Volume Seventy-eight

The Voice of Truth International

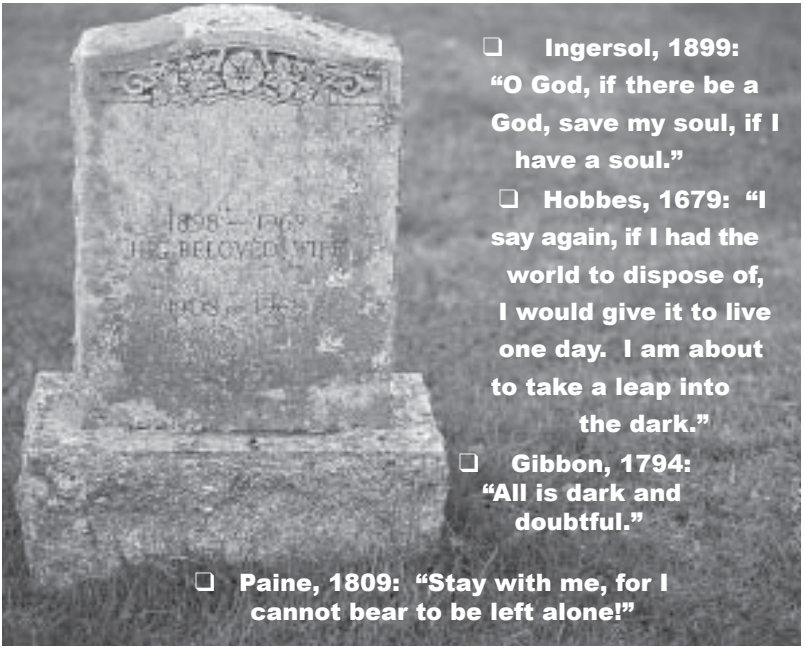
And now, defiant of the forces that would call me,
Wresting from His care the one He loves,
He shields me from the world,
From all that would endanger,
And claims again the triumph of His love:
"Thou...art...*Mine*!"

An Atheist Seldom Dies in that Faith

Bill Dillon

Bold words are often spoken by those who claim "there is no God". When days are flowing well and smooth and life is hopeful and strong, such utterances may come easy. But what about the darker days of sickness, financial reverses, loss of loved ones, and ....? What of the end of our life? When seconds become short eternities, is it easy to say, "I don't believe"? Does the infidel's conviction retreat in the face of death?

Think on the words of dying disbelievers:



A Clean Church

Ephesians 5:25-27

GOD DESIRES IT

Saved Are in the Church
- Acts 2:47
- 1 Corinthians 12:13

Saved Are Pure
- 1 Peter 1:22
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Must Remain Pure
- Matthew 5:13-16
- 1 John 1:7

SIN SPOTS IT

Restore Ering One
- Matthew 6:1
- Matthew 18:15-17

Some Sin Willfully
- Hebrews 10:26
- 2 Peter 2:21-22

Must Withdraw
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6
- Romans 16:17

GOD CLEANSES IT

Church is Pure Again
- 1 Corinthians 5:7
- Ephesians 5:27

Has Good Reputation
- Acts 2:46-47
- Acts 5:11, 14

God is Glorified
- Ephesians 5:21
- 1 Timothy 3:15

Donnie Barnes

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"And Now Why Are You Waiting?" Acts 22:16

SOME TARRY IN DISOBEDENCE BECAUSE THEY...

DO NOT UNDERSTAND
- John 8:44-45 • Matthew 28:19
- Acts 8:30-39

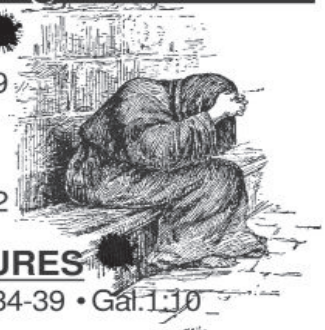
SEE NO NEED
- Romans 3:23 • Galatians 3:22

HAVE WORLDLY PLEASURES
- John 12:42-43 • Matthew 10:34-39 • Gal. 1:10

ARE NOT SURE OF HOLDING OUT
- Rev. 2:10 • Matt. 11:28 • 1 Cor. 10:13 • 1 Peter 5:7

VIEW THE PRICE AS TOO HIGH
- Proverbs 23:23 • Mark 8:36-38 • Hebrews 11:24-26

KEEP THINKING OF TOMORROW
- Proverbs 27:1 • 2 Cor. 6:2 • James 4:13-15



PAUL DID NOT CONTINUE TO TARRY . . . . . .

HE OBEYED AND BECAME A CHRISTIAN

Donnie Barnes http://www.biblecharts.org

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The churches of Christ salute you
(Romans 16:16).

Some Needed Clarity Regarding Hell

Byron Nichols

It seems to be getting more common every day for people in the religious world to not just *doubt,* but to outright *reject* the idea that hell is real. Among such people are even some who are religious leaders. Also, it is not all that uncommon to find folks who will admit that there is a hell, but who do not believe that it will be eternal or everlasting.

Let's try to see what we can find regarding these beliefs in the Bible. We all need to know what God's Word actually says about these matters that are so critically important.

NO HELL…An Appealing Doctrine

If we could find evidence to support the idea that there will never be a hell, a place of punishment, that would definitely be attractive, wouldn't it**?!** However, before we immediately jump on that bandwagon, we need to review what has been revealed to us in the Scriptures on this matter. This is too important to take lightly or to be willing to take a chance on**!**

The Bible definitely talks about "hell," but it also talks about "hades". Unfortunately, many assume that these two words are referring to the same place, that hades is just a less harsh-sounding word that means the same as hell. However, that is not correct.

The words are different. The use of hades in the King James Version has unfortunately brought about a good bit of confusion and misguidance regarding this word. Hades is used in the New Testament to identify a temporary place for souls after death, but before the Judgment. It is a different place from hell — different in name, in purpose, and in duration.

The Duration of Both Heaven & Hell

There are those who believe that the punishment of the lost, the unbelieving and the unfaithful, will actually be brief, because they believe that the punishment will be in the form of annihilation (total destruction). This is in direct conflict with what the Scriptures say quite clearly.

The words "eternal" and "everlasting" are used repeatedly with reference to how long hell will last. Both words mean ceaseless, forever, without end. In Matthew 25:41 Jesus was describing somewhat what the judgment scene will be like, and He said to the unfaithful, *"'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting** fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"* John describes what the torment and punishment in hell will be like as he writes in Revelation 14:11, *"And the smoke of their torment ascends **forever and ever**..."*

Jesus provided some enlightenment on this matter by dealing with the duration of both heaven and hell in the same verse. We find this in Matthew 25:46 where He declared that the **unfaithful** *"will go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the **righteous** into **eternal life**."* Since the words *everlasting* and *eternal* mean the same, it becomes obvious that the punishment of the wicked is going to last the same length of time as the reward of the righteous! They will both be without end!

Who Needs This Lesson?

(1) Everyone who does not know God or has not obeyed the Gospel.

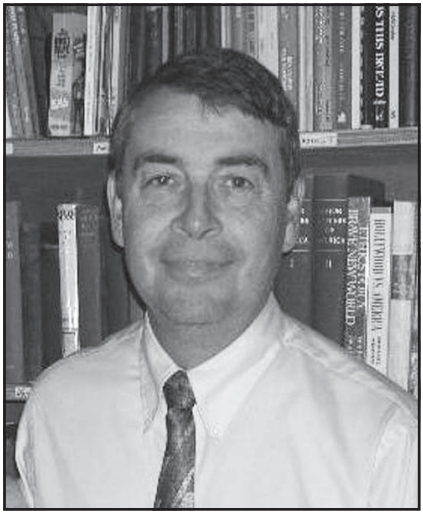
- 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, *"...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."*

(2) Everyone who does know God and has obeyed the Gospel. Why do these need this lesson?

- 1 Corinthians 10:12, *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."*
- Matthew 10:22, *"...he who endures to the end will be saved."*
- Revelation 2:10, *"...be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

Let's Summarize…

- There is a place the Bible calls "hades," where all the dead go on a temporary basis to await the resurrection of all the dead.
- There is another place the Bible calls "hell," and this is an eternal, everlasting, permanent, never-ending place of punishment which will be occupied by all who have rejected God and those who have fallen away from God.
- Then there is still another place which the Bible calls "heaven," and this is that place that most everyone wants to go to, but Jesus says that few will inhabit it because most have been unwilling to obey the Gospel and submit themselves to the will of God.
- Each one of us needs to make up our mind for sure as to which place we want to occupy forever – heaven or hell. Assuming that heaven is our choice, we then need to be diligent in making the necessary preparations so that our desire is fulfilled. ✞



The Faith of Father Abraham

Jerry Bates

We hear a lot about faith in our modern religious world. Most people believe that one is saved by faith only, and most would say that they have faith. In Romans 4, Paul discussed the faith that a person must have if he is to be saved, but he did not define it in an academic fashion. Rather, he simply used Abraham as an example. In Romans 4:12, Paul wrote that Abraham is the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, i.e., Jews and Gentiles, if they *"walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised."* Paul wanted us to look at Abraham as our example. We can be saved by faith, if we have the same kind of faith that Abraham had. It is not that we must do exactly the same things, but that we have the same kind of faith. What kind of faith did Abraham have?

Firstly, we observe that Abraham's faith was in God. Notice in 4:17 what he believed about God. He believed that God *"gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did."* Abraham's faith was not in himself or in earthly probabilities. He believed God could give life to the dead, most likely referring to the supernatural birth of Isaac long after his and Sarah's physical bodies had grown too old to have children. However, Abraham had never seen that happen, and never even seen any miracles at all as far as we know. Nevertheless, he believed that he was going to be the father of a great nation. He believed it simply because God had promised that he would. If God said something would happen, it *would* happen – without question. His *faith* was not perfect, but it was in a *perfect God.*

In what is your faith? As I said, most would say they have faith, but faith in what? Some place their faith in *faith;* this is the faith of much of the modern self-help books. Some place their faith in *themselves,* in what they have or have not

done. Since they have lived good lives and are good people, they are confident they will be saved. Others place their faith in a *religion.* Since they are sincere in whatever religion they follow, that should be sufficient, they think. Others place their faith in a *scheme* or a *plan.* Because they have done certain acts, such as having been baptized or going to a church service on Sunday, surely they are going to heaven, they believe. *Our faith must be in God, which would include faith in the resurrection of His Son, Jesus* (Romans 4:24,25).

Secondly, we find that Abraham's faith was in the power of God. We read in Romans 4:18,19 *"who contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb."* Abraham had hope, although it was contrary to hope. Sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? How could he have hope and yet not have hope at the same time? Abraham earnestly desired a child, but physically he knew it was impossible. However, God said he was going to have a son; thus, he confidently expected a son. What was the basis of his hope? Nothing but faith in the power of God.

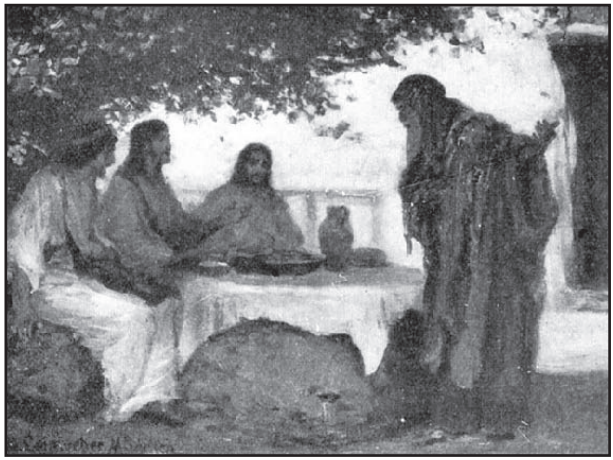
To some, this is illogical and irrational. They charge that Christians are refusing to face facts or are out of touch with reality. Others call it blind optimism or a blind leap in the dark. However, Abraham was not refusing to face facts, and neither was he out of touch with reality. He knew he was too old to have children. He knew the weakness of his and Sarah's bodies, but he also knew the greatness and power of God. He knew that physically he could not have children, yet he also believed God, with whom nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37).

Do you have this kind of faith? Some refuse to believe the miracles in the Bible or believe in Jesus' resurrection because they seem impossible; nevertheless, they steadfastly claim to be right with God. Their faith is not like Abraham's. We should not ignore problems in life, yet neither should we be intimidated nor overcome by them. Our God is greater than them all. Many refuse to accept Christ or to be baptized because they cannot reason everything out. Abraham believed, even when it went contrary to human reason.

Finally, we find that Abraham had faith in the promises of God. *"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God"* (Romans 4:20). To waver means to hesitate or to be in doubt. Abraham knew God could and would do what He had promised. This must have been very difficult, because there was a long period of 25 years from the time of the promise to the birth of Isaac. Yet, he continued to believe even when year after year went by with no son. Abraham never took his eyes off of God. He had questions, and maybe occasional doubts, but he never quit serving the Lord. He

gave glory to God, even though everything had not worked out as he would have liked. He was not like some ingrates who claim to know God but do not honor Him as God (Romans 1:21).

Do you have faith in the promises of God? He has promised that He will care for us (Matthew 6:33); nonetheless, many seem to trust more in their bank accounts or other material things than God. Some give up their faith because they did not receive some blessing that they sorely wanted and for which they prayed. On the other hand, some give up their faith because of some trial or loss that they feel that they do not deserve. None of these things are like the faith of Abraham.



We must also notice that Abraham's faith was in what God had said, not in what he personally wanted. Our faith must be God-focused and Bible-based. It seems the faith of many is based more on what they want or think than in what God has said. A simple *"Thus saith the Lord"* is not sufficient for many. From the surveys I have seen, the vast majority of Americans, both young and old, believe that moral truth depends on the situation. In other words, the Bible alone is no longer a safe guide in matters of morals. This is nothing like the faith of Abraham.

What can we learn from this? Yes, faith can save each one of us just as Abraham was saved by faith. However, our faith must be like Abraham's faith: a firm faith in the power and promises of God, a faith that prompted him to do just as God commanded, a faith that enabled him to persevere through years of not receiving a promised blessing, a faith that trusted in God rather than in something else. Abraham's faith was not expressed in empty words. He gave his life to what he believed and devoted himself to doing what God said. If you are following in the steps of the faith of Abraham, you will do the same. You will express your faith in repentance and confession (Romans 10:9) and be united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-6). *"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10). ✞

Did Dinosaurs Really Exist?

