

The Awesome Power of God



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Text: Loren M. Chamberlain

THE AWESOME POWER OF GOD

The most destructive nuclear blast man has been able to produce pales to insignificance when compared to the awesome power of the Creator God!

In this modern world of science and technology, the concept of power and energy is very important. What many may find surprising is that the technical meanings of these terms are closely related to and aligned with meanings given in the Scriptures.

This is a time of gadget technology. If you want to be successful, invent a new gadget or add a new button or wrinkle to an existing one. Home appliances have really removed a great deal of drudgery from our daily life. And that is good, but do we really need that battery-operated back-scratcher?

Thousands of years ago the prophet Daniel was told to seal up the book until the time of the end. It was revealed to him that the end time would be a time when many people would rush here and there, and knowledge would be increased. Whether or not he was speaking of scientific discovery and knowledge, we cannot say specifically. One thing we do know: scientific knowledge is increasing. The advances in modern science can be directly attributed to the knowledge and understanding of power and energy.

R. B. Lindsay, professor of physics, director of the ultrasonics laboratory, and dean of the graduate school at Brown University, commented on the importance of energy: "Of all unifying concepts in the whole field of physical science, that of energy has proven to be the most significant and useful. Not only has it played a major role in the development of science, but, by common consent, it is the physical concept which has had and still has the widest influence on human

life in all its aspects” (“Concept of Energy in Mechanics,” *Scientific Monthly*, Oct. 1957).

Who would have imagined one hundred years ago the tremendous volume of work and communication that would be made available by the Internet? Think of the physical power and energy the worldwide web has made available to the masses, and this is only the beginning. What if it were possible for a self-aware machine to be constructed? “Creating a self-aware machine would give us a companion, something to talk to about major issues.” So says Stephen M. Younger, who is a nuclear physicist and was, until recently, the senior associate director for national security at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Los Alamos is now building a mammoth machine, code-named Q, which will occupy a half-acre of floor space and compute 30 trillion operations per second. “In one second, Q will be capable of performing more operations than were performed by unaided human beings in all of history,” says Younger (*Computer World*, p. 52). Of course, considering the condition of the world today, we can’t help but ask the question, Will humanity advance and be made morally better by all of this knowledge, power, and energy, or will man be lead to use it unwisely? Surely most would at least agree with Mr. Younger; man certainly does need a companion to talk with. The problem for man is in finding the right companion!

Where did all this power and energy come from? In the beginning it was the Creator God who created time, mass, and space (Genesis 1:1). When God said, “Let there be light,” it was He who energized the entire universe, which makes Him the real Source of all power and energy. Time, mass, space, and light-energy are all God’s servants, and they do His bidding. According to God’s Word, all the Creator had to do was speak. “The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. He gave the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. Let everyone in the world fear the Lord, and let everyone stand in awe of Him. For when He spoke, the world began! It appeared at His command” (Psalm 33:6–9, New Living Translation).

There are two main points about power and energy we really need to understand. The first one, to put it in today’s vernacular, is, “What you see is what you get, and there ain’t no more!” This fact is known as the first law of thermodynamics. This first scientific law of ther-

modynamics agrees with the Word of God. The universe is not now being created but is being *conserved*, with neither matter nor energy being created or destroyed. “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which he had made”(Genesis 2:2). Therefore, we are assured, God’s work of creation was perfect and complete, so God ceased doing the work of creation.

The second law of thermodynamics tells us that paint peels and metal rusts and roofs leak. In other words, the whole universe is dying; entropy has set in. If allowed to continue, the whole universe will suffer heat death. Why is this happening? Because Adam and Eve listened to Satan instead of God and in doing so sinned. God therefore cursed the ground. “Ground” is the same word for “earth.” The very elements of matter—the “dust”—out of which all things had been made were included in the curse so that the “whole creation was brought under bondage” to a universal principle of corruption or decay. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22; Genesis 3:17).

The aging of the earth and heaven, believe it or not, is a relatively recent discovery of science. But listen to what God’s Word revealed thousands of years ago. “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end” (Psalm 102:25–27). Notice that there is an exception to this decay. The God who imposed the law on His creation is not restricted by it or subject to it, and neither is His Word! Jesus said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my *words* shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

The concept of power and energy as defined by engineers is that it is an art and science by which the properties of matter and sources of power in nature are made useful to man in structures, machines, and manufactured products. This study of the properties of matter and the sources of power has made possible an increase of at least a hundredfold in per capita power in our country in the past one hundred years. In other words, each individual can, on average, accomplish one hundred times as much as one could accomplish one hundred years ago, by means of machines and methods developed by aid of

the energy concept. This, no doubt, has contributed to modern man's high living standard. Where man has failed is in not acknowledging the great High God of all power and energy.

