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Articles

Clouds (Part Two): God's Cloud as His Chariot by Charles Whitaker (Charlotte, North Carolina)



"Where the LORD goes, there are whirlwinds and storms, and the clouds are the dust beneath His feet." (Nahum 1:3, *New Century Version*)

In Part One, we saw that God possesses His own cloud; He enwraps Himself in it. "His cloud," as David calls it in Psalm 18:12, is more than supernatural: It is positively spectacular, discharging not only rain but fire, not only hail but smoke. From His magnificent yet terrifying¹ cloud, God reveals His secrets to some according to His sovereign will, while hiding Himself from others according to the purposes of that same will. His cloud can facilitate revelation as easily as it can concealment.

God is present in His cloud. It is no wonder, then, that so many scriptures associate His cloud with His glory. Exodus 16:10 notifies us that "the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud."² Exodus 24:16 reports that "the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days." Not at all surprisingly, the glory of God, in His cloud, filled the Tabernacle:

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34-35)

As a parallel scripture, consider the description of the dedication of Solomon's Temple: And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. (I Kings 8:10-11; see also II Chronicles 5:13-14)

The cloud at once announces God's presence and obscures enough of His glory to protect humans from destruction. Whether we want to think of the God-cloud as a manifestation of the *shekinah* or not, it is apparent that He is there, present in His cloud.

The gospels also link God's glory to His cloud. A case in point is the Transfiguration:³

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While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. (Matthew 17:5-6; see also Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34-35)

Here as elsewhere, the cloud *hides* God so people do not succumb, overcome by the brightness of His glory. But the same cloud also provides the opportunity for the Father to reveal a truth He deemed exceedingly important to the three disciples present on the occasion, namely, the opportunity to teach them that the words of His Son carried more weight than the words of Moses or the prophets (represented by Elijah). Just as God used His cloud (as we saw last time in Exodus 19:9) to facilitate the Israelites’ hearing of Moses, so on this occasion the cloud facilitates the disciples’ hearing of Jesus.

After Christ’s resurrection, the apostle John, who was present at the Transfiguration, refers to this incident, connecting it with God’s glory: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Years later, Peter, who was also present with the brothers James and John at the Transfiguration, likewise connected it with the glory of God: “For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (II Peter 1:17). Generally, God’s cloud reflects His glory by virtue of the fact that He is present *in* it.

Riding the Portable Throne

Any discussion of God’s cloud demands a look at Ezekiel 1 and 10, the prophet’s description of God’s “portable throne.” In Psalm 104:3, the psalmist sees clouds as God’s chariot. If we stop to reflect, even the garden-variety of clouds we know so well are generally on the move, sometimes rapidly so. This fact informs the image of clouds as a means of transport.⁴ Ezekiel introduces his description of the throne with a reference to clouds:

As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north [remember, Isaiah 14:13 hints that God resides at “the farthest sides of the north”⁵] and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal. (Ezekiel 1:4, *English Standard Version* [ESV])

The “gleaming metal” (many translations render it “glowing metal”) may be a reference to Christ, the God riding the cloud. Compare the description of Christ’s feet at Revelation 1:15: “His feet [were] like unto brilliant metal as if they burned in a furnace” (*Jubilee Bible 2000*). In Ezekiel 1:27-28, the prophet concludes his description with a reference to the Being who was riding the cloud, mentioning a stunning display of God’s glory:

I looked at Him from His waist up. He looked like hot metal with fire all around Him. I looked at Him from His waist down. It looked like fire with a glow that was shining all around Him. The light shining around Him was like a rainbow in a cloud. It was the Glory of the Lord. (*Easy-to-Read Version*)

The *Good News Translation* describes the rainbow mentioned in verse 28 as “the dazzling light which shows the presence of the LORD.” Again, in Ezekiel 10:4, the prophet cannot miss the glory of God radiating from His cloud:

Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD’s glory.

A broad look at Ezekiel’s description of the portable throne makes it clear that God revealed more about the “inner workings” of His cloud to Ezekiel than to anyone else. The passage is a good example of God’s exercising His sovereign prerogative to reveal knowledge according to His purposes. Interestingly, about the only element missing from the description of the portable throne in Ezekiel 1 and 10 is smoke. Clouds are there, as are fires of coal and lightning, but no smoke. It may be that God, choosing to reveal never-before-understood secrets about His cloud, purposefully removed the smoke to permit the prophet a better view.