Louis Rushmore

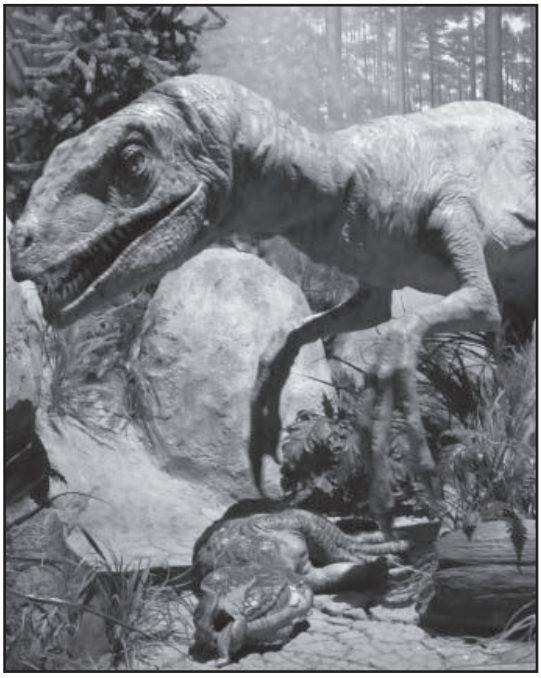
Yes, the fossil evidence for the existence of dinosaurs is overwhelming. Dinosaurs really did exist. In addition to abundant fossil remains to prove that dinosaurs once roamed the earth, the **historical record** also testifies to the former existence of what we call "dinosaurs." The Bible is just one of the historical records that verify that dinosaurs once inhabited earth.

The word "dinosaur," meaning "terrible lizard" was added to the English language in 1841, and so it is no wonder that the word "dinosaur" does not appear in English Bible translations such as the *King James* that predated the existence of the word "dinosaur." However, the Bible does describe dinosaur-like creatures within its pages.

Job 40:15-24 introduces the "**behemoth**." From verse 15, one learns: (1) This beast cohabited the planet with mankind. (2) "He eats grass like an ox" (NKJV). Verse 16 says "strength is in its hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles." Verse 17 compares this creature's tail to a cedar tree – one of the largest trees in girth (up to 52') and length (up to 152'), a far different kind of tail from modern-day, large, land animals like the hippopotamus or the elephant. In addition, the behemoth had strong thighs. Verse 18 attributes to the behemoth "bones" like "beams of brass" and "ribs like bars of iron." Verse 19 affirms the behemoth to be the most massive of all the creatures God created. Furthermore, this creature was such that only God could slay it. Whereas verse 20 notes that the behemoth was at home on the land (e.g., "mountains"), this creature was fearless in marshes and rivers, even at flood stage (see also verse 23). Verse 23 also identifies one of the places on earth where the behemoth lived – around the Jordan River. A form of the Hebrew word for "behemoth" occurs 190 times in the Old Testament and is variously translated as "beast" or "cattle"; some of those may very well also refer to what we call dinosaurs today.

A dinosaur-like sea creature (verses 1-2, 7, 31-32), the "**leviathan**," appears in Job 41:1-34. The leviathan could not be domesticated or tamed (verse 4) and was unsuitable for a pet (verse 5). It was invincible (verse 9) to all weaponry of the ancient world (i.e., sword, spear, dart, javelin, arrows and slingstones, verses 26, 28), and the leviathan was fearless (verse 33). This creature evidently did not necessarily pursue humans naturally, but if approached by men, it would readily attack (verse 10). The leviathan was swift enough in water to make whitewater waves as it swam (verses 31-32).

Yet, the leviathan also came ashore, too (verse 30). He was a massive creature (verse 12) with natural armor including scales (verses 13-17). The sight of him as he raised himself up struck fear in warriors (verse 25). His destructive powers crushed "iron as straw and bronze as rotten wood" (verse 27). Whereas the behemoth was the largest creature God had made (Job 40:19), the leviathan was the fiercest creature on earth (Job 41:9-10, 33-34).



God's description of the leviathan in the Bible provokes man's imagination because nothing like it lives today. It had a noteworthy, powerful neck (verse 22). The leviathan's teeth were no less alarming (verse 14). His belly was a remarkable breastplate useful for both defense and offense, leaving distinctive, pointed impressions in the mud wherever it had been (verse 30). This beast's eyes shone as miniature suns (verse 18). The most astonishing description of the leviathan was that it breathed fire (verse 18-21)! Smoke rolled from its nostrils (verse 20), and the leviathan's fiery breath set brush on fire (verse 20). Incidentally, several ancient civilizations' historical annals record lizard-like creatures that breathed fire.

Another Hebrew word, "**tannin**" (singular) or "tannim" (plural), describes

a dinosaur-like creature of the sea (Psalm 148:7). It appears 28 times in the Old Testament, and it has been translated sometimes as "sea monster" (Lamentations 4:3 KJV; Genesis 1:21; Psalm 74:13; 148:7 ASV), "sea creatures" (Genesis 1:21; Psalm 148:7, NKJV) "monster" (Jeremiah 51:34; Ezekiel 29:3; 32:2 NKJV; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9; Jeremiah 51:34; Ezekiel 29:3; 32:2) or "dragon" (Deuteronomy 32:33; Nehemiah 2:13; Job 30:29; Psalm 44:19; 74:13; 148:7; Isaiah 13:22; 34:13; 35:7; 43:20; 51:9; Jeremiah 9:11; 10:22; 14:6; 49:33; 51:34, 37; Ezekiel 29:3; Micah 1:8 KJV), among other references.

Human history aside from the Bible also acknowledges the existence of what we today call dinosaurs or dinosaur-like creatures. Following is a sampling.

- A Greek vase dating to 550 B.C. shows both men and a dinosaur, indicating that mankind and dinosaurs coexisted.
- About 450 B.C., the ancient historian Herodotus wrote about flying, snake-like reptiles.
- In 1896, Samuel Hubbard discovered ancient Indian drawings on a canyon wall in Arizona of animals, including a dinosaur.
- At Natural Bridges National Monument Petroglyph in Utah is an ancient rock carving of a dinosaur.
- For hundreds of years, people have been collecting Ica Peru burial stones that depict on them various kinds of dinosaurs, some which only recently have the fossilized remains of those kinds of dinosaurs been uncovered. These stones also indicate peculiar textures of dinosaur skin, which recently has been confirmed upon discovery of fossilized dinosaur skin. These burial stones only date back from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500.
- In 1944, Waldear Julsrud found ancient dinosaur figurines in Mexico. Hundreds of handmade dinosaur figurines were unearthed, some reaching five feet in length.
- In 1968, William J. Meister found a marine (trilobite) fossil 700 feet up a cliff in Utah, and the fossil was inside a fossilized footprint of a sandal.
- In 1983, a human footprint and a three-toed dinosaur footprint were found in rock in the Turkmen Republic.

Dinosaurs were created within the six days of creation (Exodus 20:11) and obviously coexisted with mankind until such time as they became extinct. Human history, scientific discoveries and the biblical record confirm that people and dinosaurs populated the earth at the same time. Not only so, but some of the references above pertain to drawings, carvings and pottery that depict dinosaurs, and which were made just hundreds of years ago or a thousand years or so ago. Atheistic evolutionists refuse to acknowledge historical and scientific evidence, but now you know the truth about dinosaurs. ✞

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A Return Visit to Gethsemane

Ardron Hinton

"O My Father, IF it be possible, let this cup pass from Me…"

What was in this "cup"? Betrayal, false charges, forsaking, mockery, brutal beating, a crown of thorns, a mob calling for His death, humiliation, no justice, nailing to a cross to die in agony.

It comes as no surprise, and we can certainly understand why He dreaded these hours. In this prayer, the standard for submission and obedience was set. *"Your will be done."*

"Though He was a son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Jesus had prayed, *"If it be possible let this cup pass from Me,"* but there was no other payment for sin. Eternal justice had to be considered. The penalty had to be paid! Christ had come to provide a way out. He paid it all. Unfortunately, millions have failed to respond to God's grace. These will pay their own sin-debt in judgment.

Jesus drank that bitter cup to the last drop. At three o'clock that afternoon He could cry out, *"It is finished!"* Here we learned obedience. Are we praying, *"Not my will, but Your will be done?"* ✝

Ardron Hinton is a preacher of the Gospel living in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.

The God of Infinite Knowledge

Wayne Jackson

The Psalmist declared: "*Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite*" (147:5). What a grand statement of the omniscience of God. The knowledge of Jehovah is infinite in that it encompasses all past, present, future, and even potential events.

First, God knows precisely what has happened throughout all history. Sometimes, in discussing the origin of the universe and of mankind with unbelievers, we accommodatingly speak of the "creation theory" versus the "evolution theory". What we imply is this: from a scientific standpoint, we cannot prove how the universe or the human family came into existence. Science can only deal with matters that are observable and subject to testing. We can logically argue that the scientific data more nearly fit the creation concept than the evolutionary idea, but it is not a matter of scientific demonstration. On the other hand, we do have historical testimony as to the origin of the cosmos and everything in it. God, in the Bible, has told us that within "*six days He made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is*" (Exodus 20:11). He knows what happened, for He was there.

How did Paul know the names of the magicians who opposed Moses (2 Timothy 3:8)? This information is nowhere found in the Old Testament. Obviously, the God of history inspired the writing of this epistle to Timothy.

Second, our Creator is deity of the present as well. "*The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good*" (Proverbs 15:3). He is aware of our wrongs (2 Samuel 11:27; Acts 5:3), He knows our heartaches (2 Kings 20:5), and He is aware of our every need (Matthew 6:8). Indeed, "*there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*" (Hebrews 4:13).

Third, the Lord knows the events of the future even before they come to pass. In the days of ancient Israel, when the Hebrew people were constantly flirting with idolatry, the challenge went forth to certain false prophets: "*Produce your cause, said Jehovah; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and declare unto us what shall happen . . . declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods*" (Isaiah 41:21-23). Only the true God can reveal "history in advance." The Old Testament contains more than 1,000 prophecies.

These are precisely-worded pronouncements of what would happen in the future. Facts regarding nations (Daniel 8; Isaiah 13) and individuals (1 Kings 13:2; Isaiah 44:28f) are graphically revealed. More than 300 prophecies concerning the coming Messiah are carefully chronicled. Truly, our God is a being who is able to "call those things that are not, as though they were" (Romans 4:17). Jehovah knows the future so well that He can cause His prophets to speak of future events as if they were completed (Isaiah 9:6; 53:4-6).

Fourth, the omniscient Creator even knows what would have happened given certain circumstances. There is an interesting account concerning Saul and David in 1 Samuel 23. King Saul, moved with envy against the shepherd lad, pursued David in an attempt to destroy him. David was in the city of Keilah, having recently saved that community from the Philistines. When Saul heard of it, he figured that he could trap his rival within the walled city and kill him. David apparently learned of the plan, so he inquired of Jehovah regarding the matter. He wanted to know if Saul would actually advance upon the city; and, if so, would the citizens of Keilah deliver him to the monarch? In response to both questions the Lord answered in the affirmative. Accordingly, David gathered his forces and departed from the city and took refuge in the wilderness.

When Saul heard that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not come to the city but rather continued to seek his prey elsewhere. Of course, God was with David, so Saul's design was never realized. It must not be assumed that Jehovah was mistaken in what He told David regarding the king's intentions. No, rather, the omniscient Ruler of the universe knew the inclination of the evil Saul and the fickle disposition of the men of Keilah. Hence, He was able to state exactly what would happen given the fact that David remained in that place. This is truly a magnificent commentary on the absolute precision of the knowledge of our Maker. ✞

Wayne Jackson is the Editor of *Christian Courier* and lives in Stockton, California, USA.

- **Only God knows all history perfectly.**
- **Only God completely knows all about the present.**
- **Only God knows the future perfectly.**
- **Only God knows for sure what would have occurred, given certain circumstances.**
- **Only God has infinite Knowledge!**

Jesus and Women

Tom Kelton

A Jew would not greet a woman on the street, much less talk with her there. In morning prayer, a Jew blessed God that he was not made a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. It was impious for a Jew to teach a woman the law.

But Jesus' attitude toward women was revolutionary in His day. His coming, in the first place, was due to the faithfulness of the Virgin Mary. She cooperated simply and truly with the work of the Holy Spirit in her. And, we notice the Spirit-inspired work of Anna and of Elizabeth, which stands out in contrast to the disobedience of her husband, Zechariah. When Jesus began His public ministry, there was apparently a group of women who travelled with Him and the other disciples to care for them (Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40-41).

Picture Him by the well at Sychar. Jesus sat by the well, being tired, and His friends went away to buy food. When they returned, they marveled. They might well do so. They had three grounds for marveling. Jesus was talking to a woman who was a Samaritan and a harlot. The woman was staggered, herself, when He addressed her. The worth of woman is seen.

Or see Jesus at the Temple when they brought Him the woman taken in adultery. It was a trap, and a peculiarly clever one. Whatever He said, they had Him. If He said, "Stone her," He could be accused of encroaching on the rights of the Romans who alone had the authority of life and death. If He said, out of His well-known tenderness

to sinners, "Let her go," then He was contravening the law of Moses which made death the penalty for adultery.

He said neither. He said, *"Let the one without sin among you cast the first stone."* One by one they left.

To the woman He said, *"Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."* Jesus' love for woman is seen.

When it comes to Jesus' death and resurrection, we see the faithful way in which the women cared for Him. They were the first witnesses of His resurrection, and it was they who brought the news first to the disciples.

When we come to Acts and the Epistles, we see a freedom for women which was in marked contrast to the attitudes of that time. Entry to the church was by baptism, in which men and women both shared. There was neither male nor female in Christ. In Romans 16:1-3, a woman called Phoebe is called by Paul, *"our sister,"* and is highly commended by Paul to the church. Some women are called *"fellow-workers"* by Paul in his letters. It was Priscilla, together with Aquila, her husband, who shared in instructing the great preacher Apollos (Acts 18:26). Philip, the evangelist, had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

Jesus and His church are the greatest blessing that has ever been known to women. Women, as souls in the presence of God, have been elevated to their rightful position of being equal to men. ✞

Tom Kelton (deceased) was a writer and preacher at Pharr, Texas, USA.

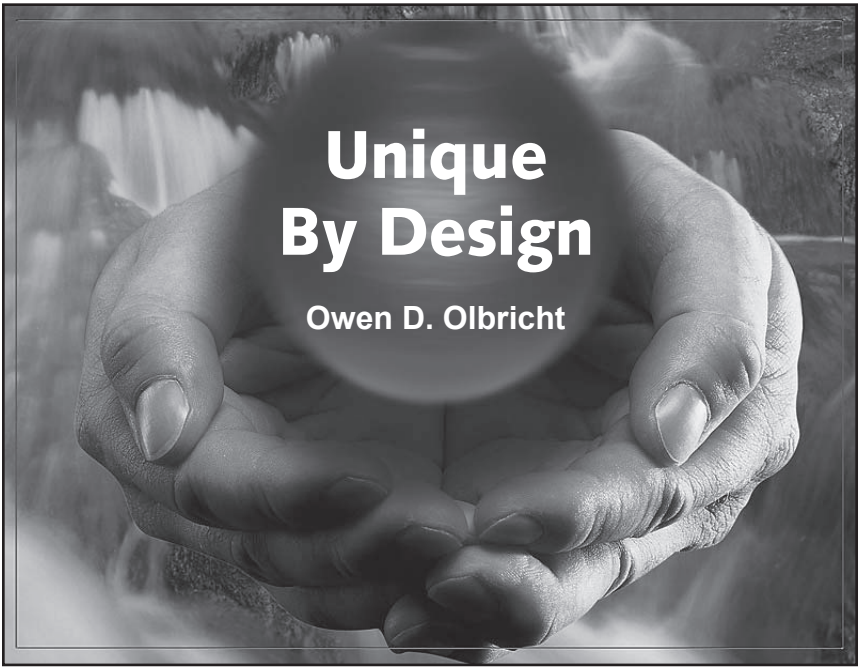
Grow Up

Bill Dillon

Some years ago, Sir J.M. Barrie wrote a play about a boy who never grew up. It was called "Peter Pan." Spiritually, it is possible to stay in an immature state. We call such people in religion "Peter-Pan Christians." They just never grow up. They can't get along, and no one can tell them anything.