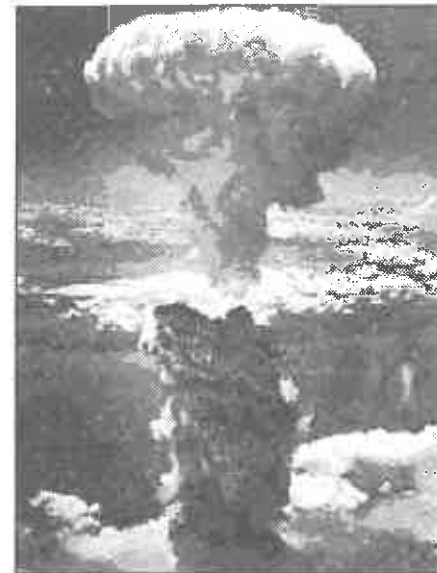
It was the Creator God who gave man the "Dominion Mandate." Man was to be fruitful, fill the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). This commission God gave to man is still in effect today and gives man the great responsibility of developing the sciences, technologies, humanities, commerce, and education, for the benefit of all mankind.

To define "energy," we might say it is the capacity for accomplishing work. Actually, the most basic form of energy is light. It is the radiant energy from the sun that accomplishes and maintains the earth's physical and biological processes. It is believed by scientists that the radiant energy from the sun is made possible by thermonuclear reactions involving the conversion of matter into energy.

It was the brilliant scientist Einstein who looked at God's creation and gave us the equation, the conversion factor involving the square of the velocity of light. E standing for energy, m being mass, and c^2 being the speed of light squared. That is, $E=mc^2$. This equation allowed man to harness the atomic power and energy of the universe. However, as awesome as the invention of the atom bomb was, and as immensely powerful as the unleashed atom can become, this tremendous force had already been dwarfed by another power, one more dynamic than the power contained within the atom!

It was on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, a power far more reaching was given to men, a power far greater than the atom. "And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). This *power* is destined to swallow up the very constituent parts of the atom itself and turn its destruction into *life!* What is this great power? It is the power of the Holy Spirit of God Almighty and of His Son Jesus Christ! It is the power of God Himself, a power He has offered, believe it or not, as a free gift to those who will repent and turn to God, accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. "But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

While all of humanity quakes living under the constant threat of the atom bomb and its even more sinister sister, the hydrogen bomb, few



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The massive energy released in an atomic explosion pales in comparison to the awesome power of God.

know or understand the real power, the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is also something about "light" we must consider, and that is its "velocity," one hundred eighty-six thousand miles per second. This speed seems to be constant under all possible conditions and is the greatest velocity that has been found in the universe. All other lesser motions must be referenced to the speed of light.

It is quite astounding to realize that the first words of the Creator God that were revealed to mankind were, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Light is the greatest aspect of the physical creation and it points us

directly to Jesus Christ. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus Christ is, "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

Power Words in the Scriptures

In the New Testament, there are several Greek words that are used for our English word *power*. Each Greek word translated into English gives a slightly different degree of meaning, yet they are legitimately included under our concept of power. It would also seem significant that each word is used with reference to the Word of God.

One of the Greek words is *exousia*, meaning "authority." Jesus uses this word in Matthew 28:18: "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth." The same word is used again in Luke 4:32, which states, "His word was with power."

The Greek word *dunamis* is another frequently used word translated "power." From *dunamis* we derive our English word "dynamic,"

which means “strength or might.” This word is used in Hebrews 1:3: “the word of His power,” and also in Matthew 22:29, where the “scriptures” and “the power of God” are used essentially as equal terms.

Energes is another useful Greek word from which we get our English word *energy*. This word is used in Hebrews 4:12, where the Word of God is said to be “quick, and *powerful*.” The significance in this verse is that the Word of God is full of energy, and it is *energizing*, producing work resulting from the energy contained within.