Likely, Psalm 18:11 is a poetic description of God’s riding His portable throne. Here, David alludes to the cloaking effect of the cloud: God “made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.”

Isaiah 19:1, where the prophet writes that “the LORD rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt,” is another verse

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that apparently mentions God’s transporting Himself wherever He wishes while cloaked in His brilliant cloud. A better-known example appears in Daniel 7:13, where the prophet Daniel was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

Next time, we will look at the role God’s cloud plays in the prophecies of Christ’s return.

Inset: Smoke and God’s Cloud

As we have seen, some descriptions of God’s cloud include the presence of smoke, for example, the “smoking cloud” of Isaiah 4:5 (*Complete Jewish Bible*) and the enveloping smoke over Mount Sinai described in Exodus 19:18. While smoke has several meanings in God’s Word, three stand out:

1. **Judgment.** Compare two far-apart scriptures, ones which really are not that distant, considering they both deal with the concept of God’s *judgment*. In the first one, Abraham “looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace” (Genesis 19:28).

In the second passage, smoke attends the fall of another great city, Babylon: After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and just; for He has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of His servants.”

Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” (Revelation 19:1-3, ESV)

Judgment forms the backdrop of both passages, and, in both cases, smoke is present. One of the underlying concepts behind smoke is God’s judgment. In fact, one Hebrew noun for “smoke” is closely associated with the noun “anger,” as illustrated in Psalm 74:1: “Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?”

God also links judgment with smoke in Nahum 2:13: “Behold, I am against you,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will burn your chariots in smoke.” It is only appropriate, then, that fully 22% of the scriptural references to smoke appear in the book of Revelation, since that book narrates the visions the apostle John saw regarding the Lord’s Day—the Day of the Lord (Revelation 1:10)—a day of judgment.

Smoke and judgment fit hand and glove for at least two reasons: First, smoke is *evanescent*; it is short-lived, ascending, dispersing, quickly becoming rarefied. In Psalm 102:3, the psalmist writes: “For my days pass away like smoke . . .” God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 51:6, assures us that “the heavens will vanish away like smoke.” As smoke is short-lived, so is God’s wrath. In Isaiah 10:25 (ESV), God tells us that “in a very little while My fury will come to an end.” Like smoke, God’s judgment is intense but short-lived.⁶

Second, not only is smoke an apt image for the brevity of God’s judgment, but it is also a good image of the *fate* of those judged and found wanting. In Psalm 37:20, David assures us that the wicked shall perish “like the splendor of the meadows, [they] shall vanish, into smoke they shall vanish away.” In Hosea 13:3, the prophet, speaking of those who offer human sacrifices, concludes: “Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away, like chaff blown off from a threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.” Poof! And they are gone.

2. **Protection.** We have already seen that, as recorded in Isaiah 4:5-6, God promises to create in Jerusalem a smoking cloud that will serve as a covering “for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.” (In their wilderness wanderings, the children of Israel found protection from the sun under God’s cloud.)
3. **Fellowship.** An intriguing reference to smoke occurs in the narrative of God’s making His covenant with Abraham: And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces [of the sacrifices]. (Genesis 15:17)

The Hebrew noun accurately translated “oven” refers to a “baking oven” as distinct from a kiln or smelting furnace—

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both of which burn much hotter. (The Hebrew nouns for “kiln” or for “smelting furnace” are more likely to appear in contexts of God’s wrath or judgment.)

In this passage, God is not passing judgment on Abraham, as He did on the Egyptians in Exodus 14 or on Sodom in Genesis 19. Nor is He protecting Abraham from an enemy, as He promises to do in the case of His people in Isaiah 4. Rather, Genesis 15 links smoke to the sort of oven in which people prepare food. The symbolic action indicates that God and Abraham were going to have a meal together. There was peace between them; they were in fellowship. In this context, smoke represents the fellowship of God and man in peace.