When is a person grown up spiritually? It is when they begin to behave in grown up ways. They realize they do not know it all. They are willing to forgive and are always striving to do better. The New Testament says to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

Are you grown up, or are you like the boy who never grew up? Let us all be working at higher levels of maturity in our lives. We will not regret it (Hebrews 5:12-14). ✞



Unique By Design

Owen D. Olbricht

Almost 80 years ago, July 1925, John T. Scopes, a biology teacher, supported by the American Civil Liberties Union, was tried in Dayton, Tennessee, for teaching the Darwinian theory of evolution. Earlier that year the Tennessee legislature had passed a law prohibiting its being taught in public schools.

Two famous lawyers, William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), who aided the prosecutor, and Clarence Seward Darrow (1857-1938) argued the case. Scopes was convicted for teaching evolution in violation of the Tennessee statue, which later was repealed in 1967. Some think that, even though Bryan won the case, the stress on him during the trial was the cause of his death five days after the trial. Scopes was convicted, but released on a technicality.

New Challenge

This year, 24 states are faced with efforts to have "intelligent design" taught, along with evolution, to explain the origin of complex life forms. These include such states as Wisconsin, Ohio, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and others. The board of education in Cobb

County, Georgia, approved the following sticker to be placed in science textbooks:

> This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.

The Dover, Pennsylvania school district was the first in the nation to require the teaching of intelligent design. The state board in Ohio passed a similar measure. This proposal does not define God as being the intelligent Being who caused the origin of life, but those who oppose it suggest He is implied.

John West, director of the Center for Science & Culture, an arm of Discovery Institute in Seattle, Washington, whose biggest donor is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, suggested: "Some features of the natural universe are best explained as products of an intelligent cause rather than an undirected process like natural selection." He went on to say that identifying this cause "is outside the scope of science."

Obvious Changes

If by evolution "change" is meant, this cannot be denied. Change has taken place among almost all species. All dogs are thought to have come from two dogs, all cats from two cats, and people from two human beings — Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:20).

The big question concerns whether or not all forms of life evolved from a single cell instead of being created by the activity of an intelligent creator. The nature of the universe points to the necessity of a creator. The Bible correctly states:

> *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead. (Romans 1:20)*

The "intelligent design" in the universe is more logically explained as the result of the work of an intelligent designer than as the result of random selection by non-intellect. ✞

Owen D. Olbricht is a preacher and writer living in Sherwood, Arkansas, USA.

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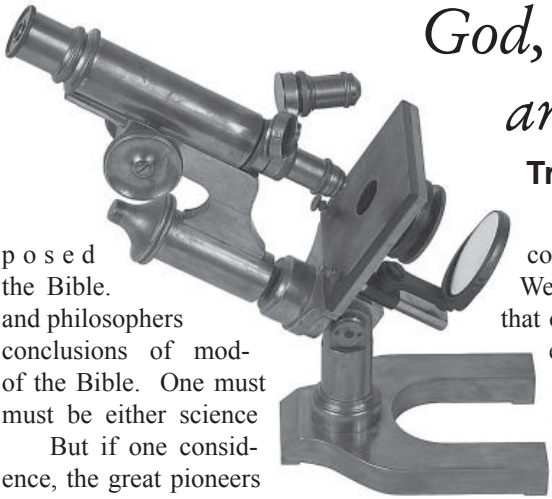
God, the Bible, and Science

Travis L. Quertermous



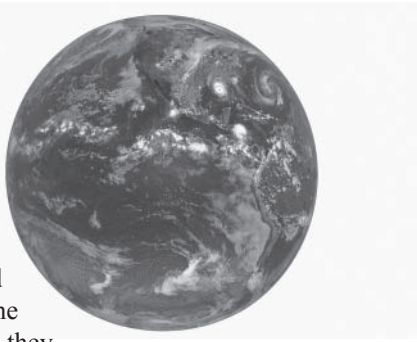
One often hears of the supposed conflict between science and the Bible. We are told by many scientists and philosophers that one simply cannot accept the conclusions of modern science and the miracles of the Bible. One must choose one or the other — it must be either science or faith.

But if one considers the who's who of science, the great pioneers and inventors who literally founded modern science, we find that they were all devout believers in God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. Moreover, they were all outspoken creationists. These scientists include men like Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes, Sir Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Antoine Lavosier, Anton Van Leewoenhoek, Blaise Pascal, Edward Jenner, Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Gregor Mendel, Louis Pasteur, Louis Agassiz, Lord Kelvin, the Wright Brothers, Enrico Marconi, Alexander Fleming, and Werner Von Braun, among many, many others who could be named. None of these great scientists and inventors saw any conflict between science and the Bible. In fact, they were all inspired in their work as scientists by their faith. Johann Kepler, for example, once defined science as "thinking God's thoughts after him."

True, some important scientists, like Darwin, Freud, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Stephen Hawking, were unbelievers, but they are in the minority. The truth is that God is the author of both nature and Scripture. When we interpret both correctly, they always complement one another. But let us heed the apostle Paul's warning of *"science falsely so called"* (1 Timothy 6:21), as well as Jesus' warning against false prophets who come to us as *"wolves in sheep's clothing"* (Matthew 7:15). ✞

Travis L. Quertermous is the preacher for the Dexter Church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

"In Him Was Life"



Stanley E. Sayers

Scientists seem to know and explain most things — but the origin of life. At this one point they reckon with the impossible. As a rule, they go back as far as they can, even with dinosaur bones and fossilized evidences, and even if Richard E. Leakey of Great Britain should uncover or dig up his beloved "missing link", it still would not establish the origin of things.

Darwin started out to be a minister in the Church of England, but changed his mind. He then began theorizing how would it all be if there were no divine beginning, made his closely observing travels, and wrote *On the Origin of Species*, but he still could not explain the beginning of things, how it all got started. Spontaneous generation was a hundred years old and rejected by most scientists as totally impossible. Genesis One was still hanging over his head, Genesis meaning "beginnings," and at the time Darwin published his *Origin*, which the first day off the press sold all that had been printed — 1,250 volumes, still neither his book nor any scientist could explain the origin of life!

The apostle John wrote in his Gospel, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made. In Him was life"* (John 1:1-4). And there we have it! Life, the origin of life, the biological origin of all creatures living, including man (Genesis 1:1-31). Charles Darwin sought to explain all living creatures through a single ancestor, but he did not attempt to explain how the original ancestor had its beginning nor where it came from! But the Bible has no difficulty in doing this. *"In him was life."* Life began with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-4: Revelation 19:13). The Hebrews scribe tells us that God made the world through (or "by", KJV) His Son (Hebrews 11:3a). John writes, *"He*

was in the world, and the world was made through Him..." (John 1:10, NKJV). Christ, the Word, was the channel though whom God created the world. God and Christ are so closely associated that Jesus testified, *"I and my Father are one"* (John 14:9). (See Lanier, *The Timeless Trinity*.)

God and Christ dwell in us through the Holy Spirit (John 14:23, et al.) I think this passage most wonderful, *"God was in Christ personally reconciling the world to himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:19, J. B. Phillips' translation). And then Jesus prayed as He neared the cross, *"I am not praying only for these men but for all those who will believe in me through their message, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, live in me and I live in you, I am asking that they may live in us, that the world may believe that you did send me"* (John 17:20,21).

How Far Back Can Scientists Go?

Scientists can only go back as far as God, and the believer is waiting for them. Darwin himself, who was never an atheist, said, "The question of whether there is a creator and leader of the universe has been answered in the affirmative by the greatest spirits that ever lived." Thomas Jefferson emitted, "There is a great directing head of all things, a Supreme Being, who looks after the destinies of the world." Robert E.D. Clarke has rendered us a great contribution in *Darwin: Before and After* (The Moody Press).

Dr. Robert T. Clarke and Dr. James D. Bales (both deceased) have written a valuable book, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution* (Baker). A chief factor is that scientists do not think of biblical presentation as being scientific, and perhaps the main reason for accepting evolution is because it gives an out for not accepting, not a creative God, but a law-giving God, whose laws interfere with their carnal appetites. Bertrand Russell told his grandson that the world started from an accident in evolution. *Life in the Son* by Robert Shank does much to tie us, to bind us, to the teaching in the power of Christ and how we obtain life through Him, He through whom God created the world. *"In Him was life!"* ✞

Stanley E. Sayers is a Christian writer living in Mustang, Oklahoma, USA.

Darwin himself, who was never an atheist, said, "The question of whether there is a creator and leader of the universe has been answered in the affirmative by the greatest spirits that ever lived." Thomas Jefferson emitted, "There is a great directing head of all things, a Supreme Being, who looks after the destinies of the world."

In the beginning there was nothing. And suddenly for no reason nothing exploded and created everything.

You expect me to believe that?

At some point, by chance the right chemicals happened to float together at just the right moment to be struck by an electrical charge and become life.

You expect me to believe that?

Somewhere two non-human mothers each gave birth to a human child. They were born at the same time and in the same place, one was male and one was female. These two new "humans" gave birth to the human race.

You expect me to believe that?

One of the descendants of these first humans was born with a knowledge of right and wrong. No longer driven by instinct, this person suddenly was making decisions based on a morality for which there is no real explanation.

You expect me to believe that?

I'm sorry. I don't have that much blind faith. It's all just too farfetched to be anything more than a fairy tale. I can't believe intelligent people claim it is "science" (cf. 1 Timothy 6:20).

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:10). I *can* believe that without stretching my imagination into the realm of the impossible.

The universe was created by an all-powerful, all-knowing God.

THAT I *can* believe! ✞

Phil Greer, Springfield, Ohio; via *THE SOWER*, a weekly publication of the Arthur church of Christ, Arthur, Illinois, USA.

The Bible

N.B. Hardeman

According to accepted chronology, the time from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation is exactly 4,100 years. From Moses, the first writer, to John, the last, there is a period of 1,600 years. Here, then, is a volume covering 4,000 years, penned by about forty writers who lived from 1,500 years before Christ to about 100 years after the birth of our Lord. It is well to ask: Who were those men? Were they college professors? No. Did they come from parents who were makers of phrases? No. Who were they?

Many of them were men whose ancestors had spent a long period of time as captives in the land of Egypt. Their fathers had bowed their backs to the rays of an Egyptian sun, and had marched under the crack of the whip of hard taskmasters to carry on their ever-increasing labors. They lived on garlic and onions, and according to tradition, the average life of the working man was only about three months. Their posterity, 600,000 men, besides women and children, marched across the Red Sea, and for forty long years lived in that great and terrible wilderness, fed with manna from on high. They ultimately passed into a little country of about 7,000 square miles. There, in an isolated land, they lived and moved and wrote their story.

They had no great libraries with the learning of the past poured into their laps. They had no daily papers with special columnists to give them the news. They had no speedy telephone, nor telegraphs, nor cables. Radios were wanting. They were an unlearned, ignorant collection of men, with a background that the aristocracy of our time would be ashamed of. There was no possibility of collusion or conspiracy among them. They all wrote about the same general theme — vis., man — his origin, duty, and destiny. There were about forty of them who produced sixty-six books that cover the history of 4,100 years. Among all of these there is not a single contradiction in their historical statement, nor a single discrepancy in their moral teaching.

No two men can write at length about the same thing, but there will be contradiction in their statements. No one man can write voluminously for a period of years, but he will change his mind and correct the mistakes of twenty-five or thirty years ago, and thus revise his manuscript. Nothing of that kind took place

among the writers of the Bible. How do you account for such? There is just one explanation, and it is that holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. V, pp. 24,25. ✞

N. B. Hardeman (1874-1965) was a well-known preacher of the Gospel and cofounder of what is now Freed Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

All-Sufficient

Roger A. Rush

The Bible is all-sufficient in that it thoroughly equips man for life with God (2 Timothy 3:15-17). When it is asserted that the Bible is all-sufficient, what is meant is that the Bible contains everything needed to enable man to have forgiveness, live righteously, and prepare for eternity. We are, therefore, *"thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (NKJV). Nothing pertaining to our relationship with God is lacking, and therefore, additional revelation is not needed.

Given the all-sufficiency of the Bible, any "new revelations" must be superfluous, erroneous, or repetitious. One should be very cautious of anybody who claims additional revelation of the Divine will beyond the Scriptures. Jeremiah warned, in behalf of God, *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD"* (23:16). Further, he wrote: *"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD"* (23:32).

Some still claim that God speaks directly to them apart from the Scriptures. They embrace the idea of progressive revelation, but the doctrine cannot be sustained from the Bible. A number of questions need to be considered. Why do new revelations often contradict the clear teaching of the Bible? Why do the new revelations of some contradict the new revelations of others? If the source of these "new" revelations were God, would the message not be consistent? Why are new revelations needed? If we are *"thoroughly equipped"*, what is lacking? If we possess *"all things pertaining to life and godliness"*, what else do we need (2 Peter 1:3)?

A faith not built upon the Bible is a faith that will not stand. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). The Bible is all-sufficient. If we can't find authority for it in the Bible, we had better reject it. When we speak for God, we must speak from the Word of God (1 Peter 4:11). Is your faith based on the all-sufficient Word or on the progressive revelations of men? The former will stand you in good stead with the Almighty; the latter will provide a weak foundation that will surely crumble. ✞

Are You Reading to Understand?

Rod Kyle

Seldom do we pick up and read something with the deliberate decision to "misunderstand" it. But so often, that is what happens. The Bible is God's only means of guiding us home to heaven (Luke 16:29,31). So, how important is it for you to correctly understand it? Consider the following "keys" to success. The New Testament teaches us through…

Direct Commands. In Matthew 28:30, Jesus' commands, written down in the New Testament through the inspired penmen (John 16:13 and 2 Timothy 3:16) have to be obeyed if the circumstances in which He gave them apply today. He gives both general and specific commands. With either type of direct command also comes implication. Both are binding upon us.

Principle. First John 4:7 teaches all Christians to love each other. This is something that each of God's people must apply individually. The New Testament is crammed with principles that always involve action.

Examples. Many examples in the New Testament are actually actions commanded by God, but unrecorded. Acts 20:7 teaches us that Jesus wants us to have the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. He had commanded the observance (Luke 22:19,20) but left it to the inspired apostles to guide the church on when to do it. Examples, however, are only relevant when associated with commands or principles taught elsewhere in the New Testament. On this, much more could be said.

Silence. Yes, the silence of the Scriptures also teaches us. This is often called the "principle of exclusion." When God gives us a positive command, He is stating what He wants. His silence, therefore, excludes additions and innovations by man. The Bible would be a huge book if God also had to list the things He did not want us to do in association with a particular command of His. A good example of this is Noah. Of what was he commanded to build the ark (Genesis 6:14)? Could he have obeyed God by building the ark out of pine? Our presence on the earth today tells us that he didn't attempt the ridiculous. The subtle error of denominationalism is that man can "do anything in religion that God has not explicitly condemned." Hence, we have countless religious groups in this world, and more are on the way.