The Hebrew word *koach* is the most frequently translated word for “power.” We see it used very expressively in Psalm 29:4, the great “Psalm of the Voice of the Lord” (and, therefore, the Psalm of the Word of God). Verse 4 states, “The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.”

John, in his Gospel, uses the Greek word *semeion*, sign, very effectively when he records the seven miracles of Jesus. He does this to bring out the significance of each one as well as emphasize the power and energy they also demonstrate.

It is quite evident, therefore, that both Old and New Testaments are filled with the power of God’s Word, and that the inspired writers chose words that convey the different connotations of power—but the significance of these miracles as signs is also very important.

The Signs of Jesus

Again, we must be reminded that the Creator God can set aside His laws of conservation and decay when He decides to do so. He also performs acts that in our eyes are miraculous. Let’s stop and think about this. The reason certain acts or events are called “miracles” is because they do not conform to natural law. That’s why they are called miracles in the first place! Many people do not believe in miracles because miracles contradict natural law; therefore they reject the Bible, God, and Jesus Christ. The works of Jesus Christ require creative power and are thus beyond the reach of natural processes. Only God can create. Is Jesus Christ God? You bet He is. Only God can forgive sin and raise the dead, and Jesus has done both.

We are all familiar with the great signs Jesus performed in the Gospel of John. These signs reveal a great deal about the real power of God. Out of all the miracles wrought by our Lord, John records

only seven, and John calls all these “signs,” not “wonders” or “mighty works.”

Perhaps one of the reasons John chose the Greek word *semeion* (sign) for these works of Jesus was to emphasize the significance of them, yet, at the same time being careful not to deny the power and wonder they demonstrated. While John said he could have written a great deal more about the words and deeds of Christ, he didn’t (John 21:25). Still, under God’s leading, he wrote twenty-one chapters about the special signs that Christ performed before His resurrection, accomplished through God’s power.

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:30–31).

The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine

This beginning of signs Jesus performed at a wedding in a little obscure village in Cana of Galilee was not just a simple act. There were six water pots of stone, apparently the water in them had already been used for drinking water and for the purifying and cleansing of the Jews, that is, the ceremonial and religious cleansing of the hands and utensils, and they were now empty. The total amount of water they held was in the neighborhood of 135 gallons. Now being empty would indicate a lot of thirst quenching, purifying, and cleansing. This should give us some idea of the number of people at this wedding. Let’s ponder for a moment the actual act of turning water into wine. Grape vines need to be watched over, watered, nourished, and pruned to produce the grapes necessary for good wine. The grapes are then crushed, and the juice is then stored in wine skins. Fermentation has to take place. Since I am not a vintner, I have probably skipped a number of very important steps, but you get the idea. When Jesus began this miracle all He had to work with was the molecular structure of water. Jesus converted water instantaneously into a far more complex molecular structure, that of superior wine. The governor of the feast attested to the superior taste of the wine Jesus produced from only water. The Creator who produces wine from sunshine, air, soil, and water can, as well, omit some of the ingredients or speed up the process. What we must remember is that John’s Gospel presents evi-

dence of a supernatural miracle attested to by an accredited witness who was unaware of the source of the wine (John 2:1–11). The significance of this sign illustrates the depth of the nation of Israel's destitution. They had no wine, joy, provision, blessing, or glory apart from the Messiah, and this beginning of signs clearly pointed out their need.

Jesus grasped this opportunity and used the water pots to show that He had the power to purify, cleanse, satisfy, create, and produce whatever was necessary for men. Jesus' concern was for more than just the social need of the host; it was to reveal His creative power, His power to create man anew (John 3:1–15). It was through His *hour* (the crucifixion) that He would meet all of man's needs. Therefore, the net result of the power of Jesus Christ was that the bridegroom's need was met, the glory of Christ was revealed, His power to create anew was demonstrated, and the faith of the disciples was strengthened because of this evidence He had given, which proved He was the Son of God. Of course, this sign or miracle was not intended to be proof of Messiahship. Of this He gave only one (Matthew 12:40).

