THOUGHTS OF SEPTEMBER, 2017

1. [Written in early September] September 23rd is the latest watch-date for the rapture that I am aware of. It’s not that anyone is claiming that date as being absolute, but that the prophecy saints are alerting us to another possibility based on possible biblical insights. I have heard no one urge us to quit our jobs, sell all that we have, and go sit on a hill because of the rapture or the Lord is coming on that date. But one of these days, possibly very soon, He will come for the church. In the meantime, 9-23-2017 is another prompt for eagerness. [now, on October 1st, we are still here.]
2. I don’t know anyone who knows fully how Jesus alone builds His church, but it appears that many have no idea at all. Peter spoke for us when he said, “Master, you are fortunate that we are here on this occasion. We will do a great job if you let us do some church building” – Luke 9:33, my paraphrase.

Luke and the Spirit wrote next that Peter did not know what he was saying, which is certainly true but, then again, he knew exactly what he was saying. He wanted to honor Jesus by building something for Him and for the two other honorable persons, Moses and Elijah. That would have been something like a St. Jesus of Nazareth Church, a St. Moses in the Wilderness Church, and a St. Elijah in the Chariot Church.

In turn, it would have been reasonable to those three disciples [Peter, John and James] if later other like-minded believers would erect in their honor a St. Peter’s Church, a St. John’s Church and a St. James Church. That’s the way the religious mind thinks. That mindset does not know what it is saying, but does say what it means. It is religious carnality in its earliest christianoid appearance. We have easily accepted that sort of thinking as being normal.

But has Jesus and our Father accepted our thinking? You noticed that our Father immediately and strongly responded by saying, “Shut up! You are dealing with My Son; the only One whom I have chosen to build churches” – v. 35, more of my paraphrasing. The setting was such that they were afraid, as well they should have been, and their fear is recorded so that we are better informed. Yes, Peter knew what he was saying, and Jesus’ Father knew what Peter was saying.

Had Peter known better he would not have said what he said; but he did not know. I wonder; do we know what we are doing when we think, say, and act that way? “Let us build for you” is death. It started with, “It seems good to us.” But, “I, Jesus, will build my church” is life. Does it matter to us or to God anymore? To adapt a currently popular phrase, “All things matter.”

1. It is easy to see and hear the recent decline of reason: 1) Hurt feelings is but one of the reasons we cannot oppose illegal immigration and same sex marriage. 2) Divine character is being attributed to the environment. 3) Lethal force is being used against the human unborn, the elderly, and the ill. 4) Scientific truth is being rejected in favor of gender identity. 5) And economic schemes need have no basis in experience or reason. All of this is lawlessness [iniquity]. There does not need to be rioting in the streets to be lawlessness; we have an abandonment of reason, science, and truth. Have you been able to spot the source of such nonsense? Yes, it is in the abandonment of basic truth – Scripture.
2. I will start this Thought with a series of questions that will tempt you to answer with an automatic and erroneous response. At times, is the Lord Jesus less than you desire? Is He less than you need? Does He seem to let you down? Despite what the Bible says about Him, does He come and go without reason? The question, asked on a more grand scale is, “Does your life, lived in the presence of our all-wise, always-communicating, always-present, and always loving God, make sense?” The answer is “yes.” On the simply human, atheistic level the answer is easily and obviously “No.”

John the Baptist knew the correct answer until his life got “tighter” than his understanding of that which had been given him – Matt. 11:2-3. He had known that cousin Jesus was the One, but after perhaps a year in prison he had had time to rethink the breadth and depth of God’s words and actions delivered to him in Matthew 3:13-17. To John it was a matter of life and death. Jesus’ answer refocused John on the matter of Life. John was re-founded on the truth of Jesus, that He was adequate, timely, faithful, and that all of John’s life made perfect sense. Like our Father in heaven said to John about His Son, Jesus, we too can be well-pleased with Jesus.

1. As we go through our trials, especially those involving fellow-saints, it’s important to keep our focus on the sharpening process, not on the sparks or continual grinding – Prov. 27:17. The process is to reduce us, to get more of the flesh out of us so we will be more righteous and productive. It’s not to kill us, although it seems like that at times.