Are you using the "keys" God has placed within His Word? Or are you like the accountant from Ethiopia (Acts 8:31) and in need of a little help? Are you reading to understand? Your eternal destiny depends upon the outcome. ✝

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.

A Book Like No Other

Grady Miller

The supernatural character of the Bible is best seen by considering four terms that describe the Bible alone: revelation, inspiration, infallibility, and authority.

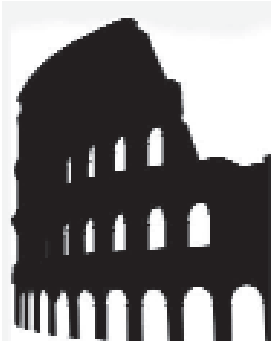
Revelation pinpoints the origin of the Bible. It is a message to man from the mind of God. Peter declared, "*No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:20,21). This moving — literally, "being borne along" — is a term used to describe the wind filling the sails of ships and carrying them across the water. Men did not write their own message, but received a message from God. To reject the Scripture, therefore, is to reject the communication God gave to man. Such phrases as *"God spake"*, *"thus saith the Lord"*, and *"the Lord has said"* are found more than 1,300 times in the Bible. The book is of divine origin.

Inspiration designates the means by which God revealed His will. The original word is "theopneustos", from "theos" (God) and "pneustos" (breathed), a "God-breathed" book (2 Timothy 3:16). In some way God gave His message, — including the very words (1 Corinthians 2:10-13) — to men who faithfully recorded His instructions. These men could proclaim, like David, "*the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*" (2 Samuel 23:2). This claim argues against the vague concept sometimes known as "thought inspiration" and supports the plenary or full inspiration of the Bible.

Infallibility denotes the faithfulness and accuracy of the Word of God. It holds no error — not of history, geography, science, or doctrine. An all-knowing and an all-powerful God would make no mistake in His revelation. The Bible, faithfully transmitted and translated, is an infallible book. Much of the tension in "conservative" denominations today centers on the question of the infallibility of the Bible.

Authority is found in Scripture. It is the very Word of God. Since it sprang from His mind and reveals His will, no man has the right to set it aside. Jesus claimed to have all power or authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). His written words carry the same weight as His spoken words. ✞

Grady Miller preaches for the Lord's church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA.



Romans 14:1-13

Jerry Bates

1. Should Christians judge one another over the eating of meats? (v. 3)
2. What does it mean to receive one who is weak in the faith? (v. 1)
3. In this context who are the weak in faith? (vs. 1-3)
4. Who has the right to judge a person's conduct? (v. 4)
5. Is it wrong to esteem one day above another? (v. 5)
6. Does man have the right to live as he pleases? (v. 7)
7. To whom do believers belong? (v. 8)
8. Why did Paul say Christ died and rose again? (v. 9)
9. How might the weak Christian judge the strong Christian? (v. 10)
10. How might the strong Christian despise or show contempt for the weak Christian? (v. 10)
11. On the day of judgment to whom will each one of us give account? (v. 12)
12. What Old Testament verse is quoted in verse 11?
13. If all men will one day bow down to God and confess their faith in Him, why will not all men be saved?
14. Rather than judging one another, what should Christians be doing to one another? (vs. 12-13)

(see the back cover for answer)

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

NOTES: This context concerns how Christians treat one another in the area of opinion. When a person believes something to be wrong, then it would be wrong for him to engage in it, even though it might be okay for someone else to engage in it. The examples Paul uses are those of the eating of meats or observing holy days. Both are *matters of opinion* and Christians should not judge one another. The weak should not judge the strong; the strong should not act in such way to encourage the weak to do what he believes is wrong. We must realize that only God is the judge and that each one will be judged by God.

Some things are always sinful, while other thing are sinful only if a person mistakenly believes they are. The duty of all Christians is to edify or strengthen one another and never do anything that might cause another Christian to stumble. We should strive to do that even if it means we deny ourselves of some right that we may have. We must be careful not to encourage someone to do that which they believe to be wrong.

The Day of the Lord

Wayne Barrier

The apostle Peter wrote, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless"* (2 Peter 3:10-14).

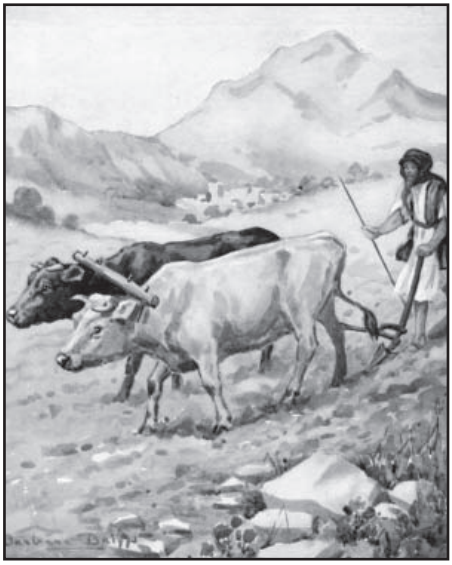
Peter described the end of time when this world will be destroyed. Our goal in life should be to always be prepared for this day that will come as a *"thief in the night."* Since life in this world is certain to be short under any circumstance and for every person, we should give highest priority to preparing for the new heavens and earth where we can dwell forever.

Peter wrote these words almost 2,000 years ago. Some scoff at this teaching (2 Peter 3:3,4) and ignore the warnings. Peter said that God is not slack concerning His promise (2 Peter 3:9). He will do as He says. We live in times when the world is troubled and uncertain. Many people suffer because of war, hunger, disease, and crime. The way out of these hard circumstances is through Christ and His kingdom (Matthew 11:28-30). Many are caught up in the day-to-day demands and complexities of our earthly existence. Relief is in Christ. If we are faithful to Christ, we have the promise of rest in this life and eternal life in heaven. We should, as Peter suggests, *"look for the new heaven and new earth"* that will come after this world is destroyed. The "*day of the Lord"* will be a great day for those who have prepared for it. Therefore, Peter said in 2 Peter 3:18, *"but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."* Those who are growing when the end comes will be ready for heaven. ✝

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA, and does mission work in several countries.

Which Yoke Do You Wear?

Danny Boggs



"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). We don't have to suffer under sin's wearisome load anymore! Jesus gives rest.

But what is a yoke doing in the middle of an invitation to rest? A yoke pairs two beasts of burden. It fastens around their necks so they can plow together. A yoke usually symbolizes submission and bondage. A yoke doesn't typically suggest rest.

The truth is, we are locked in a yoke before we come to Jesus. Jeremiah wept in behalf of his people: *"My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by His hand they were fastened together; they were set upon my neck; He caused my strength to fail"* (Lamentations 1:14). Everyone is either a slave to sin, which leads to death, or a slave to obedience, which leads to righteousness (Romans 6:16). When we are yoked to sin, the yoke is iron, and sin does not pull its share of the load. Trudging through life without Christ is the worst of burdens.

As we keep working toward the end of life's row, the choice is not whether to be yoked, but which yoke to wear. We can stay yoked to sin and its dead weight, or we can be joined to Jesus. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He's a workhorse!

Drawing on His power for the work, and enjoying His gentle and humble company until the work is finished — we can rest in that yoke. ✝

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

Let's Make a Deal!

Jodie Boren

Do you remember Aesop's fable about the dog and the bone? A dog had found a bone and was on his way home to savor it when he came to a bridge. He stopped and looked down over the side into the creek and saw his image and the bone reflected in the water. The water magnified the bone making it appear larger and more desirable. He let go of the bone to get the reflected one, only, of course, to lose both. This abbreviated version of this old fable brings to focus a modern day application.

First John 3:19-21 gives us the assurance of salvation. Because this is the greatest blessing of all, it is incredible that so many fall victims to the devil's ploy of "Let's Make a Deal". Disguised as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), he comes into the body of Christ and offers to careless and unsuspecting Christians the glamour of the world and the praise of men in exchange for their salvation. The devil, in his "deal" with us, has the uncanny knack of making these digressions from God's teachings appear to us as pleasing to God, and thus desirable to express our love to Him.

The devil's reasoning is very

palatable to the cravings of many who wish to dine upon the sectarian innovations of worship. Thoughts like the following sound plausible, and with the perverting of Scripture, seem sound, doctrinally speaking. Examples: "There are so many talented women. It is a shame not to let them preach — lead singing, etc." "A piano or organ would just make our music to God so much better." "God wants His people to be happy, so why not allow hand-clapping and dancing in the aisles?" "The Lord's Supper is so meaningful it is foolish to limit partaking of it just to Sundays." "Anybody who calls God 'Father' is your brother." "A choir, with its beautiful voices, is so inspiring." "We shouldn't be so narrow-minded that we can't worship God on special days like all other Christians do." "Promise Keepers and other such organizations strengthen us spiritually and help the ecumenical movement." "We're not under law. The New Testament is a love letter — not a pattern." On and on the devil goes as he strives "to make a deal" with us.

All of this sounds well and good, but remember, we are to please *God* — not *men* (Galatians 1:10). It is God we must worship (Revelation 22:9), and it must be in truth (John 4:24). In Deuteronomy 11:26-28a we read, *"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God…"* Then, in language that cannot be misunderstood, Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 12:32, *"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it."*

Satan has always been opposed to righteousness. He tried to "make a deal" with Jesus. In Matthew 4, he offered Him what amounts to *"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."* Each time Jesus thwarted Satan's efforts by saying, *"It is written",* and then quoted Scripture to rebuke Satan. We need to follow Christ's example so that when Satan tries "to make a deal with us", we will go to the Scriptures for our authority in all matters. Yes, Satan promises us the world, but Jesus cautions us. He asks, *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26).

May the words of James always be in our thoughts. He wrote in James 4:7, *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

Make no deals with Satan! ✞

Jodie Boren is a retired preacher and artist living in Hartville, Missouri, USA.

The Baptism of a King

Hershel Dyer

The year was 496 A.D., and the place was Rheims, now a city in northeastern France. Clovis, King of the Franks, had long been urged by his wife, Chlotilda, to be baptized into Christ. She and their two sons had earlier done so. Since the Franks worshipped various pagan gods, Clovis was reluctant to depart from the religious ways of his followers.

However, an event occurred which brought a change in his thinking. While at war with an enemy people known as the Alemanni, he found his army losing the battle. Prayers to his pagan god had proved to be of no value, whereupon, he offered the following prayer:

"To Jesus Christ, whom Chlotilda declares to be the Son of the living God, thou who art said to give help to the struggling and victory to those hoping in Thee; devoted to Thee, I entreat the glory of Thy assistance; and if Thou wilt indulge me with victory over these enemies, and I shall have full experience of that valor which the people dedicated to Thy name proclaim that they have put to the proof, I shall believe upon Thee, and I shall be baptized in Thy name."

Regardless of the appropriateness of this prayer, it is a fact that the battle soon turned in the favor of Clovis' forces, and his enemies acknowledged his rule over them. Chlotilda quickly took advantage of this event to press her husband in doing what he had promised. She sent for one to come and teach him the way of salvation. His earlier apprehension as to the feeling of his people was alleviated when they said, "We are prepared to follow the immortal God."

Hence, on December 25th of the aforementioned year, the King of the Franks walked to the building where the baptismal pool was housed. There, as one writer discloses, Clovis was immersed "for the remission of sins and for the hope of eternal life." To his great delight, 1,000s of his warriors and subjects immediately followed him in baptism. ✞

Hershel Dyer is a Gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16 NKJV).

The Church – A Dwelling Place for God

Ronald D. Bryant

The church does not save — it *is* the saved. The church is a living spiritual organism. It is variously described. Among those set forth in New Testament, none is more challenging than one found in Ephesians 2. The church is described as becoming a dwelling place for God. God is at work transforming the individual Christian into the likeness of Christ, according to Paul (2 Corinthians 3:18). God is also at work fitting Christians together to be His dwelling place. The church is to be a holy temple.

In initial response to this, the following question seems appropriate: "How can woefully inadequate, unworthy, imperfect, struggling Christians become a dwelling place for God?" But, the appropriate question is, "How can God fit woefully inadequate, unworthy, imperfect, struggling Christians together to be a dwelling place for Him?" Fortunately, we are not under obligation to explain how God does this. However, we are privileged to accept and affirm the following:

> *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)*

God is at work in the church. He is doing far more than just keeping the family safe. The whole body (building) is being fitted together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord. God is at work, doing only what God can do, "fitting" the members of the body together. God is the master craftsman. He is in charge of the building. He is fashioning the stones. He is removing the things that hinder the constructing of the structure. God is doing the "fitting" of the stones. It is He Who is fashioning the pillars for His temple. This is a grand and highly significant fact. It is wonderful and humbling to consider. The following is a poor paraphrase from a source long forgotten:

> In what strange quarries the divinely appointed portions are being hewn! Out of the hillsides of wounded pride; deep in the recesses of hurt and despair; in the dusty atmosphere of little cares; in the momentary and often hurtful contacts that man has with man; wherever souls are being tried and tested — in commonplace and even unseen ways — God is there, fashioning the pillars and stones for His temple.

By inspiration Peter wrote, "*You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5). ✞

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Central Church of Christ in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

The Church and Jesus

Robert D. Rawson

Jesus promised to *"build my church"* (Matthew 16:18). The church is owned by Jesus Christ (Romans 16:16) and is spoken of as *"churches of Christ"*. However, let's take a look in this article from the other side of the coin. What was the relationship of the church back to Jesus?

The church in the New Testament upheld the Lord in a mighty way and a frail way. The members were human beings seeking to be more spiritual in their outlook on life while they lived in various cities of their time like Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Rome. The directives of 1 Corinthians 15 are to be steadfast and unmovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord. The imperatives continue in the next chapter: *watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit* (act) *ye like men and be strong* (1 Corinthians 16:13). This is the teaching to those of the first century church. Did they follow the orders given? We must note that some did and some did not. Now, down the stream of time to our day, are we following these admonitions? Some are and some are not. So, what should we all do? Certainly, teachers and preachers of God's Word must continue the faithful presentation of the message (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Fellow brethren should listen and heed the message because Jesus would have it to be this way.

Without love the early church was taught that their labors amounted to no value (1 Corinthians 13). They were taught that love bears, believes, hopes, and endures. In the first few verses, we read of some who might give their bodies to be burned or give all their goods to feed the poor. However, from what motive? Was the motive a 'just cause'? Was it 'the thing to do'? Was it 'what my parents did'? Paul writes, 'if it's not of love, the sacrifices profit us none.' Now, down the stream of time to our day, are we serving with the motive of love in mind? Some do and some do not. Yet, what should be the motive of all of us?

The church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) had investigated doctrines and claims of men. They appear to have successfully held on to sound doctrine. Yet, in the midst of this letter from the Lord, He admonished them that He might have to come and remove 'their candlestick' from out of its place (the recognition light of the faithful church, according to the two closing verses of Revelation 1). What was so wrong with a doctrinally sound church? They had left their first love! They were told to repent and do the first works. I personally don't know the specific love they didn't have any longer, but *they* knew, and they were to repent to please the Lord. Those who valued their relationship with God did repent. Down the stream of time to our day, the same New Testament admonitions should be followed if we desire our relationship with the Lord to remain unbroken.