The Second Sign: Healing of the Official's Son

The second sign was performed when Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee (John 4:46–54). A government official who was probably an officer in Herod's service had walked some twenty miles to see Jesus and addressed Him as "Lord," putting himself under Jesus even though legally he had authority over Jesus. He had a son who was in a condition of weakness, feebleness, frailness, and sickness (John 4:46–54). This father thought it was necessary for Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son. But Jesus told the Nobleman he would not believe or have faith unless he saw signs and wonders. The Nobleman continued to plead with Jesus expressing the anguish and tender affection he had for his young child imploring Jesus to come and save his child from death. In the end, Jesus told him to go, which was a command and a promise that his son would live. "Believed" was an act of his volition. "Went" was an action of his person. From some ten miles away, Jesus instantaneously reversed the decaying process of this young child who He had never seen, restoring to full vigor and activity the cellular structure that had been destroyed by a mortal illness. All this was accomplished by no more than Jesus' spoken word.

It is interesting to see how this official's "little" faith grew in strength. First, he believed enough to ask Jesus to help his son. Then he believed the assuring word of Jesus. Finally, he and his whole house believed. Faith is a gift that grows in power and strength as we apply it to our lives.

To believe in Jesus is to honor Him. Honoring Jesus is a clear evidence of faith. Even though Jesus rebuked the man, the man did not give up. He cried out, "Lord [*Kurie*] come down ere my child die." Jesus helped the man because he was persistent. It is our persistence that shows we really recognize and acknowledge our need and really believe that Jesus can and will help. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7–8).

Israel was destitute of national life, being ruled over by the Roman Empire. This sign is connected with death, for the young son was at the point of death, just as Israel was at the point of death when Jesus was proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

The Third Sign: Healing at the Pool

The third sign is found in John 5:3–9. This sign involves a man who has been sick for thirty-eight years and spent much time laying among the blind, lame, and paralyzed who waited at the pool of Bethesda for the waters to be stirred up by an angel. This man was alone and helpless. He must have crawled to his place beside the pool. Apparently he did not even have a friend, and he could not even afford to hire a man to put him in the pool when the waters were stirred up. Jesus said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" This question was designed to get the man's attention so that Jesus could cure him. "Be made whole" literally means to become instantly whole. There was no progressive cure contained in the words. Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." With these words of our Lord, thirty-eight years of sickness and suffering were destroyed, and this man's legs became strong. Jesus' command involved the creation of new bone, muscle, and numerous other parts that were obviously atrophied and dead.

It is significant that it was Jesus who sought this man out for healing just as it was Jesus who came first unto His own. Jesus sees and knows every man's condition. He reaches out to us in compassion,

offering His help.

Another significant point is that the man did not know he was healed until he obeyed the command of the Lord to “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5:8). If the man had failed to believe he was healed, he would have remained lying there. In this act of rising he demonstrated his belief and faith in Jesus. Jesus never did pronounce a “word of healing.”

There are many today as well as then, both in Israel and throughout the world, who are blind, lame, and spiritually withered. No one has to continue through life being enslaved to sin. We can experience the healing power of Jesus Christ, the power that will change us, and make us into new creatures in Christ. If we believe Jesus, we will rise up in obedience as freed people from the sin and desperate needs of this corruptible world. Christ forgives all our sins. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:3).

The Fourth Sign: Feeding the Multitude

In the fourth sign we are going to see a whole multitude fed (John 6:5–15). This miracle made necessary the suspension of the mass conservation law. Remember, God rested from all His work that He had created and made (Genesis 2:3). Therefore, He is no longer creating matter, energy, structure, or life. He ceased from creating and started His work of sustaining His creation. Jesus Christ once created all things. “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16). Now He is sustaining all things, “And He is before all things, and by Him all things *consist*,” or are sustained (Colossians 1:17). The book of Hebrews also shows that Jesus is “upholding all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3). Also it is in Him that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

When Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fishes into bread and meat more than sufficient to feed 5,000 men, He would have had to suspend this “mass conservation law,” because He multiplied the loaves and fishes, apparently making something out of nothing. This miracle was so great in the eyes of the people that they immediately recognized Him as “that prophet that should come into the world” (John 6:15; Deuteronomy 18:15–18).

When we read about the signs and miracles Jesus performed we are

truly amazed, but seldom do we consider what physical laws must be set aside or suspended so a supernatural event can take place.

It was the optimistic faith of Andrew that found the resources and brought them to Jesus. Andrew went among the people and found a young lad who had five barley loaves and two small fishes. No matter how small the resources or how poor the quality, it was all laid before the Lord. Jesus took what He had and gave thanks to God for it. Though it was quite meager, He did not look at the meagerness of it, questioning or griping with despair and hopelessness, wondering how He could feed these hungry thousands who had followed Him. The multitude had followed him for days and had just made a nine-mile journey to keep from losing Him. They were not only hungry and apparently out of food, but they were in mountainous country, an area where no food for purchasing was available. Jesus simply looked up and gave thanks to God. Jesus gave what He had. He could only distribute what was in His hands and trust God.

