

# **BROKEN FOR YOU**

Your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven

**A**NANIAS WAS AT HOME IN Damascus when Jesus suddenly appeared to him in a vision. “Ananias!” Jesus said. “Here I am, Lord,” Ananias responded. “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. Right now he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might receive his sight.”

Ananias was taken aback by this. He had heard of Saul, that he was persecuting believers in Jerusalem and that he was on his way to Damascus to do the same. He didn’t hide his misgivings, but broached them to the Lord like he would have to a long-time friend.

“But, Lord, I’ve heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name,” he said.

Jesus was well aware of Saul’s actions. He wasn’t dissuaded.

“Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before the Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel. I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name,” Jesus told him.

That was enough for Ananias. He went out, found the house and, laying his hands on Saul, said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard.”

Both visions, Saul’s and Ananias’s, provide food for thought about the personality of our Lord and Savior. Jesus didn’t appear to Ananias in a blinding light. Nor did Ananias fall out under the power. But Jesus had just appeared to Saul as a light “brighter than the noonday sun,” and he and all his men had fallen out under the power. Jesus had chosen him, a zealot Jew, to be an instrument for taking the Gospel to the nations. But he had also chosen Ananias, a mere disciple, to effectuate a spiritual work through the laying on of his hands upon

Saul. These accounts show us a Christ who is fully engaged in the propagation of his Gospel and the kingdom of heaven, appearing at various times in different ways to whom he chooses to accomplish his aims.

He hasn’t changed. He is still the same, appearing to contemporaries of his choosing to accomplish his will in the earth today.

**S**tovall Weems launched Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1998, after he and his wife Kerri had decided to leave their home state of Louisiana to start a church plant on the East Coast. The church experienced remarkable growth over the next twenty years, branching out with campuses in places as Washington, D.C., Paris, and Zimbabwe. In 2018, Celebration was regularly listed both as one of the largest churches in the country with over 14,000 members, and one of the fastest growing, too.

In March of 2018, Good Friday and Passover coincidentally fell on the same day. Weems asked Paul Wilbur, a traveling worship leader who was familiar with ancient Hebrew and also a member of Celebration, to lead a Good Friday service by celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Wilbur obliged and presided over the service while Weems took a secondary role.

The service reached the point of reenacting the Lord’s supper. Wilbur passed the bread to him and the others on stage, and then began reciting Jesus’ words from the Gospel accounts in Hebrew. Weems, standing at Wilbur’s side, first heard Wilbur’s voice, but then recognized that it had morphed into a different voice which was also reciting in Hebrew. Weems looked up, over his shoulder, and saw the Lord. Experiencing the discerning of spirits, he was transported into the heavenly kingdom where Jesus himself was presiding over the celebration of his own supper.

We had the opportunity to sit down and talk with Weems about his vision. When we first interviewed him six months after it happened, it was evident that he was still reeling from the experience and the revelation of the scriptures wrapped up with it.

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know. God knows. And I know that such a person was caught up to Paradise.*

**We're a scrappy startup magazine that's beginning to grow because we're trying to get over what the Lord wants for the body. Did you initially have some hesitation in giving us an interview about your experience?**

One of my big revelations was that it was all about the body of Christ, that we're all equal, all valuable. It was interesting because after it happened, I knew that I had to share it that weekend. After that, the Lord told me not to talk about it unless someone asked me. And not only that, but it had to be in the right environment, because it's just very precious. So when you called, well, you fit the bill. I'm not afraid to talk about it now. He has freed me up to share more now, but I'm glad you came.

**We understand you had an encounter with the Lord in a Good Friday/Passover service. Tell us about it.**

Let me say, I've had some powerful experiences with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit was there [that night]. But when I heard that voice, that audible voice, I felt another presence. The presence, the person of Jesus was there, and I turned and saw him. The third time he spoke, I was in the heavenly realm. I was at the Lord's table. It was like the Last Supper, but it wasn't what happened on earth. It was the heavenly version. He was facing the congregation, but in this realm he was facing the congregation of heaven, the church of the firstborn. After talking to scholars, I've come to believe that it was Mount Zion and Jesus was leading the Passover there both as the high priest and the Lamb that was slain.

**So you were existing or participating in two realms at the same time?**

Yes. Since the vision I've spoken with Paul Wilbur and Jewish scholars. It was what they call the heaven-to-earth principle. When we're having Passover here [on earth], it is going on up there. The book of Hebrews gives context to this.