This fellowship with God was preached and practiced by the faithful brethren of the first century and must also be true of our twenty-first century. We must hold to sound doctrine with the attitude and motive of love. Further, we must repent if we aren't serving this way. ✞

A Question for This Generation

Rick Cunningham

"You of this generation, consider the word of the Lord: ...'Why do you go about so much, changing your ways'" (Jeremiah 2:31,36).

Jeremiah was given God's last words to a nation about to be destroyed. Judah's fate was set. They were not being called to repentance. They were being accused and sentenced. They had exchanged their God for the gods and nations and standards of the world.

Judeans wanted change. Their God, His Word, and their religious heritage had become too exclusive to suit them. So they changed. They changed to fit in with people around them. They did so in spite of God's Word commanding them to be a holy people.

Jerusalem slowly became a city of diversity. Every god was worshipped there. Every belief was accepted. Optimism was high and negative attitudes were not tolerated. Prophets proclaimed the most hopeful and cheerful prophecies of Judah's future. Yet, all the while, God was preparing the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar to conquer them, which occurred in 606 B.C.

I see a troubling comparison between the Judeans then and the church today. Many of our congregations are changing. God, His Word, and our religious heritage have become too exclusive to suit them. So they change. They change to fit in with the people around them. They do so in spite of God's Word commanding them to be a holy people.

Some congregations are slowly becoming churches of diversity. Everyone and every belief is accepted. Optimism is high and any negative attitude is not tolerated. Preachers proclaim the most hopeful and cheerful predictions about their future. Yet, I wonder what God has in store!

The churches who insist on changing to conform to the world are not serving God. They dishonor God. And if they continue to do so, the Lord will prepare their destruction.

The question stands: *"Why do you go about so much, changing your ways?"* ✞

Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the Main Street congregation in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

Who Is My Family?

David Deffenbaugh

For many (if not most) people, the answer to our question is pretty obvious. That was apparently the attitude of Jesus' contemporaries when He was informed by them that His mother and brothers were wanting to speak to Him. Jesus surprisingly asked, *"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"* The question no doubt puzzled the listeners, and Jesus answered His own question. *"And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother"* (Matthew 12:49,50).

From Jesus' opportunistic lesson we learn some important and largely overlooked lessons about being in God's family. **First, we learn that God does have a will, and it can be known.** One of the major points of contention in man's mind about God and man's relationship to Him is that mankind really cannot know what God would have Him do. If such is true, then the words of Jesus, instead of being ones of encouragement and hope, become ones of despair. If God's will cannot be known, then one cannot be counted a part of God's family.

Second, God's will must be done. Certainly it is a great accomplishment for one to come to know the will of God. Greater still is when one does that will. This, though, is surely one of the man's great challenges, as it is addressed so often in Scripture. Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the parable of the wise and foolish builders to drive home the necessity of doing and not just hearing His words (Matthew 7:24-27). Also, James speaks directly to one's being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (James 1:22-27). As Jesus said, *"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them"* (John 13:17).

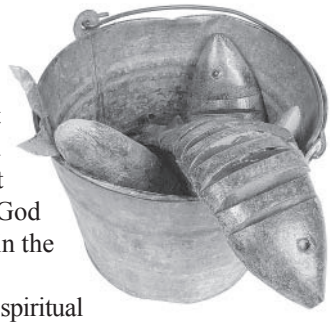
Third, we must subject our will to God's. Solemn are the warnings of Scripture to those who though engaged in religious activity were failing in reality to do God's will (Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 7:8,9,13). Perhaps the most significant obstacle to God's will is our own will. Jesus, of course, blazes the difficult trail in overcoming one's own will in order to do God's. His prayer in Gethsemane's garden still echoes clearly, *"...not my will, but thine be done"* (Luke 22:42).

Indeed we are blessed if our earthly family is the blessing God designed it to be. But without comparison is the blessing if we are genuinely able to lay claim to being in God's family. ✝

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the Center Hill congregation in Paragould, Arkansas, USA.

The Divine Environment

Perry N. Hall



Can a fish just live as well out of water as in it? Can a man live just as well in the water as out of it? The fish was created to live in the water, and cannot live out of it, but man was created to live out of the water and cannot live in it. All things that God has made live their lives under the conditions and in the environment God has created for them.

God established the church to promote man's spiritual life. It embraces the elements that are essential to spirituality. Man can no more live the Christian life out of the church than a fish can live out of water.

One of the most unbelievable doctrines to emerge from professing Christendom is the teaching that the church has *nothing* to do with salvation. The majority seem to believe that people can be saved out of the church as well as in it.

Jesus, the Savior, purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). Christ is the Head and Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). The spiritual benefits of Christ's blood are in that which He purchased, the church, which is His body. The very meaning of the Greek term (ekklesia) translated by the word "church" means the "called-out". The church is made up of those who have answered the call of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), met its conditions (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38-41), come out of the world, and thus were constituted members of the church as they were washed in the blood (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:12-14; 2:11-13). Is it in harmony with God's truth to say that people can be saved *without the blood of Christ* as well as with it? If men are saved outside the body, the church, then men are saved without the blood, *with which He purchased the church* (Acts 20:28)!

We must accept no substitutes for the true environment that God has created for our spiritual life. Jesus said, *"I will build my church"* (Matthew 16:18). The true church is the one we read about it in the Bible. It is not a denomination, nor an alliance of denominations. It is a divine organization, established by the wisdom and power of God, for the spiritual welfare of man. Men are placed in this divine environment when they obey the Gospel of Christ. ✞

Perry N. Hall is a Gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

John 17:20-23

20 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

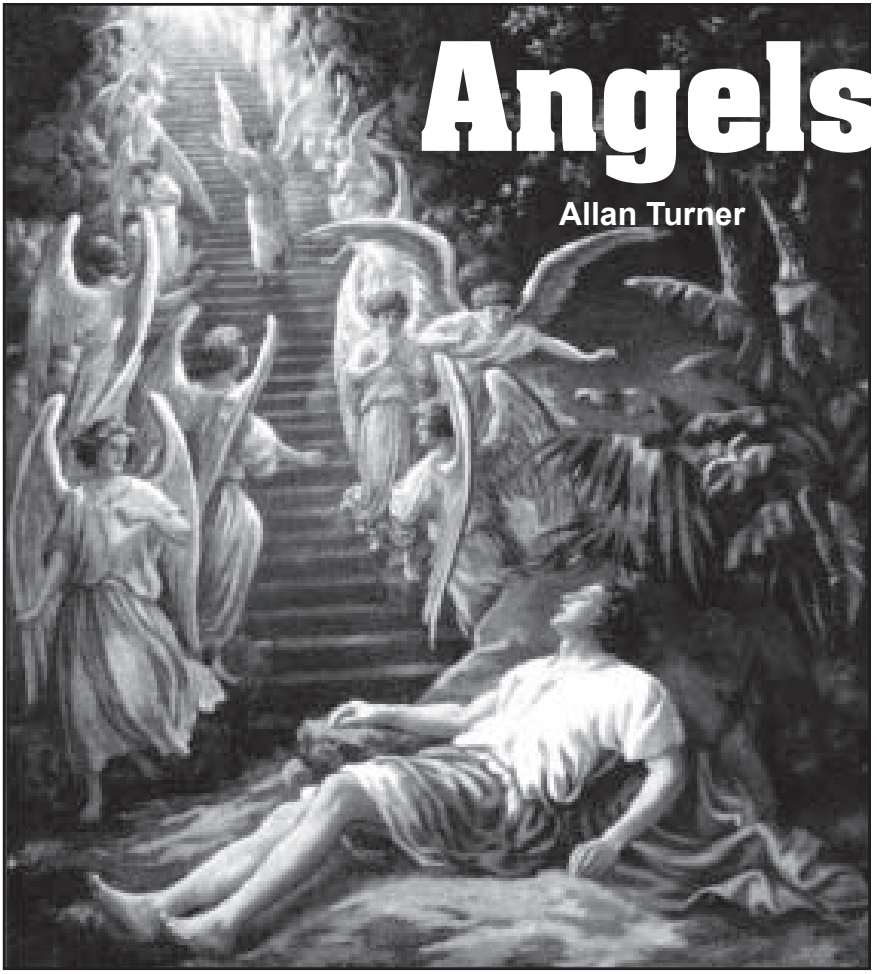
22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

These were some of the last words our Lord spoke before His betrayal and crucifixion. We must believe that they were of vital importance to Him.

He was talking to His Father. What did He ask? He asked for oneness, for unity. We can learn two very important truths from this prayer:

1. There are those who believe that God is only one person, portraying Himself sometimes in the role of Jesus, sometimes as the Holy Spirit, sometimes as Himself. In this passage, Jesus prays that His followers may be "one", as He and the Father are "one" — united in heart and purpose — a united one, not a singular one. The Hebrew word for "Elohim", the plural for "God", has the meaning of "a united one", not "a singular one".

The perfection of unity that believers in Christ are to show to the onlookers should have been the means to convince the world that Jesus was sent by God. It is the terrible division among those who claim Him as Lord that has turned many souls from following Him.



Angels

Allan Turner

Angels are spiritual beings created by God (Psalm 148:1,5), who are on a higher order than man (Hebrews 2:7), and neither reproduce nor die (Luke 20:35,36). They are mentioned some 273 times in the Scriptures and often functioned as agents of destruction or blessing (Genesis 19:13,16). As such, they were involved in God's providential care for His people (2 Kings 18,19). It is our firm conviction that they still function in this capacity even today.

Modern-Day Sadducees

Unfortunately, too many of us have become modern-day Sadducees in that we do not believe in angels (cf. Acts 23:8). Many have assumed that because miracles have ceased, angels are no longer in business today. This would seem to be an obvious contradiction of Hebrews 1:13,14, which says angels are *"ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."*

Although we are not living in the miraculous age, this must not be taken to mean that God is not still exercising control over His creation. In Matthew 5:45, the Bible teaches the general providence of God, and in Matthew 6:33, the child of God is taught to trust in God's specific providence toward His children. In Romans 8:28-31, we are taught that *"all things work together for good to them that love God."* Does this not suggest God's providential care?

We Do Not Live in a Totally "Chance" Universe

Both Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17 make it perfectly clear that God's creation has not been left to mere chance. God is still in control. He still rules in the kingdoms of men, and this is verified by such passages as Romans 13, Acts 17:26, and Daniel 4:17,32. To believe, as some do, that God has taken a 'hands-off' position with reference to the affairs of mankind is not only a contradiction of Scripture, but is tantamount to dethroning Jesus Christ, who now reigns as King of kings (Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 1:20,21).

It is, indeed, comforting to know that angels are sent forth by God to minister unto us for "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 1:18,19). Our prayers to God are not exercises in futility, but are, in fact, requests based on a faith that God can and will help us, and that angels are His agents in these matters.

Lord, Open Our Eyes

Paul prayed that Christians would have the eyes of their understanding enlightened so that they could see *"the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe"* (Ephesians 1:18,19). If we will, by faith, open our eyes, we can see that *"they that be with us are more than they that be with them"* (2 Kings 6:16).

We have not undertaken to explain how angels minister to the saints, only that they, in fact, do. ✞

Allan Turner is a preacher of the Gospel and has a website called "Re:Thinking".

Doctrine To Live By

WHATEVER IS TRUE

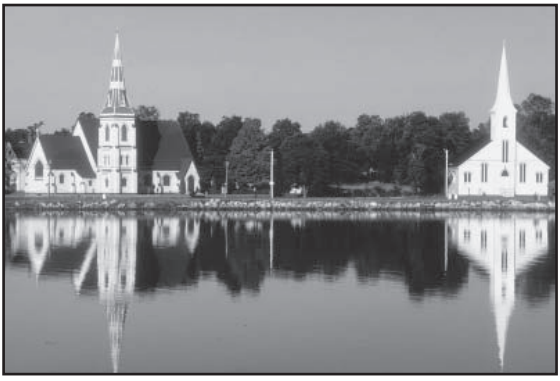
John Gipson

Note that "whatever is true" stands at the very top of Paul's great list of things we should steadily think about. It is ahead of everything else. "*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things*" (Philippians 4:8).

The temptation of today is to repeat the cynical question Pilate asked Jesus, *"What is truth?"* We tend to seek the pleasant, whether true or not. It is so convenient for me to have "my truth", and you to have "your truth". "It doesn't really make any difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere," we are told.

For the sake of harmony and political correctness, we are eager to stamp all religions as "true", regardless of how they conflict with each other. We tend to major on a commonly accepted idea of so-called "spirituality". This is a vague, abstract state often removed a hundred miles from the truth.

In the Bible, truth is not presented simply as an abstraction, but boldly in the form of Christ. The Christ said, "*I am the truth…*" (John 14:6). As Avon Malone observed, "Other men spoke of truth, but He was truth speaking." Christ said, "*…and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*" (John 8:32). In our devotion to the pleasant, the lovely, and the gracious, we must never forget Christ and His teachings. He did not mince words when He said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by 'me'"* (John 14:6). Dogmatic? Well, yes. But when is truth not? It always stands against falsehood.



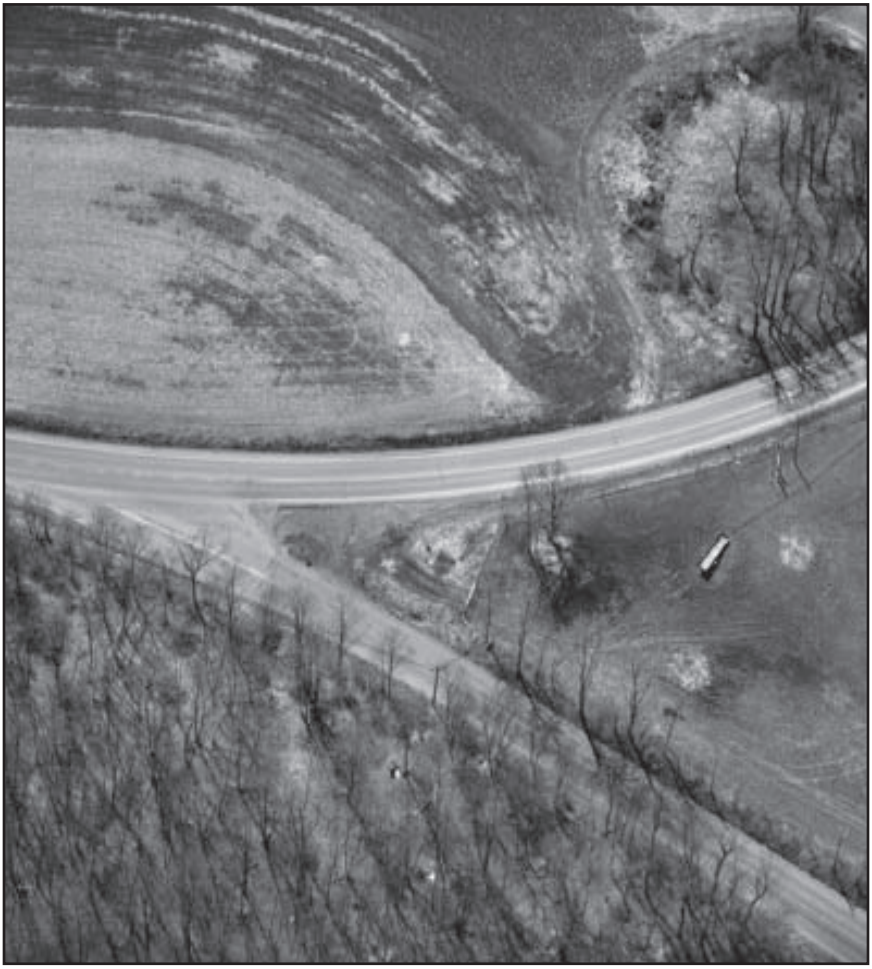
If we rely on God's truth in Christ, we should never hide from any other truth in the world. "Whatever is true, …think…" ✞

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

Doctrine To Live By

A Pivotal Point in Religious History

Wes McAdams



Doctrine To Live By

I believe churches of Christ have reached a pivotal moment in history. We have some questions to answer, some choices to make, and we will inevitably need some strong men and women of God to help us through these perilous and exciting times.