In all three cases—judgment, protection, or fellowship—smoke represents *the presence of God*. It is in this sense that smoke relates to God’s cloud, which also indicates His presence. However, there is a decided difference in symbolic emphasis between God’s cloud and the smoke that may be associated with it. The thrust of the passages about God’s cloud is twofold:

1. His cloud hides Him to keep people from being consumed by the brightness of His glory.
2. Paradoxically, His cloud reveals Him, for when God’s cloud is around, people definitely know it. He often teaches from His cloud.

However, the primary thrust behind the image of smoke is different: *Smoke highlights the intrinsic difference between God and man*. In Proverbs 10:26, God mentions the fact that smoke is not good for the eyes. Humans instinctively close their eyes around heavy smoke. Again, in Isaiah 65:5, God speaks of rebellious people (verse 2) using an anthropomorphism, saying they “are a smoke in My nostrils.” The image is informed by the fact that smoke gags humans, who need the “breath of life” (Genesis 2:7) to exist. Sputtering and coughing, we take quick action to avoid inhaling it, knowing that we are unable to live in a heavily smoky environment.

Conversely, God is at ease in His smoky cloud. In fact, Isaiah discovered that God’s throne-room is “filled with smoke” (Isaiah 6:4). Revelation 15:8 notifies us that “the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power.” Some argue that this smoke refers to incense. However, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew and Greek nouns for “smoke” in these two passages, nouns appearing in aggregate 38 times in God’s Word, refer unambiguously to incense only once (Revelation 8:4).

Smoke makes a good “buffer” between God and man because a smoky environment is inimical to man. God can use it to ensure His privacy. Smoke is His way of saying, “Keep out.” By controlling the density of smoke, God can control exactly how much of Himself He wishes to reveal. The lesson is that humans can know of God only what He wants them to know.

End Notes

¹ For examples of God’s cloud generating terror, consider Exodus 19:16 (the giving of the law at Sinai), Ezekiel 1:28 (the prophet’s response to the vision of the portable throne), and Matthew 17:6 (the disciples’ response at the Transfiguration).

² Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural citations are from the *New King James Version*.

³ The Greek verb rendered “overshadowed” in verse 5, its first use, is *episkiazo* (*Strong’s Concordance* #1982). *The New American Standard Bible* and the *King James Version* render *episkiazo* with the verb “overshadow” in all five of its New Testament appearances: Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 1:35; 9:34; and Acts 5:15. *Episkiazo* carries the idea of “enveloping.” Compare Psalm 97:2, where the psalmist writes that “clouds and darkness surround” God. They envelop Him.

⁴ See Jeremiah 4:13, where God describes Nebuchadnezzar with imagery involving quickly moving clouds: “Behold, he shall come up like clouds, and his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are plundered!”

⁵ Here God is quoting Satan, the great deceiver, so we accept them at face value at our own risk. It is not appropriate to consider God’s quotation of Satan here as an example of “two witnesses” validating a charge, since the Devil does not

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have a sterling reputation as an honest witness.

⁶ For scriptures showing the brevity of God’s wrath, consider the following:

- Isaiah 54:7 (*Holman Christian Standard Bible* [HCSB]): I deserted you for a brief moment, but I will take you back with great compassion.

Note the conceptual opposites of “desertion” and “great compassion,” separated by only “a brief moment.”

- Isaiah 26:20 (HCSB), where the “wrath” of God passes quickly: Go, My people, enter your rooms and close your doors behind you. Hide for a little while until the wrath has passed.
- Isaiah 10:25 (*The Amplified Bible*): For yet a very little while and My indignation against you [Israel] will be fulfilled and My anger will be directed toward the destruction of the Assyrian. See also Malachi 4:1-3.

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Calcium Complexities

by David Antion (Pasadena, California)

They say, “Take calcium. Take more. Add citric acid. Add phosphorus.” Did you know that there are three “kinds” of calcium in your body? What do you need to build bone and absorb calcium? Read this article for a thorough and sane approach to the problem of calcium absorption.

The most abundant mineral in your body is calcium. You probably know it is plentiful in your bones. But do you know that calcium also has to be in your blood stream? At all times your blood must carry a certain amount of calcium in its serum.