Yes, some of the process is terrible, but the result of resting in there [of hanging on our crosses] bears fruit. Eternal quality of life is the product, and forever. On the other hand, unbelief will “prove” that the Lord doesn’t love us, that He is not with us, that He is incapable, that He is not a good God. The Israelites thought that way. They thought the Lord had brought them into the wilderness situation to kill them – Deut. 1:26-35. Trapped in their unbelief, they fulfilled their own words and died in the wilderness. Those who trusted the Lord lived and entered the promised land [for us, the life in which we enjoy the Lord’s fullness here on earth, which may have little or none of the commonly appreciated temporal pleasures].

1. The Lord almost killed Moses twice, and did eventually kill him. The first time was when Moses had argued with the Lord too long – Ex. 4:14. The Lord’s patience with His called and anointed one had come to an end.

The second time was when Moses obeyed his wife [“Don’t you circumcise that boy, too, you bloody brute!”] and disobeyed the Lord – Ex. 4:24-26. Because Moses was near death, and she knew why, she circumcised the second son, then went with the two boys back to grandpa in Median. Moses recovered and continued alone on his journey to Egypt.

Eventually, the Lord did kill Moses. Moses stuck to tradition by striking the rock twice to bring forth water, although the Lord had told him to strike it once this time. Because of this disobedience Moses died prematurely at God’s hand – Num. 20:7-12; Deut. 34:1-8.

The lesson: Overcomers push through all sorts of obstructions to complete their tasks. Disobedience never works, although it may look successful in the short run.

1. I made the point recently that rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft – 1 Sam. 15:23. In the Old Testament those who practiced witchcraft were put to physical death. In our New Covenant, that punishment is spiritual death. Rebellion brings spiritual death, spiritual punishment, and associated physical punishment. Even though we Americans love our country and honor our forefathers who set up our form of government, it is a fact that they rebelled against England in order to get our freedom. What does the Lord show us about our rebellion? He shows that rebellion breeds rebellion.

History shows us that a bit more forbearance on the part of our forefathers may have avoided the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and our internal rebellion, the Civil War. In due time, England abolished slavery in all of its empire, and gave independence to all of its colonies. Look at this timeline:

1707 – England and Scotland formed Great Britain.

1775 – American colonies revolted over a tax on tea and other grievances.

1800 – Ireland granted self-government.

1812 – America fought against Britain’s attempt to re-subjugate America.

1833 – British Empire abolished slavery [final two areas abolished in 1843].

1852 – New Zealand granted self-government.

1861-1865 – American Civil War. 500,000 American soldiers died.

1867 – Canada granted self-government.

1869 – Newfoundland granted self-government.

1910 – South Africa granted self-government.

1913 – Australia granted self-government.

Jesus suffered greatly without rebelling against God or man. He died to Himself in order to bring life to many. Our flesh does not like that path. We like to stand on our rights, and we have a long and growing list of them. When we imagine that our rights have been trampled we are quick to raise our voices and shake our fists in protest [that is rebellion in any degree]. Although we have peaceful recourses, we don’t dally long with them, preferring confrontation. Our feathers are easily and quickly ruffled.

Fortunately, the Lord is patient and compassionate, and full of mercy. But He is offended by our offences, so we do not go scot free. [That does not refer to you Scots. Scot free is from an early 10th century Scandinavian word “skat,” meaning a tax or payment, particularly one to support the city’s poor. The word skat migrated to Britain and mutated to scot. Scot free meant to not pay the tax, and has come to apply to getting away with anything.]

The same process as found above in America’s political history is found in the area of religion. If we have a streak of rebellion, it will be expressed even in the most holy areas. A streak of love will find its areas of expression. A streak of generosity will be expressed broadly. Etc. The Lord is the only One who knows “what if,” but it did not take long for the Roman Catholic Church to have its own reformation after Luther’s Protestant Reformation had become established. What if those protestant new Protestants had remained in the Roman Church [paying a severe price to do so] and been a strong support to the Roman Church’s reformation, which lacked depth and breadth?