**How did you know that you weren't re-living the Last Supper?**

I knew I was physically standing on [Celebration Church's] platform, but I was in another realm, in heaven, and Jesus was next to me. I came to realize that we were at a communion table with the disciples. But it wasn't the room that we read about in the Bible. This was a heavenly place. We were on a mountain, and I could sense the heavenly host. The table was white. I could sense the spirits of just men made perfect [as described in the book of Hebrews]. It was like the church in heaven, but I didn't dare look up [from the bread I was holding in my hands]. [We were in this heavenly realm], but it was a full immersion of what it felt like in that room during the Last Supper.

**You say that being there was so sacred, so holy, that you would not have dared to look around or try to get a better view of Jesus' face. Are you able to describe what it was like to encounter the personality of the second Godhead?**

This is the first of many dichotomies—two [conflicting]

things at once that makes it hard for the human mind to merge these things. The first thing that I was taken aback with was, that Jesus has a personality. He was fully God but many times we forget the man Christ Jesus. He came as a man, so he has his own unique personality. And I can't describe the closeness that I felt with Jesus. His voice was a reflection of his attributes. So the one thing that stuck out to me was Jesus, he was passionate—he was not emotional. The fear of God was so strong, but it was clean, pure. It was accepting and not condemning. And at the same time I experienced his total, overriding love, total acceptance. And the authority he carries. There was no sin consciousness, though I felt totally known. When you are next to him, you have to bow—there's something about all that strength and authority he has, it just kind of bows you somewhat, but his overwhelming love is also flooding you.

Jesus is the best version of every type of man or leader. He's the perfect man. He's the second Adam. And—I'm trying to process this—we're in this other realm, and all these things are happening. You feel this [holy] fear, and need to bow, but I don't want to move. It's terrifying, but I also felt that I was part of the team. He's God, he's Lord, he's Christ, but he treats you as an equal. I've always had my relationship with the Lord—that he is my Lord and Savior, he is my king. But I never had the understanding [like this] that he is also my brother. That I am family. I am on his team, and it is about our Father's business. You've known him forever, but then it's all brand new. You're terrified to be there, but then you're supposed to be there.

**You mentioned that there was no sin consciousness?**

Yes, you know the scripture, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”? We're all so far from God's standard. That's why he went to the cross. That's the last thing you should ever think about that would keep you from God—that's why Jesus died on the cross. He had to do all the work.

**And you've talked about loyalty since the vision. Is this where loyalty comes in?**

Yes. Now, on [Celebration Church's] platform, we have the bread in our hands, the broken piece of the matzah bread. Paul Wilbur started speaking about the bread and that is when it all happened. I had the bread in my hands and that same matzah bread is what I was looking at in both realms. I know that Jesus died [historically], but my feeling was that he hadn't gone to the cross yet. I looked at the bread, the bread that I had been holding in my hand, and at that moment I knew that Jesus served me that bread. He had a piece of the broken bread in his hand, he was not looking at me. He was looking out [toward the first assembly, the heavenly host]. So, I realized that he was inviting me, including me, to partake and be part of his table. I knew

that I was telling him to go die for me. I knew that if I ate that bread, I was telling him to go to the cross and die for my sins and, in return, I would give my life to him.

**How does communion tie into the covenant?**

As I said, I realized what Jesus was saying, asking, of me—I knew that if I took that bread, I was telling Jesus, Yes, I want you to go shed your blood for my sins. I knew it was covenant, it was a blood bond for life and death, and it was so sacred. [I sensed in my spirit] Jesus was saying, I'm going to save you and conquer sin and death and the grave. I'm going to open heaven, I'm going to give you eternal life, I'm going to give you all my power, all of my authority, all of my love. Imagine, you are making a covenant with God, and God says, I'm going to shed my blood for you and I'm going to give you everything. I'm going to give you the keys to the kingdom. But if I took that bread, I was saying, Yes, Jesus, go shed your blood for my sins, *my* sins.

One of the main things God taught me is the power of communion, what that is supposed to represent, and the power of healing that it has in your life. It is about the covenant. Communion is very personal. [You're telling Jesus] You, Jesus, go shed your blood for my sins, and in turn, I am going to lay my life for you so that when you [Jesus] rise, you're going to rise through me, and it's not going to be I who live, but Christ who lives in me. That is the covenant.