Most people are unaware that calcium needs to be present in the tissues of your body in the form of ionized calcium. This is made when the body turns some calcium into calcium bicarbonate (not to be confused with calcium carbonate - a cheap form of calcium made from limestone). To be completely healthy you have to have an abundance of calcium in your diet so that you have adequate amounts for your bones, your blood, and your tissues.

The blood calcium does many things and is used to build bone and also to make available calcium bicarbonate for the tissues.

Today, we are being bombarded with calcium ads galore. There are more calcium supplements available today than nearly any time in history. Most of these contain calcium carbonate (limestone), a cheap source of calcium and the most difficult for the body to absorb and assimilate. Companies now add calcium to antacid tablets. Drug stores and health food stores carry various brands of calcium tablets in various combinations. Some with magnesium. Some with Vitamin D. Some with parts of the B-complex. And some with Vitamin C or citric acid.

WHAT IS NOT EXPLAINED

What is often not explained to the general public is that there are many factors influencing the absorption of calcium. One of these is the need for hydrochloric acid! Thus, putting calcium into an antacid may turn out to be futile.

Hydrochloric acid is needed because calcium, like iron, is much better absorbed in an acid medium. Furthermore, to have the calcium utilized by the bones and in the system, it needs to combine with phosphorus.

The ratio: Some nutritionists say that the proper ratio of calcium to phosphorus is 10 parts calcium to 3 parts phosphorus. When there is not enough phosphorus then the calcium cannot be held in solution in the blood and begins to precipitate out. If it falls out into the kidneys, it can form kidney stones. If onto the teeth it is called tartar or calculus. If into the joints, it is called arthritis and brings on pain. It may even be a factor in cataracts when calcium clouds the eyes.

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On the other hand, if there is not enough calcium - i.e. a ratio of 9 parts calcium to 3 or 4 parts phosphorus - the body will experience a calcium deficiency. The bones may be tapped to release some of their calcium beginning a process called osteoporosis. This can lead to erosion of teeth and dental caries.

Along with other minerals such as magnesium, phosphorus, boron, a person needs the following nutrients or vitamins: Vitamin D, Vitamin F (a combination of unsaturated fatty acids), Vitamin C complex, Vitamin B complex, all in a natural food form that the body can absorb along with their naturally occurring enzymes.

Even with all of the above nutrients, the bone structure of the human body will NOT be benefited unless EXERCISE is done. Remember what happened to our astronauts in space in the early years. It was discovered that major deterioration of their cardiovascular systems took place. Along with this was loss of muscle mass and bone loss.

In order for the body to place the calcium into the bones, weight-bearing exercise must take place. When you lift a weight, your muscles pull on the ligaments. The ligaments are attached to the bones and put stress on the bones. This sends a signal to the body that the bones need density.

It is difficult for a bedridden person to maintain proper bone mass and muscle mass. Too much bed rest brings on extreme weakness and loss of energy and strength. Today, following operations, it is a goal in hospitals to get the patient up and walking as soon as possible. This is the opposite of what used to happen decades ago.

The Back and Forth of Calcium

Calcium goes in and out of your blood stream based on certain vitamins. Let's take the actions of Vitamin D and Vitamin F (unsaturated fatty acids). Vitamin D draws calcium into the blood stream and pulls calcium away from the tissues. Vitamin F does just the opposite.

If you were to get too much sun exposure you might experience extreme fatigue as your blood calcium would rise and make the blood thicker. When this happens there is a chance of developing stones in the kidneys as they filter this blood thickened with calcium.

What we now know is that the body needs both Vitamin D and Vitamin F (unsaturated fatty acids) in order to have a balanced use of calcium.

A Non-Phosphorous Calcium

When children get too many phosphorus-laden foods and foodless foods such as soft drinks containing phosphoric acid they become jumpy and irritable. They may need to balance out their blood chemistry by taking a non-phosphorous calcium like calcium lactate. This is an inexpensive calcium and can be taken with water on an empty stomach or dissolved in water and swallowed.

When children cough at night it is often because they lack tissue calcium. Calcium lactate along with vitamin F (unsaturated fatty acids) would do much to give the tissues ionized calcium and help stop the coughs. Is it any wonder that in Bible times people valued olive oil with its contents of vitamin F?