As followers of Christ, we can only give what we have, but God does expect us to do that, and then leave the rest to God to meet the needs of the whole world. Jesus more than met the needs of the people, for there were twelve baskets full left over for the twelve servants who had so obediently and trustingly helped Jesus. God always provides abundantly for His servants.

What was the significance of this sign? “I Am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

The Fifth Sign: Walking on Water

In sign number five, gravity was superseded (John 6:16–21). For Jesus to walk on water, it was necessary for Him to set aside or suspend the law of gravity. Wouldn’t it be fun to be able to walk on water at will? Apparently Jesus did just that. Of course, what He must have done also was to create some form of anti-gravitational force to make it possible to stand on the water without sinking. The law of the conservation of energy tells us that energy (the capacity to accomplish work, moving forces through distances) can neither be created nor annihilated. Only the Creator God can supersede or extend this law. So we must ask, Just what was this force that was so powerful it made it possible for Jesus to walk on water and overcome the force of grav-

ity?

John, in his story, tells of Jesus leaving and going into a mountain alone. And when it was evening the disciples went down to the sea. They entered the ship and went over the sea toward Capernaum. A windstorm came up, and after they had rowed three or four miles they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and they were afraid; but Jesus identified Himself, and then they took Him on board the boat, and right away they were at the shore.

For a more comprehensive understanding of this particular sign it will help if we read what Matthew recorded. Matthew tells us that after Jesus had fed the multitude, He sent them away and went up the mountainside alone to pray. We are never told what He prayed about, but when evening came He was still alone. The boat by this time was some miles from shore being tossed about by the wind and the waves, and the disciples were now further from their destination than they were when they started, even though they were straining at the oars. The “great,” violent storm caught the disciples by surprise, and to add to their fear it was now dark. Darkness intensified the threat, danger, and emotional strain they were experiencing. When people are in spiritual darkness they cannot see either, and it becomes a great threat not knowing what lies ahead (trouble, sorrow, difficulty, loss, death).

At daybreak Jesus went to them walking on the sea, and the disciples were afraid and cried out in fear, thinking Him to be a spirit. It would seem from this story that the weakness of the disciples was that they thought so little of Jesus, and they lacked the understanding of just who Jesus was. The thought never seemed to cross their mind that Jesus could intervene and rescue them.

It is in a time of crisis when we cry out in fear, and that is just what the disciples did. Immediately Jesus answered them saying, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid” (Matthew 14:27). Peter was filled with courage as soon as he heard the reassuring voice of Jesus, and said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he *walked on the water*, to go to Jesus” (Matthew 14:28–29). Only minutes before, Peter had feared for his life and now he wanted to walk on water! The “if” in Peter’s request, “If it be thou,” does not show doubt, but rather has the idea of “since.” Peter was not being impulsive, rash, or hasty. Neither was he expressing any confidence in him-

self. His words, however, did express faith in Jesus.

Really the disciples should not have been surprised when they saw Jesus walking on the boisterous sea. They already knew He had great power, certainly greater than the storms, so why not greater than the force of gravity? Peter began walking on the water, but then he made a mistake. He took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the physical elements around him, such as the boisterous wind and sea, and he began to sink. What the disciples learned from this event is that if they maintained a close relationship with Jesus, continued to have faith in Him, trusted Him, and were obedient to His command, miracles could happen in their lives, and fear could be removed. After all, Peter really did walk on water, short as that walk may have been.

Miracles can happen in our lives, too. We do not have to walk in spiritual darkness nor be fearful of anything that life throws our way. “Fear thou not; For I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10). “And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isaiah 46:4).

The Sixth Sign: Healing a Man Born Blind

In the sixth sign, Jesus “saw a man who was blind from his birth” and healed him (John 9:1–7). It should be pointed out that this man was not responsible for his blindness; he simply couldn’t help it. God was responsible. He allowed it (verses 3–7). How amazing to this man it must have been to be given the ability to see, having his whole life changed so drastically and suddenly, when his whole life experience was nothing but darkness and blindness from birth. Looking at this sign from a purely physical point of view, Jesus would have had to create perfectly functioning eyes in this man’s previously useless eye sockets. Only Jesus, the Lord God, could work such a work of creation and give this man physical sight.