People are Fed up with Denominations

I think it is so exciting to watch my generation move away from religious division, creeds, and denominationalism. We have preached "non-denominationalism" for decades. Now the general public is starting to consider themselves "non-denominational". Although a person may attend a Baptist church, he very well may *not* consider himself a Baptist. Our long-held plea to be "Christians only" seems to be resonating through the land.

The problem is that our communities see "The Church of Christ" as a denomination. They identify the community churches as being non-denominational and us as being denominational! Something is dreadfully wrong with that! It is time for us to reintroduce ourselves to our communities and let them know we are non-denominational, undenominational, and anti-denoninational. We have to let them know we are not "Church of Christ-ers" or "Campbellites". *We are Christians and Christians only!*

But, in order to do that we have to come to grips with it ourselves. We have to stop seeing ourselves as a denomination! We have to stop seeing the description, "church of Christ" as a name or title. Anyone who has been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his/her sins (Acts 2:38) is a Christian and God has added him/her to the church of Christ, the body of Christ (Acts 2:47). Meeting in a building labeled, "Church of Christ" does not make one a Christian or a member of Christ's church. Only God can make someone a member of the church of Christ, and it is high time that we, ourselves, remember that! Whatever we do in the coming years, we are going to have to remind ourselves and our community that we are truly non-denominational.

People are Starving

Every study and statistic I have seen lately says that community churches and denominational churches are losing people right and left because they are not teaching and preaching the Bible. People are seeing the emotional and entertainment-driven churches for what they are…fluff! They have no substance; they are shallow to the core. People are starving for some intellectual and spiritual stimulation.

This news ought to cause us to jump for joy. After all, there was a time when people thought of us as "walking/talking Bibles". Unfortunately, many who wear the name "Church of Christ" are following the pattern of the shallow emotionally-driven churches. They are abandoning the meat of the Word and replacing it with cotton candy, and they, too, are starving their members.

On the other hand, there are many congregations preaching meaty sermons and conducting meaty Bible classes, but nobody knows about it! ***We have to get back into the community and let people know where truth can be found!*** The church is the *"pillar and the support of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). But, let's also not forget that as teachers and preachers, we must help people make application to their lives. We have to show them what the Word says, what the Word means, and what difference the Word makes in their lives!

You can preach Truth without being dry, and you can preach practical sermons without starving people to death.

We Live in the Information Age

Recently, when young atheists were "asked to cite key influences in their conversion to atheism," they didn't talk about conferences they attended or books they had read. Instead, they made "vague references to videos they had watched on YouTube or website forums." I think that is incredibly interesting! *The internet is helping convert people to atheism,* not because the atheists have the most compelling arguments (obviously they don't), but because the atheists are harnessing the power of the internet to get their agenda out there.

Imagine if the church would use the power of the internet more effectively! I am so thankful for many of my Christian brothers and sisters in Christ who are blogging, making YouTube videos, and recording podcasts. But I am still amazed how many congregations don't have a website. Or worse yet, they don't update their website.

We are at a pivotal moment in history, and there is a huge potential to reach the lost. The question is, will we choose to take advantage of our opportunity or will we squander it? ✞

Wes MacAdams: http://www.radicallychristian.com/churches-of-christ-pivotal-moment

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Dead to the Law by the Body of Christ

Dean Fugett

When Jesus died on the cross, the *authority* of the Law of Moses was removed as instruction for life, work, and worship. He fulfilled the Law and its purpose (Romans 8:2-4). The Law of Moses with all its ordinances was fulfilled and nailed to the cross of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:7-14; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14-18). For the Christian today, the *"things written aforetime, were written for our learning. . . ."* (Romans 15:4). They are examples as principles whereby we may see and learn from the mistakes of those recorded therein, as well as assurance of the steadfastness of the promises of God.

We are no longer under the commandments written and engraved in stone. We are no longer serving the letter which kills. We serve under the grace of God. We are now under the law of liberty (James 1:25), the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2), and the law of the faith. We are indeed under law, but a law of grace and truth, a perfect law with the power to make those who come to it perfect! We are under the law of Christ to keep His commandment out of love (John 14:15; Luke 6:46). John says that to say that we know God and not keep His commandments is to lie (1 John 2:4).

Paul points out that all now who try to keep parts of the Law (incense burning, animal sacrifices, circumcision, Sabbath keeping, instrumental music in worship, the Ten Commandments) are actually *"fallen from grace"* and make Jesus' death of no effect (Galatians 5:1-4). Peter said that these laws were a yoke *"which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"* (Acts 15:10). The seriousness of treading underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the new covenant an unholy thing, and insulting the Spirit of grace is told in Hebrews 10:29-31.

By the death of Jesus, the Jew was freed from the Law. Then, both Jew and Gentile were reconciled to God in the one body by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:1-19). Why, then, desire to attempt to follow the Law of Moses, or any part thereof (Galatians 3:1)? ✞

Dean Fugett is a preacher and elder with the church of Christ in Cave City, Arkansas, USA.

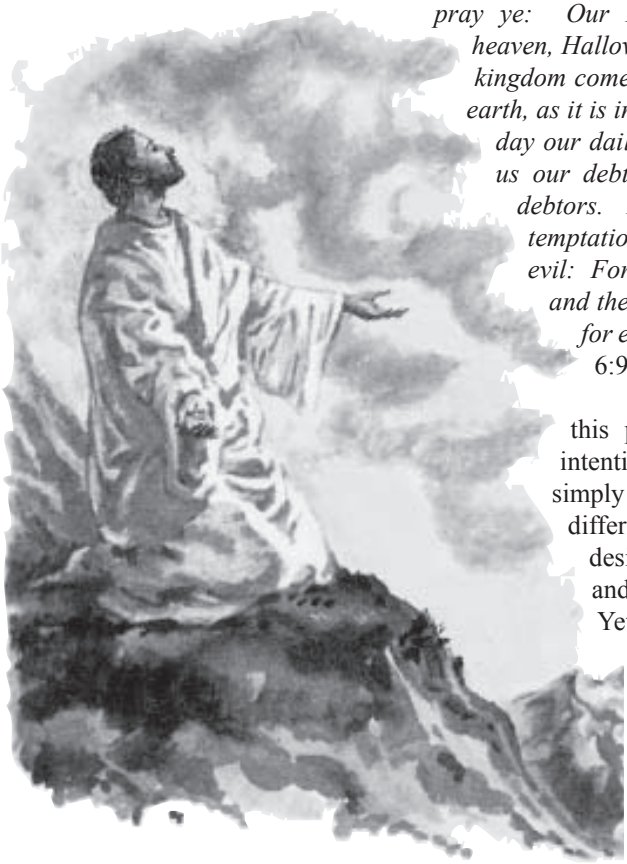
Doctrine To Live By

The Lord's Prayer

J.C. Choate

Most of those today who believe in Christ speak of "The Lord's Prayer", they say it in their worship, and they sing it. Those who do not use it in these ways are questioned and criticized.

The prayer that is referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" is found in Matthew 6. There Jesus says to His disciples, *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"* (Matthew 6:9-13).



In our discussion of this prayer, it is not our intention to be different simply for the sake of being different. It is not our desire to be negative and to disturb people. Yet, we must point out that this is not "the Lord's prayer". It was never intended to be His prayer, and the Scriptures do not designate it as "the Lord's prayer". So,

what is the purpose of these verses, and how should they be used by Christians today?

In this setting Christ was teaching the disciples about worship. First, He was condemning the motivation of the hypocrites in their giving. Many of them were giving of their alms only to be seen of men. Some would even sound a trumpet before they presented their gift, to get the attention of everyone. Jesus taught that they should rather give in secret and that the Father, knowing of their gifts, would reward them openly.

Jesus also found fault with those who prayed in public long and repetitious prayers to be seen and heard of men. Rather, He said that they should go into the closet and shut the door and there pray to the Father. He said the Father already knew what they needed anyway.

After saying all of these things, the Lord began to teach His disciples how to pray. This was not *His* prayer, as such, but it was *a prayer of example.* If you really want a prayer that could be called "the Lord's prayer", go to John 17 where Jesus, with supplication and tears, calls on the Father on behalf of His disciples that they all might be united as one, in order that the world might believe in Him.

Not only was Matthew 6 not "the Lord's Prayer", but Christ never intended it to be our prayer, either. As you go through the words of the prayer, you will see that it was fitting for that day, but not for our day, in its entirety. Let us consider some reasons why:

1. In John 14:13, looking toward the time when He would return to the Father, and the kingdom would have been begun, Jesus instructed the disciples to pray to the Father in His name, and to honor and glorify Him in this way. But, in the prayer of Matthew 6 you will notice that nothing is said about Christ, and neither is the prayer in the name of Christ.

2. Obviously, when the example prayer of Matthew 6 was worded, the Lord's spiritual kingdom had not yet been established in the world. It had been prophesied and promised, but it was yet to come. Therefore, the Lord taught the disciples that they should pray for *the coming of the kingdom.* Now this would not suit our present day setting because shortly after the Lord taught the disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom, the kingdom actually came, and it came with power, being established in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 (Acts 2).

Most believers in Christ today, thinking that this prayer is "The Lord's Prayer", repeat it word for word, even praying for the coming of the kingdom [the church] after it has already come, and has now been in existence for nearly 2000 years! That would be like a man praying for a wife when he has already

been married for many years! Such a prayer would surely not go over very well, especially with his wife, would it? Neither does it sound right when one prays for the coming of the kingdom when we know by Scripture that the kingdom has already come. Of course, we can pray for the *spreading* of the kingdom or the *growth* of the kingdom, but not for the *coming* of the kingdom, because it is already here.

As far as the rest of the prayer is concerned, it is brief and to the point. It calls for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, that acknowledgement be made of one's physical needs and especially of our spiritual needs, that the speaker be willing to forgive those who have sinned against him, as well as to ask the Father for forgiveness, realizing that one cannot be forgiven unless he is willing to forgive.

While this was a wonderful prayer for the disciples of Jesus' day, and there are many good points that we can incorporate into our prayers as Christians today, the prayer as a whole was not intended for us to repeat word for word.

Because of the very nature of its content, we cannot scripturally repeat all of it as our own today. In fact, Jesus condemned repetition in prayers, wanting us to pray our own words sincerely from the heart, rather than to follow a form or ritual prayer. Those who personally say this prayer as their own, and groups that pray it in unison, fail to understand what Jesus' lesson was all about.

We are taught to pray, and under the law of Christ, we have prayers of example. We should therefore pray accordingly (Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6; James 5:16).

Only God's children are blessed with the privilege of prayer, and even they should always pray according to the will of the Father, if their prayers are to be heard and answered. *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."* (1 John 5:14,15). We should not ask the Father for things that He cannot give, or ask Him to do something that He has not promised to do. Our prayers should always be directed **to God** for the purpose of honoring Him, to acknowledge our need for His physical and spiritual blessings, and they should be made **in the name of Christ.** (Don't make the mistake of thanking *God* for *His body* that was given for us....) *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."* ✞

J.C. Choate, long-time missionary to India, was founder of *The Voice of Truth International.* He passed from this life in 2008.

Older Women, Please Teach the Younger Women

Bonnie Rushmore

Titus 2:5 clearly teaches that the older women are to teach the younger women. In this context, older women are to admonish the young women to "*love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands*." The Greek word "sophronizo (so-fron-id'-zo)" translated "admonish" in the NKJV and "teach" in the KJV means, "to make of sound mind, i.e. (figuratively) to discipline or correct."

Many times when we think of the older women teaching the younger, we think of a formal Bible class where an elder's wife or one of the older ladies prepares lessons and teaches the younger ladies. This is a useful tool in teaching, and I encourage this type of setting. Younger ladies, if your congregation has a Ladies' Bible Class, you are expected, even commanded, to be there, according to Titus 2:5 and Hebrews 11:25. A side benefit of a formal Ladies' Bible Class is the fellowship of women gathered together to encourage and uplift one another.

A formal classroom setting is not the only venue for older women teaching younger women. We teach by our example, our manner of speech, our behavior, our dress, our attitude, etc. We can teach one to one with an open Bible. We can also teach in casual conversations. Our opportunities to teach are everywhere — we just need to seize them.

The formal classroom setting is straight forward. We study Bible passages, possibly with the aid of a class book, with a teacher lecturing the students or having class discussions and hopefully making modern day applications for each one present.

The one on one study is a little different. It is less formal and more intimate. The topics discussed may be of a more personal nature — something not discussed in a large group — something the younger woman is struggling with or perhaps a sin she needs to correct. The younger women in this situation are more likely to listen to older women if there is a relationship already in place. A young woman is not going to go to an older woman about a problem in her life if her only association with the older woman is a greeting before or after worship. Unfortunately, within most congregations the older women spend time with those in their age group and the younger with those of their age. Thus, the young women are gathering advice from their peers, instead of from those who have experienced similar trials.

If we want to be useful servants of God and fulfill the command in Titus 2:5 — older women teach the younger women — we need to continually prepare ourselves for the task. One way to better prepare is to develop a relationship with **all** of the women of the congregation — young and old. A young mother struggling with her children will more likely listen to the advice from someone with whom she has a relationship, rather than from someone whom she only casually knows.

We cannot ignore God's command that the older women teach the younger women. As we look about, we can always find someone younger than ourselves to teach. I admonish young and older women to reach out to those in their congregations and encourage and uplift one another. Younger women, you can teach the older ladies how to use the modern technical gadgets as tools in God's kingdom and help keep the older ladies feeling young! ✞

Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer for the *The Voice of Truth International* as well as the primary layout person. She and her husband live in Winona, MS, USA where they and others cooperate to help perpetuate the long-standing missionary work of the late J.C. Choate.

PICTURED: Theola Burton, the late mother of Betty Burton Choate (Mrs. J.C. Choate).

Our Mission Is Missions

Allen Webster

Anyone who knows much about the Bible would agree that the mission of the local church is to save souls. Jesus' mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and His body on earth today is to do the same thing. We have understood that basic truth since we were babes in spiritual diapers. But what does that translate to in the local church and the individual Christian life?