As We Age

The body needs calcium all our lives. But as we age, we produce less hydrochloric acid needed to absorb calcium. In addition, many of us as we age stop fixing wholesome meals and are content with snacks such as chips and sodas or fast foods that are nearly devoid of calcium.

Also, as we age, we produce fewer enzymes especially those that digest milk calcium. Many people as they age take medications that interfere with calcium absorption. Some of the elderly feel stiff and tend to avoid exercise. Many become more sedentary in their lifestyle so there is not enough demand for the body to absorb calcium and form stronger bones.

Another factor is that most milk products have been cooked to some extent through pasteurization. This makes the calcium in the milk more difficult to extract and absorb.

One element called urea has also been found to be a factor in calcium absorption. Healthy kidneys will help provide this

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chemical that is a blood buffer salt. All living animals have urea a nitrogen compound.

God Made It Simple

Ancient people did not have the chemical knowledge we have today with our ability to analyze foods and chemicals. But all they had to do was to drink the milk fresh from their goats, cows, or sheep. They ate fresh raw vegetables such as cabbage, kale, onions, leeks, garlic. They ate fresh olive oil, fresh grapes, wine, grains, and fruits. They ate sour milk that clabbered being more easily digested where the calcium is more easily absorbed. They worked outdoors in the sunshine (vitamin D) and did hard physical work with a lot of weight-bearing exercise. In every way, their lifestyle contributed to sturdy bone and muscle mass.

Today, you and I have to make sure to get enough strengthening exercise, proper minerals, needed vitamins and avoidance of overly sweet foods, too much caffeine, and sodas.

By paying attention to these things, you can improve your overall health and calcium intake.

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Respect or Respect of Persons?

by John W. Ritenbaugh (Lancaster, South Carolina)

The Bible frequently cautions us against respect of persons, yet we are also instructed to show proper respect for leaders, the elderly, and others. What is the proper balance?

Unlike the current parental teaching, people in previous generations were taught to practice different attitudes of respect for people and property than the public generally holds today. Deference was given freely to many. Men and boys were expected to give up their seats on crowded buses and street cars to women, the elderly or disabled. People commonly addressed strangers—both rich or poor—as "Sir," "Ma'am," "Mister" or "Miss." It took a great deal of familiarity with someone before one would break into a more informal manner with them.

The same general attitude was held toward property as well. All of us have stories of how "we never locked our doors" when we were growing up. Or our parents would allow us to roam the whole city when we were kids. Today, we would not dare to do these things because there is so much less respect for life and property. In our major cities, one can be randomly killed in a drive-by shooting while minding one's own business.

In these days, one rarely hears children addressing parents and adults as "sir" or "ma'am." Even a "thank you" is hard to come by. They do not respond to questions from their elders with a "Yes, sir," "No, sir," "Yes, ma'am" or "No, ma'am." And in the general public even the president is called "George" or "Bill" or worse!

Showing Respect in Scripture

In Leviticus 19:32 it says, "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD." This theme runs throughout the Bible, appearing in such words that are rendered into the English most commonly as "fear," "honor," "respect," and sometimes even as strong as "reverence." Romans 13:7 makes this clear. "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." So, we find it actually commanded to give deference, not based on whether we think they deserve it, but simply because they are somebody who fits a certain description (like the elderly) or who is an elected, appointed, or ordained person.

So strong is this theme, that God shows that insolence toward those who should be respected presages calamity (*cf.* II Kings 2:23-25 and Isaiah 3:5). We should thus be warned that when we see disrespect rising, severe social troubles are on the horizon.

The purpose of these scriptures is to help ensure that there is a proper attitude toward God. God is the Giver of all

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authority (Romans 13:1) and it is really out of respect for the God-given office that the deference is shown.

But is formality in reference to office always required? No. A husband's office as head of the family is God-given, but neither wife, nor children call him "Mister." The formality is dropped within the confines and familiarity of family. I know of no western culture that does not follow this pattern.

Forms of Respect in the Church

In the church we have long been in the custom of addressing each other as Mr. and Mrs. These forms of address are not as formal as they used to be, but insistence on them may have been overdone. Formality tends to make relationships stilted and narrow and can even move one to a far more serious elitism, which is nothing more than respect of persons.