We might see in the spittle and clay a symbolism pointing back to creation when man was formed from the dust of the earth, the thought being that our Lord will here “exercise the same creative power as that which made man.” This blind man had not asked for healing, as others had (Mark 10:46–52), and thus had not yet exhibited any kind

of trust in Jesus. After all, he could not see. So Jesus, by placing spittle-clay upon the man's eyes, made him conscious of the fact that it was Jesus, whom he could not see but could feel, who was the Healer. Therefore, at the command of Jesus, he immediately obeyed and went and washed in the pool of Siloam, "and came seeing."

There is a lesson here for the whole world. Man's eyes can be opened, and he can be delivered from the darkness of sin and shame, death and corruption, by coming to Jesus Christ and by obeying Him.

The only way man can be delivered from darkness is to come to Jesus. Jesus came to be the Light of the world. For man to be delivered he must come to Christ, for He is the only one that can give sight to man and his world. Man is seldom aware of his great need, because he walks in darkness. He cannot see into the future or into the next world. He cannot see God, who He is and what He is like. Mankind does not know what his real purpose in life is. Therefore, man's need is to see "the Light of the world."

The Seventh Sign: Raising the Dead

Jesus, in the seventh sign (John 11:1-16), demonstrated beyond question both His omniscience and omnipotence. When Jesus received the message from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was sick, He was beyond Jordan about a day's journey from Bethany. Though Jesus loved each one of them, He remained two more days in the same place. Jesus did not remain in the same place just for the purpose of allowing Lazarus to die, because by the time He received the message Lazarus was already dead. When Jesus arrived at the tomb, Lazarus had been dead four days. Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and the death of Lazarus would give Him the perfect opportunity to reveal Himself as such.

This particular sign reveals many purposes that are vital for every believer to know. The first purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to glorify God and to proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God. Just as Jesus and God were shown to be the "Light of the world," now by raising Lazarus from the dead they were glorified as the "Life of the world."

In verse 5, Jesus mentions by name each member of this little family. He loved this family and He loved each one individually. Lazarus'

death gave Jesus the opportunity to demonstrate His great love for families and for each individual. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

In Lazarus' sickness we see demonstrated the necessity for waiting upon God in great crises. Throughout this whole experience, Mary and Martha were learning to wait upon God. When we face severe illness or death, there is no answer but to wait upon God. Jesus knows the best time and moment to act for us in trial. We cannot dictate to God when to act or how to act.

When Martha went out to meet Jesus she expressed her feeling that if Jesus had been there earlier Lazarus would not have died. Jesus said unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11:23). Now Martha understood there would be a resurrection in the future, but her fundamental faith was experiencing disappointment. The promise of a future resurrection and reunion was not comforting to her now. Her loved one was gone, and this was going to change the life of her little household drastically. Sadly, Martha seemed to have a limited faith in Jesus. Perhaps we are all a little limited, just like Martha.

While it is essential for all to have a fundamental faith, a fundamental faith falls short; it is not all there is to faith and to our life in Christ. It is not a *living* faith, not a faith that lives in the presence of Christ. What all believers need is just what Martha needed: a living faith, a faith that is alive and vibrant, dynamic and moving, conscious and acting, communicating and fellowshiping. What is needed is the knowledge that Jesus, the very One who stands before us, is "the Resurrection and the Life."

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and called him out of the



An early depiction of the resurrection of Lazarus

tomb it must have been the most incredible and shocking thing the people of that day had ever seen. But, something else exciting also occurred. In verse 39, Jesus says, "Take ye away the stone." In verse 44, Jesus says, "Loose him, and let him go." How marvelous this is. Jesus included others in His great signs and miracles. Jesus wants us to be involved with Him in restoring the sight of the blind, raising the dead, and releasing those who are captured by sin and death, letting them go free. Jesus ask those who were present to help roll away the stone and remove the grave clothes. These acts point out that we can be helpers with Christ without interfering with the all-sufficiency of Christ.

