

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 1 – IN THE BEGINNING

If I were to ask you where we should start this 8-week study on Living the Christian Life Victoriously, I might expect you to respond by saying, “Start at the Beginning.” Sounds logical, right?

Knowing that this is a study of Christian living, one might then expect us to turn to the owner’s manual to reveal “The Beginning.” And so, let’s take our Bibles and look for information about “The Beginning.”

Would anyone wish to venture a guess as to where we might want to look? What about at the beginning of the Bible? Let’s turn to Genesis 1:1, where we will find the first four words of the Bible. These words are extremely significant because in their simplicity they tell us a great deal about whose we are.

What are those first four words? “In the beginning, God...” Make no mistake; scripture DOES NOT say that God was the beginning. The fact is that God was, that God existed BEFORE the beginning and that God was present in the beginning. God’s economy in establishing His presence to us is very clear. He doesn’t go into defining who He is or how He came into being; He simply states that “In the beginning, I am.”

And so we know that God existed before the beginning. But let’s not stop with this fact alone, because there is more for us to understand regarding who was “in the beginning.”

In the first Chapter of Genesis, is there any mention of any other person being present in the beginning? If we look at Verse 2, what do we read? “...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

And so we now have God and His Spirit in the Beginning, present and active before there was a beginning.

Was there anyone else in the beginning? Where in the scriptures can we find the answer to this question? If you will turn to the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, verse 1 and following, you will find some of the most beautifully poetic language in the Bible that is not only beautiful in language but is also beautiful in thought. It reads as follows:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Now to some, this may be heard as double talk or confused thinking; it is neither. Let’s take a few moments to look at it closely and understand thoroughly what it says.

It starts, “In the beginning...” again harkening back to Genesis, we know that what is about to be revealed was in existence BEFORE the beginning for it was there in the beginning. But what is it that was in the beginning? “The Word.” There are two things that we need to point out here. The first is that “Word” is capitalized indicating that it is being used as a name, not merely a personal pronoun. So who is this Word?

There are numerous verses in scripture that refer to God’s word, which are the words recorded in scripture and we understand the use of “word” to mean this because the “W” in word is not capitalized. But here it is capitalized, indicating that more is expected than a mere pronoun.

Are we going to hang our hat on a mere grammatical convention to understand to what the “Word” is referring?...absolutely not! In Revelation 19, there are references that read, “His name is called The Word of God.” And “He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Is there any doubt in your mind that The Word is Jesus? We could cite other references but in the interest of expediency, I believe that we can all agree that John’s reference here to the “Word,” is to Jesus.

And so now we know that God the Father, Jesus his son, and God’s spirit were all “In the beginning.”

Thus, when we read in Genesis, “In the beginning God,” we can understand that to mean that God in His three persons, was present in the beginning.

OK, so why am I making such a to-do over a fact that most of us have understood and accepted? My mother was fond of reminding my brother, sister, and me of the expression, “Familiarity breeds contempt,” which by the way is not Biblical but has its origins in one of Aesop’s fables. But my point is that this can be true too of our knowledge of scripture. It is as if you might say, “OK, I know that the Word refers to Jesus, and that Jesus is one person of our Trinitarian God, so what?”

We need sometimes to stop and reflect on what we know, and take it to heart because in order for us to live victoriously, we need to have a firm foundation on which to build our knowledge and exercise our faith.

The fact that God, in His three personages, was in the beginning; that He existed before the beginning, is critical for us to appreciate. The implication is resounding for what we learn from this is that God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God alone is eternal. All else is temporal and exists only at His pleasure.

Frederick William Faber, the brilliant theologian and hymnist who wrote “Faith of our Fathers” as well “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy,” and many other hymns, also wrote, “The Eternity of God,” in which he penned these eloquent phrases:

Thou hadst no youth, great God!
An Unbeginning End Thou art;

Thy glory in itself abode,
And still abides in its own tranquil heart:
No age can heap its outward years on Thee:
Dear God ! Thou art Thyself Thine own eternity !

Who else came claim to be “Thine Own Eternity?”

Our Dear God, and He alone!

Let us not become contemptuous of what we know of our God because of our familiarity but let us build on our knowledge so that we grow in faith.

The eternality of God is an important and basic fundamental that we need to embrace. For it is God’s eternality that gives understanding to His telling Moses, in Exodus 3:14, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘**I AM** has sent me to you.’”

The name God chose for Moses to tell the people of Israel who Moses was speaking for was “**I AM.**” Not, “I was,” nor “I will be,” but “**I AM.**” This is an ever present being that God is portraying for Moses and the people of Israel. And not only does this tell us that God is ever present, but it also tells us that God is never changing. “**I AM WHO I AM.**”

While we as frail mortals may change, our Eternal Father is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Our problem is that we more often than not, fail to cultivate our relationship with Him. We are plagued by our societal upbringing that demands that we achieve instant gratification.

Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to building our relationship with God. If we are to appreciate the ever present “**I AM**” in our lives, we need to begin to set aside time daily:

- to be with Him;
- to read His Word,
- to offer prayers of adoration , praising Him
- to offer prayers of expiation seeking forgiveness of our sins,
- to offer prayers of love in which we declare our love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- to offer prayers of petition in which we ask for God’s blessings for our friends, neighbors, enemies and ourselves.
- to offer prayers of thanksgiving,

It is unfortunate that most of us have grown up in a culture that expects instant gratification. It is this very inborn cultural expectation that gives rise to the “name it and claim it” evangelists that insist that you can have all of God’s gifts today, instantaneously with no effort on your part. It is as if in an instant you will know God and be totally transformed in mind, body, and spirit. While I won’t put God in a box and say that He can’t work that way, however, that is not what we see historically to be the path that is required.

Throughout the ages, the saints of God have devoted themselves to daily reading of the word, meditation on the word, prayer, fasting, worship, and communion with the Body of Christ.

There are no shortcuts. There is no road to God that will produce instant gratification. If we are to live victoriously we must prepare ourselves for a long journey, not for a quick jaunt across town.

If we are to live victoriously we need to begin by building our relationship with God that will grow and stretch from today into eternity.

If we are to live victoriously we need to set aside provisions for our daily progress; reading the word, being in prayer, meditating on His scriptures, fasting, worshiping, and communing with Christian brothers and sisters. These are the provisions that can shape our relationship with God and transform it from a temporal relationship to an eternal relationship.

By stocking up on these provisions we will also soon discover that our relationship with God is not “a pie in the sky by and by” kind of relationship, it is a “steak on your plate while you wait,” relationship. We don’t have to wait until we leave this mortal life to enjoy the presence of God; He is available to us in the here and now. Our problem is that we tend not to avail ourselves of His presence and love because we are too busy.

In your bulletin, you will find an insert titled, “Daily Devotional Prayer.” I would like everyone to take a copy home with them and commit to taking a moment every day this week to seek the Lord through this prayer:

Would you take a copy now and pray with me?

Dear Heavenly Father, Eternal in the heavens and on earth, I ask you to forgive me of my lackadaisical approach to knowing you. I seek forgiveness of this sin of taking you for granted and relying more on myself than on you. I seek forgiveness of the pride in me that fosters this reliance on self.

I also ask for your forgiveness for any sins I have committed in thought, word or deed, known and unknown, things done and those left undone.

I pray that you wash me in the blood of your lamb, Jesus, that when you look upon me you will see me through His perfection and not in my sin.

Send your Holy Spirit to fill me that I may be overflowing with your joy, that I may be empowered to live victoriously in Jesus. This I pray in Jesus’ Holy Name. Amen.

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