The church is called a "brotherhood" in I Peter 2:17, a "family" in Ephesians 3:15. Jesus said, "[Y]ou are all brethren" (Matthew 23:8). Beyond that, there is strong evidence that our English word "mister" is derived from "master," which Jesus said not to use in addressing each other as a title elevating one above another (*cf.* Matthew 23:7-11).

Why do we call one another by these formal titles? Most likely, it is because of a sincere effort not to disrespect, especially an elder's or deacon's office. But is it also possible that something more important is lost? Would a family be better off if the father was called "Mister"? What qualities would be lost? Warmth of affection, intimacy and approachability are three that immediately come to mind.

Respect of God and Jesus

Do we lose respect because we call God, "Father"? What is implied by calling Him "Father" rather than God? Is it not a title implying greater intimacy? Now what about "Abba, Father," which is "Father, Father"? Do we lose even more respect for Him? Of course not, because respect can be generated in more than one manner. The respect God wants us to have for Him and His Family is one of genuine warmth, intimate feeling, and affectionate desire to please and help. Formality does not help much here.

We are not embarrassed at all to call the great apostles of the first century by their first names. Do we disrespect them when we do so? More than that, we do not hesitate one whit to call our Creator and Savior by His first name—without a "Mister" either! We simply call Him "Jesus."

We do not disrespect Him because He has earned our respect through our knowledge of Him. Because of what He is in terms of character and action, we give Him our affection with our submission. That is the basis of right respect and has nothing to do with formality. It has everything to do with love. If we love, we will be respectful whatever a person's station in life. Why we will even love, and therefore respect, our enemies!

In summary, much, if not most, of the formal respect given in terms of titles attached to a person's name in both this world and the church may seem forced, artificial and even hollow. We are obligated by God to give respect, even though it may seem forced. But we should not insist that we brothers and sisters call one another by formal titles even though one has an office. Perhaps even more so, we should give sincere and heartfelt respect to those in office within the church for their work's sake. Personally, I have never been offended because someone in the church called me "John." But each of us should strive to earn that respect the godly way by loving one another. If one of us is in an office, and he is striving to love the brethren, the respect—real, godly respect—will be given.

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What in the World is Wormwood? by BibleStudy.org (Farmington, Michigan)

What is wormwood? Where is it located in the Bible? What does it mean? How is it related to the prophetic Day of the Lord?

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Wormwood, in the Old Testament, is derived from a Hebrew word meaning bitterness or to curse (Strong's Concordance #H3939). It was considered cursed since it was regarded as poisonous. Given that the word is found, in the KJV Bible, seven times in seven verses (Deuteronomy 29:18, Proverbs 5:4, Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15, Lamentations 3:15, 19 and Amos 5:7) it may symbolize complete bitterness or a perfect poison. In the latter regard, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew word behind wormwood is translated as "hemlock" in Amos 6:12 (KJV).

Wormwood is actually a plant, or more precisely a low woody shrub, with small green leaves and greenish-yellow flowers. Four species of this plant, in the genus *Artemisia*, were known to flourish in the dry desert regions of Palestine and Syria. They are *A. nilotica*, *A. Judaica*, *A. fruticosa* and *A. cinerea* (Smith's Bible Dictionary). In modern times, *A. Judaica* is found only in the Sinai while *A. herba-alba* (also considered a wormwood plant) is common in the Holy Land (Tyndale Bible Dictionary).

The plant has a bitter taste and a strong aroma. It is sometimes Biblically equated with gall (Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15, Lamentations 3:19), a bitter poison that was offered to Jesus as he was being crucified (Matthew 27:33 - 34).

New Testament usage

In the New Testament, wormwood is found twice in a single verse.

Now the name of the star is Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from drinking the waters because they were made bitter (Revelation 8:11, HBFV).

The word's use in Revelation is during an end-time period known as the Day of the Lord. This period, kicked off when the prophetic seventh seal is opened (Revelation 8:1), signifies God's punishment of the world's Babylonish system and those who follow it.

The wormwood of Revelation is not a plant but possibly a large meteor or star that, when it strikes the earth, makes a third of our drinkable water lethal to consume.