1. Do you want the Lord’s life, love, light, etc. good stuff to flow into you for your consumption or through you to others – John 7:38. Jesus gives His stuff to us so we will pass it along. We benefit and get to take our cut, but He also [mainly ?] gives of Himself and His stuff to us so we will pass it onward. That includes temporal blessings. The question can come down to, “How much is intended for my use?” We may end up being big-time consumers instead of channels.
2. I have seen many people transformed by reception of God’s Spirit. Very few of them went back to their old ways but they never doubted their heavenly relationship and its permanency. I have also seen people decide to join the church, or decide to become Christians. Among this second group there was a higher relapse into their old ways and rejection of their faith. That’s not a very scientific study of the problem, only a one-man observation.

In either case, it seemed that the second group was seeking something from the Lord, and not Him Himself. They either got what they wanted, or not, and moved on. That’s what the Lord was dealing with in John 6:26, when He said that some of the people who were fed the miraculous increase of bread and fishes wanted only that food, not Him. Had they been seeking Him, they would have been constantly satisfied. He said that if we seek Him we too will be continually satisfied, and that we will not need to chase about seeking His food, or drop out of the search.

1. I hear that the term “global warming” has been dropped. The term “climate change” is now being used, but talk of man’s ability to kill the planet persists. Our use of too much gasoline is causing these hurricanes [only partly joking]. But researchers show us that we are overlooking the positive effects of elevated atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide. One example is that we are seeing a marked increase of green vegetation on the planet, a direct result of rising carbon dioxide levels. Besides that good news, environmentalists don’t take into consideration the established record of human beings being able to adapt to changes. They seem to think that we will sit around on our hands doing nothing to help ourselves over the centuries that climate change and its supposed long-term effects go on. Climate has been and will always be shifting, sometimes in extremes.
2. Are you closely involved in life with others who have bonded for the purpose of standing against certain unholy things, or are you and your close friends on your own in regards to resisting society’s degradation? Daniel and his three buddies bonded and stood together. One cannot miss feeling the strength that their covenant provided them, and that they had to pay the price of standing before their faith paid off.
3. What did Adam have of his original righteous nature that, when he sinned, he lost, thus passing on to us his then defective, fallen nature? What is it that he lost? Is there a name or description of that lost quality? Could it have been his love for God? He began to love others and other things rather than God, so a good way to describe his loss was his love for His Creator. That seems to describe our loss.
4. Regarding mercy, it is not a matter of whether the needy person deserves mercy, but whether others will extend mercy. Mercy is the outward manifestation of pity. It assumes need on the part of the receiver, and the adequacy to meet the need on the part of the giver. Mercy can be extended without repentance, even in the face of continued offence. Are we sure that we want to be like Jesus?

I have a delightfully functional love relationship with an identifiable group of believers. They have a reputation among the broad church for being loving to the needy and true worshippers of Jesus Christ. Then something happened. They came under assault by the enemy in the area of hurt feelings and unforgiveness of their offender [not me]. It is stunning and tragic to see the enduring sin and decline of that group.

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1. A list of the fruit of our spiritual walk is found in Galatians 5:22-23. By our fruit we are known – Matt. 12:33. Really? Known to whom? Perhaps to the Lord and only a few others. Jesus was the most perfect and abundantly fruitful man who ever lived and He was not known as such by everyone, especially by “those who counted.” So, our fruitfulness will not be known and appreciated by everyone.

The spiritually fruitful person has a revelation of Jesus, not simply an intellectual agreement about Him. Revelations transform us according to what and who the revelations are about. Revelations cannot be decided upon or conjured up. They impact us, change us, usually forever. We are on the road to becoming an overcomer when we get the revelation of Jesus and subsequent revelations by the Spirit. We begin to bear Jesus’ testimony [yes, the same Testimony that in its Perfection was rejected by religious and political leaders]. But as overcomers we demonstrate His preeminence in all that we do. That is our Father’s purpose, in all that we do.

1. It is not necessary to sweat about or fear the devil. The deceiver is the most deceived of all creation. He can do only that which the Lord’s wisdom and love designs him to do, and no more. Get that picture best from the Gospel of Job. Job knew that the devil was real and terrible but could do only that which the Lord assigned him to do. That knowledge of the Lord, the Lord’s ways, and the devil’s purpose-in-God was a confidence builder for Job. No matter what the devil did, Job knew that the devil was “on assignment” under the control of God. The devil did not know it that way, but the devil was deceived; he thought he had some independent ability and purpose.