We tend to think of evangelism in terms of statistics, entries on work programs, and financial reports. It's something some semi-strange man does in some exotic jungle or dilapidated slum. Often, we are, at best, removed from and forgetful of evangelism, and, at worst, disinterested and jealous of it.

We are generally mission-minded, but, it is fair to say, not to the extent that shows a deep-seated sacrificial willingness to see every creature taught (Mark 16:15). Most churches have at least one missionary on their program of work, and most members are content to give a hundred a month to his work, though they do not get excited about what he is doing, or really know much about it. (Quick, what are the names of the missionaries you help support? In what countries do they serve? How many children do they have? Is it a successful work? When was the last time you specifically prayed for him, his family, and the lost among whom he works?). If we have trouble answering such questions, it probably indicates we are not as involved in this part of the church's work as we should be.

Churches, like people, need to analyze priorities from time to time. There are *urgent necessities,* and then there are *eternal verities.* We have to maintain a building, but we cannot take it to heaven with us. We must fix water leaks, mow grass, and pay electric bills. These are urgent necessities. They should not take up most of our business meetings and cost most of our money. Sometimes we spend money on things that are marginally necessary and then hesitate to launch out with money and energy on ideas for soul winning. This is walking by sight, not by faith.

The eternal verities are the souls of men, judgment, heaven, and hell. We cannot see these things. They do not become urgent necessities unless our eyes are

opened to see *"fields white unto harvest"* (John 4:35). Things we can physically see are easier to work on and cherish than things we can know only by faith. But we are commanded to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Some of the old-timers used to pray, "Help us live in view of eternity." This would be a good motto for a church to have — in view of eternity.

It takes leaders who walk by faith to launch out aggressively to evangelize the whole world. They must not allow the *urgent* to supersede the *eternal.* It takes members walking by faith to support their plans with heart, soul, and pocketbook. It takes preachers walking by faith to continue to emphasize the true mission of the church and to genuinely, selflessly, work to see it happen.

What, specifically, are *we* doing to evangelize our town? Our state? Our nation? Our world? Is it enough? Are we content with our efforts? Is the Lord satisfied with them? Are we ready to go to judgment with the people of our generation? What will happen to our little town at Judgment Day? As our neighbors are brought before the bar, and we look into their faces, will we see fear, anger, surprise, confidence?

I have not been able to adequately express what my heart feels about these things. I've faltered and fallen short of what needs to be said. But will you consider this carefully, thoughtfully, prayerfully? Let's put our greatest effort into things that really matter. *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15).

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). ✞

Allen Webster is the Editor of *House to House, Heart to Heart*, as well as serving as the preacher for the Lord's church in Jacksonville, Alabama, USA.

Great Commission or Great Omission?

Jerry A. Jenkins

After twenty centuries of Christian history, the church finds itself in the embarrassing position of having been disobedient to one of the last commands ever given by the Lord. Jesus affirmed, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19,20).

The majority of the world's population is not Christian. The term "Christian" is not the biblical usage, but includes Catholic, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal, Anglicans, etc. So much of the religious world claims no interest in or relationship with Jesus Christ.

The people of God must face the urgency of the unfinished task. There must be a burning sense of spiritual obligation. Each must accept the need to be overwhelmed with the spiritual opportunities. Again, each needs to sit at the feet of the Master and hear His imperative challenge. Evangelism and outreach are not left to the whim or preference of individual church members, but the Great Commission places legitimacy to the claim upon the life of each follower of Jesus.

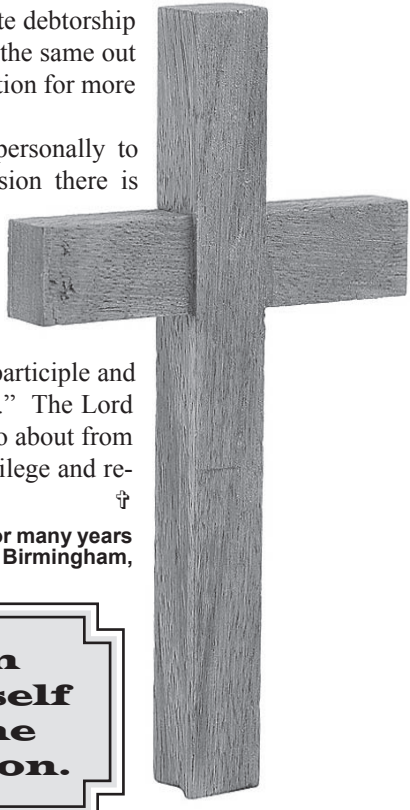
This Great Commission is based on the claim of divine ownership. *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness. The world and those who dwell therein"* (Psalm 24:1). *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's* (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The Great Commission is based on the claim of spiritual debtorship. *"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise"* (Romans 1:14). Each child of God is personally indebted to the Lord, based upon the love of the forgiven and the gratitude of the redeemed. The debt will never be fully repaid. It is an inescapable debt, and there is no way to evade, avoid, or delay it.

The people of God must face the urgency of the unfinished task. There must be a burning sense of spiritual obligation.

No substitute is acceptable. This passionate debtorship has taken the pain out of the martyrs' fire, the same out of crucifixions, and the fear out of persecution for more than twenty centuries.

Each Christian must relate himself personally to the Great Commission. In this commission there is one dominant and controlling imperative while all of the other verb forms are participles. In the original language the central verb is formed on the noun for "disciples" and should be translated "make disciples." The word translated "go" is a participle and could be translated "going" or "as you go." The Lord is saying to all of His disciples, "As you go about from place to place, involve yourself in the privilege and responsibility of making disciples." ✝



Jerry Jenkins (1936-2010) was the preacher for many years for the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

Each Christian must relate himself personally to the Great Commission.

Paula's Pain Relieved by God's Love

Roger Leonard

"Paula" sat there at the table in the library of the jail where the sheriff allowed ministers to come and talk with inmates. We had been studying the Bible together and searching for answers to the problems in Paula's life. She was confused. So many people had lied to her, abused her, made fun of her. She was racked with emotional pain. Oh, she tried to cover it up by acting tough and talking like nobody could hurt her. But I knew it was a big cover-up because I'd seen her cry. I had heard her talk about how unstable her life had been, so I knew that this was a young woman who needed to know that somebody cared. Not with words, but really and truly cared about her more than she cared about herself.

As Paula and I looked at the Scriptures together, she began to see that God cared about her − that God loved her and gave His only Son for her sins.

Then she began to recount her past − all the things she had done. People she had hurt. The resentful feelings she had toward others. The pain she had inflicted on other people. Awful sins she had been involved in. She knew that her life was

one big black picture of sin. All she could see were the ugly effects of not knowing and believing in Jesus, the Savior of the world.

She began to wonder if God could forgive her. This is natural for many people. They ponder the words of the Bible, as the mind's eye sees Jesus suffering on the cross. They realize that sin, their sin, just as much as anybody else's sin, caused Jesus to endure that suffering. "Did Jesus do that for me?" Paula asked. My answer was John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."* "The world," I emphasized to Paula. "And you are part of the world. Christ Jesus came into the world to save all sinners, Paula, and you are a sinner. I am a sinner. Christ died for all of us!"

But guilt is a powerful thing. It eats away at our hearts and souls and hinders faith in God, but only if we let it. Only if we fail to see that God wants to forgive us and that He's not *"willing that any should perish"* (2 Peter 3:9). He's waiting for us to accept His offer for salvation. *"...[T]he Spirit and the bride say come,"* we read in Revelation 22:17. The Holy Spirit speaks through the Bible and the Bible alone. The bride is the church, the wife of the Lamb. Members of the church say, "come" by using the Scriptures to share God's plan of salvation.

"Now, Paula, let's finish reading Revelation 22:17," I said. *"And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."* "Paula, Jesus is speaking here and He says, 'whoever'".

Paula sits at the table, staring at the words of the Bible. She weeps. She weeps because she now knows that whether anyone else in this world loves her or not, God does. In spite of her ugly past, regardless of her shame for all that she has done and felt, she knows that God loves her!

"Now what?" she wanted to know. I asked her if she believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that He had died, was buried, and raised the third day. She said, "Yes." I asked her if she would repent; that is, change her mind about sin and live for Jesus. Again she said, "Yes." We studied the scriptures on baptism. And she said, "I want to be baptized for the remission of sins like Peter said in Acts 2:38."

The sheriff allowed us to go with an officer to a local church building where Paula was baptized into Christ for the remission of her sins. She was then and there forgiven of all her sins. Her pain had been relieved!

Paula knew that she would fight against Satan, as all Christians do, but that from that time forward she would have the Lord to help her win the battles (1 John 2:1-2).

Friend, our Lord wants to help you with your pain, too. Will you let Him? ✞

Roger Leonard is the Evangelist/Preacher for Adel Church of Christ, in Adel, Georgia, USA.

The Forgotten Act

Tim Forlines

We have often emphasized that worship consists of specific acts: singing, prayer, the Lord's Supper, preaching the Word, and giving. In fact, even throughout "Christendom", these same acts are regarded and practiced (in one form or another) as worship.

There is one act not in the list above, but just as important as any of them. Make no mistake — it is implied in all of them, but its practice is sometimes wanting. It is the act of *participation.* There is a danger that nearly any act of worship can become a spectator event, but one or two items are more prone to it than others.

Our singing, for example, can be looked upon as something merely to be enjoyed. Of course, there is nothing wrong with enjoying the singing of praises to God. After all, Israel was told to worship joyfully (Psalm 95:1,2, etc.). We are taught to *"rejoice in the Lord always"* (Philippians 4:4); certainly the command would include our manner of worship. However, our singing can become self-indulgent if we get too caught up in how it sounds to us, as pointed out by John Price in his book, *Old Light on New Worship*. He writes:

> It is true that the emotions must be involved in worship, but it must be truth in the mind that leads the emotions. Anything that has the power to bypass the mind and directly affect the emotions must be handled with the greatest care in the worship of God. (pp. 157-158)

Similarly, the preaching has sometimes been treated as if it were an item of entertainment. Often, people notice how capable and eloquent the speaker is, rather than how helpful or edifying the message spoken. In Scripture, a great emphasis is placed upon hearing and receipt of the Word preached (Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). In this way, every worshiper participates in every aspect of worship, even the preaching of the Word!

May the "forgotten act" not truly and forever be forgotten! ✞

Tim Forlines serves the Lord in Powell, Tennessee, USA.

There is a danger that nearly any act of worship can become a spectator event.

"Just So You Worship"

Hugo McCord

It is easy to say, "What you do in worship is unimportant, just so you worship." But the Divine Being teaches that what one does in worship is also important, and that if what one does is of human origin, the worship is worthless: *"they worship Me in vain,"* says the Lord, *"teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9; John 4:24).

Since Abel offered animal sacrifices *"by faith,"* and since faith comes by hearing God's Word, the necessary inference is that God's Word had specified animal sacrifices (Genesis 4:4; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4). It cannot be that God had told Abel that animal sacrifices were required and had not told Cain. If God is love, and if He is no respecter of persons, both of the brothers had received the same instructions from God (1 John 4:8; Acts 10:34). God did not say, "What you sacrifice is unimportant, just so you worship."

It is doubtful that the brothers knew why God had specified animal sacrifices. By hindsight you and I know that God already had the sacrifice of Jesus in mind, *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). But Abel did what God said simply because God had said to do it.

Cain killed Abel, and lied to the Lord (*"'Where is your brother Abel?'* He replied, '*I do not know,'"* Genesis 4:9). Those two sins were committed, says the apostle John, *"because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous"* (1 John 3:12). The only works we know of causing those two sins were about his offering in worship what the Lord had not commanded, namely, vegetables instead of animals. Thus, it is *"evil"* to do something in worship which the Lord has not commanded.

But after Cain's rejected worship service, still there was hope. God loved Cain, and Cain could have repented. But, said the Lord, *"if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door",* and *"it desires to have you"* (Genesis 4:7). The Lord's picturing sin as a voracious animal bent down ready to pounce on a victim was done to lead Cain to repentance.

The Lord knew that if Cain would make up his mind, he could master sin, and the Lord challenged and urged him to do it, using the word *"you"* twice: *"You, you master him!"* (Genesis 4:7). What a scene! One soul, though in sin, is so valuable the busy administrator of the universe takes time for a one-on-one

attempt at restoration! Cain, like all of us, could have mastered sin, could *"have conquered the Evil One"*, but he refused to do so (1 John 2:14).

Are Christians today to pay any attention to this old history? The New Testament pronounces a woe to those who walk in the *"way of Cain"* (Jude 11). What is the *"way of Cain"*? It is to say "what you do in worship is unimportant, just so you worship."

In the time of Nadab and Abihu, the Lord ordered that *"the fire on the altar shall be kept burning;"* it *"shall not go out,"* being daily replenished with *"wood"* (Leviticus 6:12). The only place specified for a priest to get *"coals of fire"* for his incense burner was *"from the altar before Yahweh"* (Leviticus 16:12). For an unknown reason, Nadab and Abihu obtained coals of fire for their censers from another source (Leviticus 10:1).

Their fire, not coming from the sacred altar, Moses said was zarah, translated as *"strange"* (KJV, ASV, NASV), *"unauthorized"* (NIV), *"illegitimate"* (NWT), and *"unholy"* (NRS). Their action so angered the Lord that He immediately burned them alive. God made it clear that the doctrine is false that says, "What you do in worship is unimportant, just so you worship."

Specifically, Moses declared that the two priests had done what the Lord *"had not commanded"* (Leviticus 10:1), "had not prescribed," and that what was done was *"contrary to His* [God's] *command."* Anyone doing that which the Lord has *"not commanded"* is thus setting the Lord aside, and placing himself in charge.

Some have attempted to remove the actual cause of the cremation of the two priests by asserting that the place where they obtained the fire was not really important, but that Nadab and Abihu were both drunk from wine and strong drink, and so some are asserting that the Lord condemned them for their drunkenness. This they allege is true, for the Lord's prohibition of wine and strong drink for priests on duty is placed in the text close to the cremation account (Leviticus 10:8-11). But the proximity of verses 8-11 to verses 1-3 in no wise puts liquor in the mouths of Nadab and Abihu. Such far-fetched speculation appears to be an attempt to nullify the reason that Moses gave for the cremation: the priests did something which the Lord *"had not commanded them."*

As Cain did that which the Lord had not commanded, and as Nadab and Abihu did that which the Lord had not commanded, so King Saul did that which the Lord had not commanded (1 Samuel 15:9). His putting himself in charge, saving the best of the sheep and cattle, displeased the Lord. The prophet Samuel did not say to the king, "What you do in worship is unimportant, just so you

worship." Instead, his words were, *"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:22).

Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, likewise did that which the Lord had not commanded, taking hold of the untouchable sacred box called *"the ark of the covenant,"* and the Lord killed him (Numbers 4:15; 2 Samuel 6:6,7).

Are these Old Testament examples to mean anything to New Testament people? Truly it can be said that one of the reasons for the preservation of all of the Old Testament books is that *"they were written"* as *"warnings"* for *"our instruction"* (1 Corinthians 10:6,11).

