Here again we find the expression, "The Father loves the Son," but it adds, "and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel." Taking this verse in its setting, the Lord had healed a man who had had an infirmity for 38 years, and who, because of his infirmity, had been unable to avail himself of the provision God in grace had made, for when an angel came once a year to stir the water, the first one who stepped in the water was healed of whatever infirmity he had. What a picture of man's weakness and inability! The man was unable to avail himself of that provision due to the weakness of the flesh. The provision only brought out in greater clarity the need of man, for whereas a provision was made, it still required an ability on the part of man. It shows us the degradation and the helplessness of the sinner. He is not able to avail himself of this.

Then the Lord came into this scene and healed him in grace. The divine *provision* is a picture of the law of Moses, but "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom.8:3).

This healing took place on a Sabbath day, and the Jews sought to kill the Lord because He had done these things on the Sabbath day. He answered, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." There could be no Sabbath rest for the Lord in this scene tainted by sin, and so, when sin entered, God acted to bring fallen man back to Himself. This is what we see here. But then they sought to kill Him the more because He spoke of God as His Father, and they well understood that which people today deny, that by that expression He took the position of equality with the Father. The Lord said in verse 19, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for whatever He

does, the Son also does in like manner," and this is used today to seek to prove that the Son was not equal with the Father, but inferior. But a careful reading shows the very opposite. Who but One who was equal with God the Father could say "Whatever [the Father] does, the Son also does in like manner"? None other than He who is equal with Him could speak these words.

From this flows the thought, "The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel." This is said in connection with resurrection from the dead, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will." Here again we see the Son in relation to the Father, the object of the Father's love, but One also who gives life to whoever He will. For you or me to enjoy fellowship with Him, we must likewise be made partakers of this new divine life. Man, being a sinner lost and undone, dead in trespasses and sins, needs this new life, and so the Son gives life to whom He will. He exercises this in His Father's grace on those whom He calls and will have an eternal relationship with Himself and with the Father, that there may be this exchange of thought and fellowship in communion with Him.

The Father wants us to share His joy in His dear Son to whom He could unfold His thoughts and tell us, as He does, that to Him He has given all things. He unfolds to us that it has been according to His eternal purpose, "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph.1:9-11). This is God's thought. He will have His Son be Head over all. He will have His Son in that place of preeminence, "that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col.1:18). These are the thoughts of the Father concerning His Son. He will exalt Him in relation to this earth (Ps.2).

Peter quoted this in Acts 4:25-26 when he looked back and was able by the Spirit to apply Psalm 2 and its partial fulfillment when the Lord Jesus was on earth and how the heathen raged and the world rose up in opposition to Him and nailed Him to the cross. They would not have Him, but "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision Yet have I set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You" (vv.4,6-7). God has spoken, and He has said "This is My Son in whom I have found My delight." All His affection rests on Him and so He says, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession" (v.8). That prayer has not yet been answered, but the day will come when the Son will ask and it shall be given. He will receive it in the Father's time.

He was tested. "The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Mt.4:8-9). The devil would usurp that place. He would seek all to honor and worship him, but the perfect dependent obedient Man, "the second Man the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor.15:47) would not deviate from the path of obedience. The Lord could claim the earth as His inheritance, for He had a right to it, but He would not take it until the Father gave it to Him. As it was not yet the Father's time He would not give honor to the usurper, but in obedience to the Father He went His way. Think of our blessed Lord and what glory He gave to the Father! Every step of the way He waited His time until the Father, who, in the perfections of His heart, has given all things to Him and will make good that promise. But in the meantime He is sitting on the Father's throne, "From that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (Heb.10:13). In this day, however, He will not take His power and reign alone, but He will have those with Him who have been associated with Him in that glory. I believe the Lord is leading on to this, "He gives life to whom He will."

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received from My Father" (10:14-18)

This could only be said of the Lord Jesus. We know the Father loves us, but we cannot say, "Therefore He loves us because of what we were or did." Rather He loves us because it is His nature, the outflow of what is in His heart towards those in whom there is nothing to love. There was nothing in us that drew forth His love, but when the Lord Jesus was here in His path of perfect obedience, He could say, "Therefore My Father loves Me."

There was in His walk and obedience that which drew forth the Father's love on Him. It was because, "I lay down My life that I might take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received from My Father." He had power to lay down His life and He had power to take it, yet He did so in obedience to His Father's will. "Then I said, Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God" (Heb.10:7). The "volume of the book" does not refer to the Old Testament; it was already written in Psalm 40:7. Rather, it looks back into the past eternity when it was written in the scroll of God's council. He came to fulfill that

plan. He came here to do His Father's will, cost what it may, and it led Him on to the cross. Because of man's disobedience and sin, He would be subjected to God's sentence on it, in obedience to the Father's will. And He said, "Therefore My Father loves Me."

The Lord speaks of that love in relation to His sheep. First He was bringing His sheep out of the fold of Israel, but He had other sheep which were not of that fold, and there had to be "one flock and one Shepherd," but to accomplish that, the cross was needed. He had to go into death, and "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (Jn.12:24), and He would have fruit. He would not be alone in that glory. He would have sharers of that glory with Him. But who could He choose? There were those among sinners whom He would call, and the only possible way for those to be brought in was the cross. In obedience to the Father's will He went into death to accomplish this.