So, when Paul wrote that “Satan hindered us,” Paul was not stymied – 2 Thess. 2:18. He remained faithful, laid aside his personal involvement in the future mission [apparently due to an illness], and assigned his job to Timothy who carried it out to success. Timothy proved to be a competent, anointed disciple who needed and received some advanced training away from Paul.

1. Have you noticed that controllers become manipulators when they encounter someone who they cannot directly control? Failing that, they back off and employ destructive techniques. I hear that that happens, otherwise I would not know.
2. We have been given a sound mind. That means that confusion will not grasp us. We will be challenged at times, but confusion can be rejected outright. On the other hand, we will often experience a lack of knowledge/information. That lack will never end in this earth-life. We always seek knowledge beyond our present. But lack of understanding/knowledge does not cause confusion. Contrary information does not cause confusion. Confusion is not related to lack of information; it is related to a weakly integrated mind, which the Lord fixes without necessarily giving us any further information.
3. Cain and Abel were brothers, fellow believers, offspring of believing [but imperfect] parents. Both men worshipped the Lord and brought sacrifices to Him on their altars. Why was Abel’s offering acceptable to the Lord, but Cain’s was not? Cain had devised a worship system that was not acceptable, and Able had perceived a worship that was acceptable to God. Abel’s involved Truth and Spirit, which must be the basis of any worship if we are to be acceptable to the Lord. Use care, lest our beautiful, well-worded and religious ambiance be rejected by the Lord without our notice. One way to test those waters is to watch your reaction when challenged about your lack of Truth and Spirit in your beautiful worship services. Cain’s response was anger and rejection, which is murder, so he did.
4. Two fun questions for the evolutionists: “Did you come to you from the goo by way of the zoo?” We were deliberately and skillfully created by a Creator.

Also: “First there was nothing; then it exploded.” Is that the origin of all things?

1. All nation’s printed languages flow toward Jerusalem. Nations east of Jerusalem write from right to left. Those nations west of Jerusalem write from left to right. That’s the way it is so it must prove something.
2. The speed of light has been slowing down. It was 10-30 times faster at the time of Christ, twice as fast in the days of Solomon, four times faster in the days of Abraham, and 10 million times faster prior to 3,000 BC. Don’t ask me to explain that, or to comment on its importance, but things basic are changing, and rapidly.
3. At the time that Mary told the wedding attendants to do whatever her 30-year old son Jesus said for them to do [John 2:5 -- they were out of wine], He had done no miracles. For 30 years He had been God the Son on earth and had done no miracles. What did she mean, and what did she know about Him that she would say that? I am confident that she did not know He was about to do a miracle, but in some way she knew that Jesus was or had the answer to their wine problem. She knew her son very well, that He was righteous, faithful, and capable of handling problems. Her life with Jesus had built up her confidence in Him. Is that not the same for us, even if we do not expect a miracle? Simply knowing Him is a powerful life changer and confidence builder.
4. It is said that we become like the god/gods/God we worship. True worship makes us a powerful presence in the kingdom and is a powerful force on our souls.
5. The third commandment about not taking the name of the Lord our God in vain is usually understood as not swearing falsely and not swearing while using His name. That may be true, but those reasons fade in comparison to what appears as the more likely understanding, that as God’s ambassadors we are not to misrepresent Him.
6. Moses sent 12 spies from the wilderness into the Promised Land early during their time in the wilderness. Upon their return, ten spies advised against going into the Promised Land because there were giants there, and many warring nations; such opposition that the 10 spies felt like grasshoppers compared to the enemy. Their report persuaded the nation to not go in. The people said, “It is better that we die here, or had died back in Egypt.” God’s response was something like, “That’s a good idea. Stand aside, Moses, I’m going to wipe them out and start over with you as the father of a new nation.”

Moses intervened, so the Lord proceeded with them in the wilderness for 40 years, during which time all those who were 20 years of age and over when they came out of Egypt died off, except the 2 faithful spies who had said, “We can do it because our God says so and He is with us.” If we are negative, we tend to get what we are. If we want to die, it seems that we shrivel and die. If we want life and that abundantly, it seems that we have life abundantly.

