



Our Little Children— Specially Blessed by God!

By Selmer L. Hegvold

Most of us cannot help but marvel over the lovely innocence of beautiful children cooing away in their cribs, crawling on the floor or scampering about the play area outdoors.

Neither can we help but believe there are angels who constantly protect these little ones from injury or death as they blunder thoughtlessly into danger after danger!

Our children do not possess charmed lives. They can get into mischief quickly — stumble into danger at the wink of an eye. But angels do exist. God's angels can and do intercede for children faster than that "wink of an eye." The Bible tells of angels intervening in the lives of God's servants in both the Old and New Testaments. Time and space cannot hinder their speedy intercession to save God's people — and their children — from dire calamities.

All the children of God

To God we are all His own little children, if we are begotten by His Spirit (I John 2:1, 12, 18). He watches over and protects us with a special loving concern.

And we can be thankful that he does! We really are, of ourselves, helpless amidst the growing problems of this age. Not just ordinary dangers surround us and our children, but God's Church also faces assaults from the media and hostile groups outside the organization. We are indeed like little children, as defenseless as they are in this world of Satan's. We need help from above — the "strong hand from someplace"!

Increasing pressures on parents striving to rear their children prop-

erly and safely wear us all down. Some give up and let their progeny go their own way.

Only when we are truly born of God as members of His Family in the Kingdom of God will we have universal safety from the wiles of Satan. Without the devil around (Rev. 20:2-3), great strides can be made. Only when Christ's rulership over all the earth comes can we expect complete relief from the dangers that surround us and our children.

But what about now? How can we raise our children safely and teach them the proper way of life in today's world? Well, would God call us to understand His truth and actively participate in His great Work if He were not willing to provide protection for us and our children? No, our children can, in the future, be strong laborers for God.

The Kingdom of God is now just ahead of us. The prime talent for the Work of the Kingdom resides in the homes of the saints today — in our children. God knows this. He planned it that way. And our Creator expresses His great love for our children through the many blessings He makes available for them.

Blessing of little children

Jesus Christ showed great concern for little children. However, initially the disciples failed to understand this concern. "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on

them, and departed thence" (Matt. 19:13-15).

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:15-17).

Luke and Mark broadened the concept of the blessing of the little children. Luke used the term *infants* to describe these children, and Mark recorded that Christ was able to take them up in His arms (Mark 10:13-16). That Christ could take them up in His arms shows they were not more than six or seven years of age. It is obvious Christ was blessing small children, too young to provide solutions to their own problems.

Notice that God has commissioned angels to the task at hand. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven *their angels* do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

Herbert W. Armstrong recognized God's concern for children and the importance of the ceremony Christ performed. Thus, from the beginning of the Church in this era, Mr. Armstrong has observed this moving ceremony for our children.

For years the Church conducted the blessing of the little children — those not blessed in previous years — in the last afternoon service of the Feast of Tabernacles. Over the years, as the

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Notice also I John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

II John 7 makes another statement about false prophets and deceivers: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ *is come* in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

There is a slight variation in the Greek text from which the English words *is come* are translated in this verse. The words here literally mean "is coming." Here it is again apparent that Jesus Christ not only came in the flesh, but that He still "is coming" in flesh, living His life in true Christians today.

How does Christ live in us?

If Christ is really living in us, we will live the same kind of life Christ lived. Christ will not live his life in us in a contrary manner to the way He lived *in the flesh*.

We already saw that Christ kept His Father's commandments. If Christ is living in us, we will be living that way too! When we fail to live up to that standard perfectly, as a result of a sin, we will repent and quit living in that sin. Our overall way of life will be that of commandment-keeping, not commandment-breaking.

A person in whom Christ is living will know the true doctrines of His Church, as they are revealed in the Bible. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17). A true Christian will also have love and not hatred for other true Christians — brethren in God's Church (John 13:34-35).

Down through the ages God has sent servants to carry out His Work and His will, but most people rejected them. This was true of the prophets and of Jesus Christ Himself and all His apostles and ministers down to and including the present time. But those who have Jesus living His life in them will not make this mistake. They recognize and accept those Jesus Christ sends. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth

me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

Would Christ reject His own rule?

Going one step further, such people will also accept the rule of those Christ sends. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

Some who have left God's Church loudly proclaim their loyalty to Christ while they reject His rule in His true Church! Such people will not "hear" the ones God sends (I John 4:6) because Christ is no longer living in them, or else never did!

Since Jesus Christ lives in His people — in His Church — those people will keep the Sabbath holy, the same day He kept holy each week. They further will keep the same Holy Days that Christ kept and commanded to be kept forever (Lev. 23:21, 31, 41). (Jesus Christ is the God who was with Israel in the wilderness. He gave the Ten Commandments and the Holy Days to His people during the time of Moses. See I Cor. 10:4.)

Since God's people collectively — the Church — are the modern "body of Christ," they will be doing His Work instead of "doing their own thing." Just as Jesus said He did the Work that the Father sent Him to do (John 4:34), so His servants today, since He lives in them today, will be doing that same Work.

The true servants of Christ will not be speaking against God's law or the testimony of Christ. Most ministers today preach against the law of God and many say you are under a curse if you try to obey that law, not understanding the scriptures on this subject. "To the *law* and to the *testimony*: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is *no light in them*" (Isa. 8:20).

There are many false prophets and ministers in the world today. Examine those who claim to be the true ministers of God by these Bible principles, and then you can know whether they are led by and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, or by some other spirit. □

Little Children

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numbers attending the Feast grew and the number of infants to be blessed increased, the demands in time to perform the service also grew.

Mr. Armstrong instructed that the blessing of the little children should no longer be done at the Feast sites. He noted that God had raised up numerous churches pastored by dedicated, qualified ministers of Jesus Christ. The service became the responsibility of the pastors in these churches.

The second Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles was set for the parents to come prepared for the service in each church. So just before the sermon on the second Sabbath following the close of the Feast, the scriptures quoted above are read and a general prayer is given. The ministers, in pairs, take each little child up, lay their hands on him or her and pray for God's protection and blessing beyond that which the parents are able to provide.

A profound meaning

As members watch and each child is taken up in the ministers' arms, a sentiment of appreciation for God's love and concern spreads throughout the congregation. Prayers pour up silently before His throne, adding an "amen" to those of the ministers who pray over the children.

Throughout the 15 minutes or so of this special ceremony, all appreciate that each child being so blessed is specifically sanctified before God in heaven. Many adult tears come at the innocence and trust in the eyes of the little ones as they look up into the faces of the ministers holding them. There is no comparable service in the Church of the living God!

Look forward to this ceremony in your church. This special blessing is for *your* children, so they can have God's guaranteed extra protection and blessing for the troubled days through which they have yet to live. Then when Christ returns — very shortly now — to receive them to Himself, they will have been prepared to become co-laborers with Him in His limitless universe for all eternity! □