"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.... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love" (15:5-9).

We have had "the Father loves the Son" twice, and then "My Father loves Me," but can we measure that love? Can we enter into that? Now He says, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you."

Can we understand how it is possible that the Son should love us with that same love that He was loved by the Father? We can understand that the Father would love the Son, who in all the perfection of His ways brought such glory to the Father and who was ever obedient, but we are the children of wrath and of disobedience, and yet He loves us with the same love as He loves the Son. This is the measure! It could be no less and it could be no more if the Father's heart is to be fully made known and expressed. Because of this He has brought us into the Son's place that we might be able to enjoy His love as the Lord Jesus is loved. He has removed every restraint so this love can flow freely to you and me whom He calls His own. O blessed revelation of the Father's heart in the Person of the Son! See also John 16:27.

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with

Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (17:20-24).

Here the Lord Jesus looks beyond the cross to the completed work. If the Father loves us now, it will not find its rest until He has us with Himself in His very presence with all the marks and stains of sin removed, everything that is part of this first creation left behind, and we are in new creation glory. O, the wondrous thoughts of the Lord’s heart when He says, “Father I desire.” In all His pathway He said, “Not My will, but Yours be done” (Lk.22:42), but now He says, for the only time, “Father, I desire.” This was not in opposition to the Father’s will, but rather it was also the desire of the Father’s heart: they have one will, and the Lord expressed this so touchingly, “I desire that they also, whom You gave Me, may be with Me where I am.” He speaks of you and me whom the Father has given to Him as the fruit of the travail of His soul.

The Father has been so glorified and pleased with the work that Christ has accomplished that He has given those whom He has redeemed to Him. The Son receives them from the Father. Nothing less than them being with Him where He is will do for His heart, that they may behold His glory which the Father has given Him, for the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world. Here we are allowed to look back into the past eternity. The veil is drawn aside and we see there was free-flowing affection in that relationship that existed between the Father and the Son, and we are now brought into this intimate relationship that we might be in the enjoyment of those affections that flow out freely there and, in occupying the Son’s place, to enjoy that love.

In the last verse of the chapter He said, “I have declared to them Your name, and I will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them and I in them” (v.26). The prayer of the apostle was, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph.3:16-19). The faith here spoken lays hold of what God is for us in Christ, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith.

How can we know the love of God? It was expressed perfectly in the Lord Jesus. And if He dwells in our hearts by faith, then we can know it, but it is by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the practical everyday enjoyment of what Christ is to us now. It is by Christ dwelling in our hearts that we are able to enter consciously into the enjoyment of that love which passes knowledge.

Who knows the height, breadth, depth and height of this love? We cannot understand the extent of His glory. We cannot see His vastness. But Christ is the center of that glory, and if Christ dwells in our hearts we are filled with all

the fullness of God, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col.2:9). There is nothing beyond the revelation that God has given in His dear Son, and the more we by faith apprehend this the more we will enjoy that wondrous love displayed in Him. We are now the objects of this love, and soon to be with Him in the glory where, without restraint, without hindrance, we will be as Ephesians 1 declares, before Him fully and without blame in love. What a day, beloved, for us to look on to!

Such are the Father’s thoughts of His dear Son, and if we want to understand our position and our relationship and the blessings into which God has brought us in His wondrous grace, the more we understand what Christ is to God the better we will understand these things.

John 17 is the great high priestly prayer, and when we look back to Exodus 28 we see the great high priest in the garments of glory which are described there – the ephod, the breastplate and the stones on the breastplate bearing the names of the twelve tribes, and the stones on his shoulder piece likewise. As the high priest entered in before God in all his glory and beauty, this speaks to us of Christ in the presence of God in all His glory and preciousness to Him. The Father’s love cannot rest on Him apart from it also resting on those who are in Christ as seen in the precious stones. Thus He is before God for us, and we in Him.

O that we might enjoy this and realize from this wondrous relationship into which we have been brought the great responsibilities that are ours. Considering the love He has for you and me, what return do we give Him? Is there a response from our hearts to Him? This is how by the Spirit He would appeal to the affections of our hearts, to draw us out in willing obedience to Him to follow Him now in the short time we are left here. That is the one great purpose in John 17, in which chapter we have mentioned “the world” eighteen times, for example, “the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Why is *the world* mentioned so often? That our affections might be carried out of this world to where He is now, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

We are to “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col.3:2) – on Christ where He is at the right hand of God. If Christ was not there in glory, *that* Scripture could never be written. If He was here it would not say, “Set your mind on things above.” No, it would say, “Set your mind here where Christ is.” But God wants our minds where Christ really is. That is where *His* mind rests, and He wants to draw us up to that wondrous Person at the right hand of God. May God grant it for His name’s sake.

Jake Redekop

Our next two issues of the *Assembly Messenger* will, the Lord willing, take up the controversial subject of election. Pray for wisdom, love and accuracy in every expression.