1. Moses appeared destined to lead them into the Promised Land, but got mad at and impatient with the people, even after having done so well with the gradually-being-perfected ones and the gradually-dying-off ones for 40 years. This time the Lord told him to speak to the rock [not strike the rock, as before] and it would give water. But in his anger and impatience Moses did the traditional thing, and struck it. There was and is a difference between those who have deep-seated, all-pervasive unbelief and those whose unbelief is shallow and occasional. God gave water to His people but Moses did not get to lead them out of the wilderness into the Promised Land.

The problem: Moses had not represented God to His people. These were a different people than those who had come out of Egypt, those who had unbelief in every occasion. Those of us who would represent the Lord to His people [teaching, counseling, shepherding, etc.] are to know His heart for His people as He gathers them to us and as the times and they change. Cookie cutters are not helpful, even though they are often used to ill-effect. Jesus and His message grew and changed with His disciples’ growth. So did His message to the Pharisees. We need to know our people. Listening to the Holy Spirit helps greatly.

1. The burning bush had attracted Moses’ attention because it was not being destroyed by its burning. But there was and still is another reason for the burning bush. It showed that God is a consuming fire, but only of Jesus’ and our flesh. He purifies us as by fire, but the life of Christ in us remains, with less of our obstructive flesh/dross. Have you noticed? If you are moving on with the Lord, you have noticed.
2. From the time Abraham had [almost] offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to the Lord [Gen. 22:9], until the time Isaac received his bride Rebekah [Gen. 24:62], Isaac’s name is not mentioned? That name-gap is right in the middle of the story of Isaac. The Holy Editor edited Isaac’s name out of those chapters for a reason.

You know the allegory of a) Isaac the son, to a) Jesus the Son, b) almost sacrificed by his father, to b) Jesus being sacrificed by His Father, c) receiving Rebekah his bride, to c) Jesus receiving His bride [the church], d) Rebekah being brought to Isaac, to d) the church being brought to Jesus, e) Rebekah arrived in the evening, to e) the church will arrive just before darkness falls on the earth.

So, Isaac’s name is missing from the time of his [almost] death by sacrifice, until he received his bride from the hand of his father’s servant. That’s exactly like Jesus and His bride, as He is missing from the earth while the Holy Spirit is laboring to bring His bride, the church, to Him before darkness falls on the earth.

1. Everyone does not believe in a god; everyone who believes in a god does not believe in the Lord God; everyone who believes in the Lord God does not believe that Jesus is the Lord; and everyone who believes that Jesus is the Lord does not yield their lives to Him so as to become an overcomer. It is a fact that all will not go on with the Lord, will not press into Him, will not seek His kingdom first and above all else, and will not lay down their lives to be led by the Spirit. There are way stations along the pilgrims’ way that become their homesteads. They/we/I/you could have pressed on but will not, but some will. Now, that is self-responsibility!
2. I hope that you are one of those faithful ones who expect the rapture at any time. That’s a mark of true faith, even though that point of true faith has been factually wrong for about 2,000 years. Basically, it is better to be faithful than accurate – if you cannot be both. Since Jesus left, the faithful have been expecting His return at any time. But, it does seem like the signs He gave us to watch for have come about regarding the rapture, which comes 7 years before His return to earth and the beginning of His 1,000-year kingdom.

If you, expectant one, have been wondering what you should be doing in view of your expectancy, you might do as Daniel did when he read the scriptures and found that the end of their [the Jews’] seventy-year captivity was at hand – Dan. 9:1-19. He started praying and repenting of his and Israel’s sins. Paul instructed us to be expectant of the rapture and other end times events, and to comfort other believers about His coming for us. He said we are to be on the alert but to be self-controlled [don’t give up your day job], and to encourage and build up one another as we continue in our expectancy. In all of that, it seems that we should not sell all that we have and go sit on a mountain top. We will not be given the hour or the day, but we are to know the season of His return.