God's Program

We must pay close attention to what Jesus said. His great claim was, "I Am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). It is vital that we understand what Jesus did not say. Jesus did not say that He gives the resurrection and life to man, but He *is* the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus, of course, does give the resurrection and life to believers, but His point is not this fact. His point is far more important. Jesus declared that He is the very being and essence, the very *power and energy of life!*

Therefore, Jesus can give and sustain life as He wills. He can resurrect and restore as He wills. This is a phenomenal claim. What does this mean to us? It means that all life, including man, exists only by the *will and power of Jesus*. Therefore, if the dead are to be raised to life, only Jesus can give them life. If a living person does not wish to die, only Jesus can keep him from dying.

It is a fundamental truth, that all forms of *energy* basically exhibit different kinds and rates of motion. In the very beginning the primal form of energy, light, was associated with the ultimate motion, that of the velocity of light, over 186,000 miles per second. This should be looked upon as significant, that the origin of God's Word is associated with motion. "And the Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

The preceding signs that we have reviewed are specific, powerful, energy-filled miracles recorded for our edification and proving that Christ gave His life for us. We are then shown that Jesus Christ is our healer, and that He alone has the authority to forgive sins.

Christ wants us to realize that we must go to God with all our problems, and that we of ourselves do not have the power to solve life's difficulties. There is no reason for us to be discouraged. He is with us and will be throughout all our physical lives and for all eternity if we accept Him as our God and Savior now. Problems are not to be feared! The God Family has all power to find the solution to any problem through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The end of the matter is this: God has given us *great power* now in this life. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

We must look beyond our own concerns to see the whole program of God. One day the eyes of the whole world will be opened.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

When God brings to pass the completion of His program for the whole world, it is not the end, but the beginning—the resurrection to life eternal with all the power and energy of the whole universe at the disposal of all God's children. Why? Because God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ love us! That's why God the Father and Jesus Christ our Savior created all of mankind in the first place!

Experiencing the Power of God

A shepherd's staff is a very simple and ordinary thing. Usually it was three to six feet long with a curved hook at the top. The shepherd used it for walking and guiding his sheep, defending them against wild animals, smaller critters like snakes, and perhaps for performing many other menial tasks.

“Then the LORD told him, Take hold of its tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it became a shepherd’s staff again. “Perform this sign, and they will believe you,” God told him. “Then they will realize that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, really has appeared to you” (Exodus 4:4–5).

While Moses looked upon it as a very ordinary tool, God was going to use the staff as a sign to teach him an important lesson. God seems to take great delight in using very simple things to perform His great purposes. In all things, it was never the skill of Moses that got things done, but the great power of God. We may assume God can only use special skills, but the evidence of the Bible is that God has performed His extraordinary miracles using ordinary people contributing the ordinary things in their lives to the service of God.

About the Church of God International

This literature is published by the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. Incorporated in 1978, the CGI has ministers and congregations scattered throughout the United States and Canada. We also have churches in Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia.

The CGI's mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world (Matthew 28:19). We are blessed with four basic tools to accomplish this:

- 1. Personal and local church evangelism.*
- 2. Television and radio broadcasting.*
- 3. Booklets, brochures, and study tapes.*
- 4. The Internet.*

How You Can Help

All our materials and services are offered to the public free of charge. Many naturally ask us how we can afford to send out thousands of booklets and study tapes each month. The answer is simple.

On a regular basis, prayerful friends and members of the Church of God International voluntarily support us with tithes and offerings to further the advancement of the gospel to the world. No financial obligation is ever demanded, but if you are moved to support this work of God, tithes and donations are gratefully accepted at the addresses listed. (Contributions in the United States and Canada are tax deductible.) Giving to and through us is an effective way for people like you to help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For Further Information

If you would like to visit a CGI congregation, or if you would simply like to speak with a CGI minister or representative with any questions you may have, feel free to write or call us. We will be delighted to serve you in any way possible.

United States:

*Church of God
International
P.O. Box 2525
Tyler, TX 75710
(903) 939-2929*

Jamaica:

*Church of God
International
P.O. Box 776
Kingston 19
Jamaica*

Canada:

*Church of God,
International
Canadian Office
1299 Oxford St. East
P.O. Box 33034
London, Ontario N5Y 5L4*

Philippines:

*Church of God
International
Makati Central
P.O. Box 2450
1264 Makati
Metro Manila, Philippines*

Australia:

*Church of God
International
P.O. Box 171
Boonah, Qlnd 4310*

Web site:

*www.cgi.org
E-mail:
info@cgi.org*