Modern use

Absinthe, an emerald green drink with a high alcohol content, is made from *A. absinthium* (considered a grand wormwood herb) and other aromatic plants. The herb is native to Eurasia and North Africa, with it also being found in the United States and Canada. Although the drink was banned in America in 1912, the ban was lifted in 2007 but with restrictions.

Other Items

A Puzzle Joke

Sent by Ted & Joanne Saunders (Renton, Washington)
(Darwin felt this should be revised, so here is Part 2)

A boy calls his girlfriend and says, "please come over here and help me. I have a really hard jigsaw puzzle, and I can't figure out how to get started.

His girlfriend asks, "What is it supposed to be when it is finished?"

The boy says, "According to the picture on the box, it's a rooster."

His girlfriend decides to go over and help with the puzzle.

He lets her in and shows her where he has the puzzle spread all over the table.

She studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, then turns to him and says, "First of all, no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster."

She takes his hand and says, "Second, I want you to relax. Let's have a beer, and then..."

She said with a deep sigh...

"Let's put all the Corn Flakes back in the box."

Jesus Paid it All

Sent by Robert Chisolm (Email)

After living what I felt was a 'decent' life, my time on earth came to an end.

**The first thing I remember is sitting on a bench in the waiting Room
of what I thought to be a court house.**

The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table.

As I looked around I saw the 'prosecutor.'

He was a villainous looking gent who snarled as he stared at me.

He definitely was the most evil person I have ever seen.

**I sat down and looked to my left and there sat My Attorney,
A kind and gentle looking man whose appearance
seemed so familiar to Me, I felt I knew Him.**

**The corner door flew open and there appeared
the Judge in full Flowing robes.
He commanded an awesome presence as He moved across the room
I couldn't take my eyes off of Him.**

As He took His seat behind the bench, He said, 'Let us begin.'

**The prosecutor rose and said,
'My name is Satan and I am here to show you why this woman Belongs in hell.'**

**He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole,
and in the past when I cheated others Satan told of other horrible
Perversions that were once in my life and the more he spoke,
the Further down in my seat I sank.**

**I was so embarrassed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own Attorney,
as the Devil told of sins that even I had completely Forgotten about.**

**As upset as I was at Satan for telling all these things about me,
I was equally upset at My Attorney who sat there silently
not Offering any form of defense at all.**

**I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life
- couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done?**

**Satan finished with a fury and said, 'This woman belongs in hell,
She is guilty of all that I have charged
and there is not a person Who can prove otherwise.'**

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When it was His turn, My Attorney first asked if He might approach the bench.

The Judge allowed this over the strong objection of Satan,
And beckoned Him to come forward.

As He got up and started walking, I was able to see Him in
His full splendor and majesty.

I realized why He seemed so familiar; this was Jesus representing me,
My Lord and my Savior.

He stopped at the bench and softly said to the Judge,
'Hi, Dad,' and then He turned to address the court.

'Satan was correct in saying that this woman had sinned, I won't deny any of these allegations.

And, yes, the wage of sin is death,
and this woman deserves to be Punished.

Jesus took a deep breath and turned to His Father with
Outstretched arms and proclaimed, 'However, I died on the cross so
That this person might have eternal life and she has accepted Me as her Savior, so she is Mine.'

My Lord continued with, 'Her name is written in the Book of Life, and no one can snatch her from Me.

Satan still does not understand yet. This woman is not to be given justice, but rather mercy.'

As Jesus sat down,
He quietly paused, looked at His Father and said, 'There is nothing else that needs to be done.'

'I've done it all.'

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down.
The following words bellowed from His lips..

'This woman is free.'

'The penalty for her has already been paid in full.'

'Case dismissed.'

As my Lord led me away, I could hear Satan ranting and raving,
'I won't give up, I will win the next one.' I asked Jesus as He gave
Me my instructions where to go next, 'Have you ever lost a case?'

Christ lovingly smiled and said,

'Everyone that has come to Me and asked Me to represent them has received the same verdict as you,

~Paid in Full~

'Stop telling God how big your storm is.
Instead, tell the storm how big your God is!'