1. There is a rule that says, “We cannot be certain of anything until it can be measured.” That came from mathematicians, who say it applies to everything, not just the mathematical! I did not believe its broad use and accuracy when I first heard it, but began to apply it to several non-mathematical areas of my life. First, I started with measuring God’s love for me [us] by the offering of Himself on the cross. Bingo! The rule worked. It applied 100%. Next, I measured Nancy’s love for me as shown over our 2 years of dating and 65 years of marriage [especially the first 5 years of her marriage to this immature young man]. Another “bingo,” at about 99%. I think those mathematicians are right, and I think we are always taking measure of others even though we are not aware of it.
2. A reminder: Our Father is a potter – Is. 64:8. He makes sewer pipes and beautiful vases out of the same clay. Both of them serve His purposes. When sewer pipes have flaws, most of them are still approved for their purposes. That is an observation. When vases have flaws He either applies a bit of pressure here and there to mold it properly, or starts over after having reduced it back to a lump. But, the lump is not discarded. The Potter does not complain, He does not blame the lump, and He is not angry or frustrated. The lump is helpless; it can only yield to His hands. We are his workmanship only.
3. Why does the Lord do things for us called miraculous without our asking and without our knowing of them until after the fact? Of course, He is always working around, in, and through us to do wonderful things, but I’m talking about “miracles.” A year ago, after a week of fasting on water only, He silently healed my knees, and I only noticed it two days later. One evening this week I noticed that my generalized aches and pains, which had been continually present for years unless I was laying down, had ceased. They have continued ceased. I had not been “prayed for” about those two conditions, and He did not tell me He was going to heal me – but He healed me. Why does the Lord do things for us called miraculous without our asking and without our knowing of them until after the fact? He loves us dearly, and we love him so poorly in comparison. It’s as if He delights in giving us surprise gifts, isn’t it? He is wonderful. Lord, you are wonderful.
4. It has been pointed out that all of creation is about Jesus Christ, not just [all of] the Bible – Luke 24:27. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” – Rom. 1:20.

The Old Testament presents Him in prophecy, the Gospels present Him in history, the Book of Acts presents Him in the early church, the epistles present Him in experience, and the Revelation presents Him in His coming glory. Add to that list that we of the church present Him in varying clarity and intensity. The Lord and His glory are being dangled before us in every way, even though some may not see any of Him and none of us understand all of which we do see.

But if the Lord was clear enough for us to see and understand much of His continuous glory, He would not be magnificent enough for our needs. So, we see and hear Him as we are able, although not always as He is. What we want Him to be clouds our minds at times. It is challenging to us [to our flesh] that He did not come to make bad men good, but to give dead men life. Read in Luke 15 about the prodigal son who lost his life [“this son of mine was dead”] before he could become the son he was called to be.

1. Peter instructed the youngers to submit themselves to their elders – 1 Peter 5:5. Well, at 87, I am not a younger in age but I continue to follow Peter’s instructions. During all of my walk in the Spirit, since age 34, I have been given elders, or have rounded them up, or have raised them up, so that I would have available and qualified ones. That is a principle that should be applied to every area of life.

Now, in these years, I am blessed to have elders who are natural and spiritual sons, to submit myself to when I need it and when they see that I need it. I have paid attention to those relationships, and they have brought great comfort to me, and to Nancy. I know that the Lord has often put me out in front in matters, so I need those whom I can rely upon to “elder me.” I need their on-going life-involvement, especially when/if I don’t think I do. An elder to me is anyone who has walked with the Lord in life [or in any narrow part of life, such as finances, counseling, etc.] longer and deeper than I have. That brother or sister may be half my age, but still be my elder in their area of expertise. I greatly appreciate that person as a gift from the Lord. My natural sons are among my spiritual elders.

1. If you are a peacemaker, you have Who and what it takes to make heaven in the midst of hell and to bring light into darkness. You have seen people and situations change before your eyes [but not every time]. You, yourself, are a real forgiver of those who have sinned gravely, even against you. You have Life, and you know that it does not originate from you. You have learned that force is powerless, and that the call of the cross is in the heart of every believer. Peacemakers are called sons of God for good reason, because they are – Matt. 5:9.

Stay ready, eager, and peaceful.

Eat ready, eager, and peaceful.

Sleep ready, eager, and peaceful.

Play ready, eager, and peaceful.

Drive ready, eager, and peaceful.

The Lord is at hand.