**Do you believe the Lord's appearance was a message for your church or for the body as a whole?**

I know this experience I had with him, he wants to have this type of personal experience with everyone. He's going to really sacrifice—his blood is going to be shed. And your part of the covenant is that you lay down your life for Jesus and his resurrection life is going to come through you, his resurrection power. He's resurrecting through us so that he can live his life through us. So that he can continue to carry on the mission of his Father. So he can bring all his lost children home. And then one day he will return and establish his kingdom and crush every single one of his enemies under his feet. We are going to see those things restored. And when they're restored, we're going to see the power Jesus intended them to have.

**You came away with a new revelation of his broken body?**

I came back with the whole revelation that his body was broken for all of us alike. So when we come together for communion, we should have the principles down about what we do at the table. It is about his body being broken and it again being made whole as members of the body. Everyone is important. Yes, Christ died so we could be

*The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them.*

reconciled to God, but it was also so we could be reconciled to one another in the power of the covenant. We make sure we've forgiven one another. That's why after the vision we celebrate the Lord's Supper entirely differently than we did before.

**And yet it wasn't all just about the Lord's Supper. It was larger than that?**

At its core, it is everything that relates to the covenant. [Before the vision] I would never use that word. Unless we were doing some kind of teaching, we would just never talk about it. But now the word is the most sacred, special, beautiful word. Like with communion, I believe that part of what the Lord showed me is that things have been buried or hidden, keeping the church from tapping into its power. The sinner's prayer is fine, but that's nowhere in the Bible. We have cheapened the blood of Jesus by just saying, "Come and say a prayer." It was never meant to be like that. It is a covenant. It is a blood covenant. If you take that bread, you're saying, Go shed your blood for my sins. And God is doing that. The least we can do is [respond], "Of course I'll lay down my life for you. Of course I'll get water baptized." The church is weak because we're not doing things according to the Biblical patterns Jesus established, because there is power in the pattern.

**When Jesus decided to appear to you, he must have known that it was going to be pretty disruptive.**

Yes, totally. We had confirmation in January [2018] of a revival, but everything else has been one hundred percent disruption—everything—massive disruption. And I feel like I'm on the clock trying to get the essentials [of Hebrews 6] in place. Because if we don't have them in place, the Bible says then it's impossible to mature. How can we go out and make disciples? Those covenant things are how we're going to heal and love, and the world's going to notice.

**Why do you think the Lord chose to appear to you, the pastor of a mega-church, and not someone else?**

After it happened, I was constantly wrestling with this, asking, Lord, why did you choose us, why did you reveal this to me? There's a million better people. How am I supposed to get this message out? We're not even on TV. We can't even market. I'm going through [in my head] all the people who would do a better job, all of the churches that could be a better model or be in a better position to communicate this. The Lord finally gave me the answer I was looking for. He said, "Because I choose whom I choose."

*Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem . . . the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above.*

**W**eems's Good Friday visitation deepens our insight of the Lord's supper and the church's witness to the world. First, there is Jesus' hint that the Supper wasn't just a one-off event, but the beginning of an endless celebration of the new covenant in the new age.

*When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took the cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."*

Jesus institutes the supper just before he is to be crucified. He divides the bread—his broken body—and shares the wine—the blood of the new covenant—with his disciples, a type of the church. He adds that he will celebrate the supper with them again, but not until "the kingdom of God comes." Contemporary preaching tells us that the Second Coming will usher in that kingdom, but the truth is, it is already here. Jesus' resurrection inaugurated the new age. Weems's vision shows us that the Lord, telling his disciples that he would "drink of the fruit of the vine" again with them, was saying that he'd celebrate it anew after he had been crucified and the

Father had raised him out from among the dead.  
Then there is Mount Zion in Hebrews.

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

The author of Hebrews writes that we, believers on earth, have come to Mount Zion. We are there now. The church isn't some isolated outpost left to her own devices to work out salvation; we are full members of an active kingdom that includes all those just-men-made-perfect that have gone before us. In other words, Jesus presides in the here and now over a kingdom of the assembly of the first born which includes those of us still walking out the faith on earth.

The realization of this heaven-to-earth connection, as Weems put it, should embolden both our faith and our witness. The Great Commission isn't cabined to preachers on platforms with microphones, but encompasses each member in particular being his witness in the earth.

"You shall be my witnesses," he said. The church's active participation in his kingdom is her witness. We're not only to pray that God's kingdom be done on earth as it is in heaven, but live it out as well. **b**

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