Also, the New Testament has preserved another example of people doing that which the Lord had not commanded. Among the first century Jews, hand washing before a meal was done, not only for cleanliness, but as an act of worship. Jesus did not say, "What you do in worship is not important, just so you worship." Instead, He told them their worship was *"vain"* because it had been humanly devised, being *"the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9).

Whether a sacrifice be animal or vegetable, whether fire for a censer comes from the altar or from a kitchen, whether the best sheep should be spared for a worship service, whether a sacred box is untouchable, whether hands are washed as an act of worship, all of these matters may seem trivial. But it is clear that the Lord considers anything not commanded as major.

People who set the Lord aside and put themselves in charge think that having a machine to accompany singing in worship is a trivial matter, unworthy of discussion. To be consistent they would also have to say that rosaries and censers and prayer candles and holy water and images of dancing in the New Testament worship are all trivial matters, unworthy of discussion. They would also say that "more important matters should concern us," and "just so you worship" none of these things matter.

But voices from the dead (Cain, Nadab and Abihu, King Saul, Uzzah, and the first century Jews) speak loudly, telling us that where the Bible speaks, we should speak, and where it is silent, we should be silent. Both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6) and the New Testament (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18,19) leave no uncertain sound that any human being bold to add or to subtract from the Lord's teachings is a sinner. The Lord's silence is always prohibitive, never permissive. Is a human being humble or presumptuous who dares to speak when God is quiet? ✞

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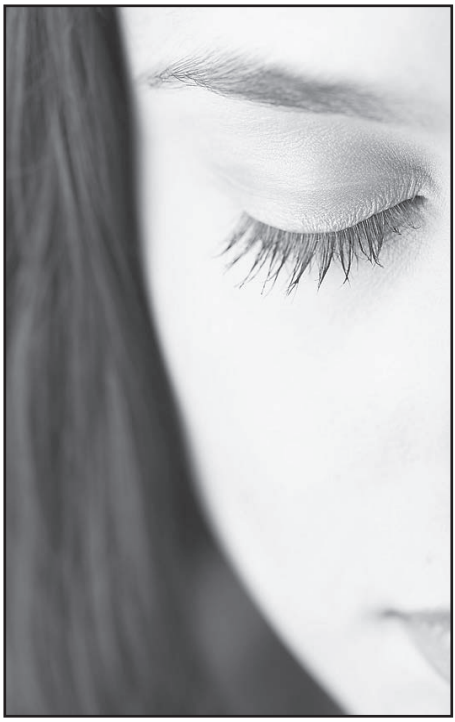
Have You Noticed…?

Dalton Key



…that worship services are more meaningful when you actually attend? As wonderful as Pentecost was, only those present had their hearts pricked by the Gospel message.

…that you get less from sermons you sleep through? Snoozers are losers during lesson time. (I did have one habitual sleeper tell me once that he got more out of my sermons while dozing than most others did who stayed awake. I don't know if I want to know what he meant by that.)

…that your participation in the worship adds to your enrichment and edification from the worship? Those who take part are more likely to take something home.

…that the congregation's singing sounds better when you are singing yourself? Isn't it strange that those who rarely sing a note are the first to complain about the poor singing?

…that the closer attention you pay to the words of a song or prayer, the more you benefit? Heaven has always sought *"true worshippers"* who worship *"in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23,24).

…that the time of worship seems to fly by when you put yourself into it, but drags on and on and on when you show little or no interest?

Let's resolve to put more of ourselves into our worship! ✞

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the 10th & Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

I am one of the family.

It was my Brother who died,
My dearest,
Sweetest,
Most precious Brother,
And *today*
Those of us who love Him
Are having a remembrance,
A memorial
For Him.
He is worthy
Of being honored,
And I sing in happiness,
Looking forward
To the time of tribute.
Some of us
Are doubly blessed today;
Ours is the privilege
Of special service
In this remembrance.
My part?
The sweetest one of all:
They have allowed me
— *me!* —
To prepare the supper
Of His body.
I have made the bread
With loving hands
And into vessels sparkling clean
I have poured the wine,
The emblem of His blood.
I
— *I!*—
Could do this special service
For my Brother
So the world will not forget
He lived and died
And lives again
For me....
for all of us!

Betty Burton Choate

The Delusion of Gay Marriage

Kevin Moore

Mona and Larry desperately want to be parents. The problem is, they don't have kids, they don't want kids, and they don't even like kids. But they do have a poodle and a parakeet, and they are just as devoted to these pets as any parent could possibly be to a human child. Legally, however, they are not classified as parents, and therefore do not share the same status, recognition, or rights as other parents. Mona and Larry, and many others like them, feel as though they are treated as second-class citizens just because they do not fit the traditional parenting model.

Due to this inequity, Mona and Larry face unfair disadvantages as they try to care for their beloved dependents. They do not qualify for financial aid, food subsidies, health benefits, or even tax credits like other parents do. Even though they dearly love and are deeply committed to their poodle and parakeet, no government assistance is made available to them.

Is it not the purpose of government to protect civil liberties? Do not Mona and Larry have the inalienable right to be parents? Being denied this legal recognition deprives them of freedom, equality, and personal choice in matters of family. Why shouldn't inter-species parenting receive the same privileges and protections that traditional parenting is afforded?

Now for the pet-hating bigots who claim that parents by definition are caregivers of offspring in their own species, Mona and Larry believe this definition is too limiting. Parenting has evolved over the years, so perhaps it is time to modernize the outdated usage of terms such as "human," "mother," "father," "parents," "children," "sons," "daughters," and "family." More inclusive and non-species-specific designations would be less discriminatory and more politically correct.

It is no one else's business if pet owners want to enjoy equal acceptance as parents, and it doesn't harm anyone. People who adore their animals should be allowed the same parental benefits and public acknowledgement as the parents of homo sapiens. If the current legal definition of family results in blatant

discrimination against parents of furry and feathered loved ones, is it not time for change? Who will support Mona, Larry, and all other pet lovers and take a stand for parental equality?

I hope you realize that the preceding paragraphs are satirical. To change the definition of "parents" to include pet owners is, with all due respect, nonsensical. And to keep the definition as it is cannot realistically be construed as discriminatory. The very essence of parenting in all societies unquestionably involves the raising of human children.

How, then, is "homosexual marriage" not an oxymoron? Marriage necessarily involves a bride and a groom, which by definition means a man and a woman. Marriage is the union of a husband and wife, which again means a man and a woman. To redefine marriage to include same-gender couples would require the elimination or radical change of all the terms and concepts that have always been integral to this cherished institution. Marriage never has been, nor can it ever be, gender neutral. It would be like trying to change the rules of mixed-doubles tennis to include teammates of the same sex.

Marriage is also pre-political and therefore a non-political entity. While lawmakers may recognize and sanction marriage, they neither created it nor are they at liberty to redefine it. Moreover, when marriage produces children, the marriage (according to design) naturally provides a mother and a father, something homosexual relationships simply cannot do. Even the reality of childless couples and single parents does not change this indisputable fact. Neither do childless couples and single parents redefine marriage. Proponents of gay marriage and gay adoption have yet to adequately explain which parent a child does not need – a mother or a father?

Is there a legitimate case to be made for so-called marriage equality? Is the rejection of homosexual marriage a matter of human inequality? Equality entails the correspondence of things that are alike. I may think it is unfair that barn owners pay less for property insurance than house owners, and then I might lobby to have my house reclassified as a barn. But the insurance company will simply remind me that my house, by nature, is not a barn. Even if I *call* it a barn, this does not change what it actually *is*.

Pet owners and parents raising children are not the same, so to refuse to categorize pet owners as "parents" does not create parental inequality. Same-sex couples and heterosexual couples are inherently different, so to limit marriage to a husband and wife, and to withhold the descriptive terms "bride" from men and "groom" from women, does not constitute unfair treatment to those who simply do not meet the fundamental criteria.

If parenting is the relationship between a father, mother, and kids, then Mona and Larry have no legal or ethical justification for crying "discrimination" if they do not fit into this category. If marriage is the conjugal union of a consenting man and a consenting woman along with certain commonsense restrictions, then two men or two women cannot feel discriminated against any more than could a woman and her adult son or daughter, or a man and his adult son or daughter, or biological siblings, or two minors, or a grown-up and a minor, or a human and an animal, or multiple partners, or one who is already married to someone else. There are many who just do not qualify.

There has to be a standard. To replace the traditional marriage model with another one (e.g. inclusive of homosexuals) is to destroy the institution of marriage all together. It is not a matter of maintaining the current model while simply allowing others to join in. The redefining of marriage is the eradication of marriage itself and substituting for it something entirely different. I, for one, hold my marriage in much higher regard, and there is a practical reason for affirming the sanctity of marriage.

You will notice that the argumentation thus far has been based on reason and common sense. No appeal has been made to religion or to any religious document. For those who blindly dismiss opponents of gay marriage as closed-minded bigots or religious fanatics, you can stop reading now. Just ponder what has been written to this point.

For those of us who accept the divine authority of the Bible, by considering the following Scriptures with an open mind and no underlying agenda, the will of God on this issue ought to be crystal clear. No further comment from me is needed. On the practice of homosexuality, see Genesis 13:13; 19:4-7; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-10. On God's design for marriage, see Genesis 2:22-24; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-3; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4. ✞

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Addendum: Some will no doubt find this article offensive, whether advocates of gay marriage, or pet lovers, or maybe even tennis players and barn owners. But please don't miss the point. It is not about homosexuals vs. pets, or barns vs. houses, or gender-specific tennis players vs. mixed-doubles tennis players. It is a reasonable challenge to those who are seeking to hijack and redefine a very special, centuries-old, well-established institution and are using irrational, defamatory, misleading bully-tactics to do so.

Attributes of Christian Womanhood

Jimmy Jividen

1 Timothy 2:9-15 contains four attributes of the Christian woman:

- Her greatest beauty is to be found in modesty (9-10);
- Her greatest eloquence is to be found in quietness (11-12);
- Her greatest power is to be found in submission (13-14);
- Her greatest glory is to be found in motherhood (15).

Some in our contemporary culture see such attributes as demeaning to women. They don't get it. God gave these attributes to His finest and final creation.

Modesty is not a sign of ugliness…just the opposite. A woman who possesses the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit radiates a beauty far above that of jewels and clothes. Her attractiveness is "inside out".

Quietness is not a sign of ignorance…just the opposite. Holding your tongue and being sure of what you speak, where you speak, when you speak, and how you speak is the greatest wisdom.

Submission is not a sign of weakness…just the opposite. It was by submission to the will of God that Jesus was highly exalted. He did not bear the cross out of fear and duty, but because He chose to. The greatest power is found in conquering your own ego by submission.

Motherhood is not a sign of inability… just the opposite. It is the highest position of honor and the most noble calling of service. Far above the titles of "Queen," "Princess," "Your Honor," "Madam President," and "Doctor" is the voice of a child saying "Mommy".

To change from such an ideal is degradation. Why would a butterfly ever want to be a caterpillar? ✝

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The Gift and the Giver

Rex Banks

From atop the royal palace, King Nebuchadnezzar mused: *"Is this not Babylon the great, which I **MYSELF** have built… by the might of **MY POWER** and for the glory of **MY MAJESTY**?"* (Daniel 4:30). The question was meant to be rhetorical, but God replied by enrolling the King in a seven year course designed to teach the arrogant despot that *"…the most high is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whoever He wishes"* (Daniel 4:25). Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten that it was "the God of heaven" who had given him *"the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory"* (Daniel 2:37), and he needed a reminder.

Don't we all have the same problem? How easily we become intoxicated with the **gift**, and how easily we forget the **Giver**! Moses warned Israel: *"... you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.'* [But]*...it is the Lord your God…who is giving you power to make wealth…"* (Deuteronomy 8:17,18). Since success often breeds pride, the nation is warned: *"Beware lest you forget the Lord your God… lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied and have built good houses and lived in them… then your heart becomes proud and you forget the Lord your God…"* (Deuteronomy 8:11-14). Again and again Israel is reminded that the Land of Canaan is a GIFT (Deuteronomy 1:20,25; 2:29; 3:30; 4:40; 5:16), not a wage earned by *"righteousness"* or *"unrighteousness of... heart"* (Deuteronomy 9:5). When the nation forgot that *"The earth is the lords and all it contains"* (Psalm 24:1), there arose a generation of greedy, rapacious, arrogant men who would *"impose heavy rent upon the poor"* (Amos 5:11), *"trample the needy*" (Amos 8:4), and *"... buy the helpless for money"* (Amos 8:6). Yet these fellow Israelites were God's servants whom He Himself had brought out of slavery (Leviticus 35:42), and the land itself was God's land (Leviticus 25:23).

Brethren, how well are we doing with the gifts which God has given us? Does God bless us with houses, cars, and wealth so that we can congratulate ourselves upon **OUR SUCCESS**, or so that we can *"do good,... be rich in good works… be generous and ready to share"* (1 Timothy 6:18)? God does indeed love a *"cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7), but we can only give cheerfully if we are completely convinced that *"every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above"* (James 1:13). If we fall into the Nebuchadnezzar trap (*"**My** power… **my** majesty"*) we'll never place our car, our home, or our checkbook at the

Master's feet. We're not self-made men, we're God-made men, and we've been *"created in Christ Jesus for good works"* (Ephesians 2:10)! We've been blessed so that we can bless others (2 Corinthians 9:12)! Let's look beyond the **GIFT** and behold the **GIVER**, remembering the promise, *"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). ✝

Rex Banks works with the Lord's church in Hamilton, New Zealand.

The Righteousness of the Pharisees

Thomas Baxley

Jesus told us that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will not make it into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). The scribes were the ones who were charged with writing things down, like the Law. The Pharisees were the "spiritual elite" in the days of Jesus, at least in their own eyes. So, how is our righteousness supposed to surpass the righteousness of those whose sole responsibility was to write the Law and those who lived their lives by it?

The answer is that though they knew the *letter* of the Law, they did not know the *spirit* of the Law. John and Jesus both call them a *"brood of vipers"* (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:33). In Matthew 23, Jesus really let those people have it. Seven times they were called hypocrites. They were called fools and blind men (19) and whitewashed tombs (27). A good summary can be found in verses 23,24. The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be so holy and so righteous, yet they neglected the weightier matters of the Law. They taught that some aspects of the law were more important than others, and that the less important aspects were not necessary to observe. The way our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees is that we teach the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:27). ✝

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Ten Things You Did This Week That You Will Not Do In Heaven

Mark Ray

1. You drove to a cemetery.
   There is no death in heaven, Revelation 21:4
2. You turned on a light switch.
   God is the light in heaven, Revelation 21:23
3. You faced temptation.
   Satan is banned from influencing heaven, Revelation 20:10
4. You visited or called a sick person.
   No sickness there, Revelation 21:4
5. You locked your door.
   No crime or evil in heaven, Revelation 21:27
6. You aged a little — grew older, found gray hair.
   All former things like aging will cease, Revelation 21:4
7. You shed a tear.
   No tears in heaven, Revelation 21:4
8. You took pain medication (had a headache, backache, etc.).
   No pain in heaven, Revelation 21:4
9. You worked to earn a living or to serve your neighbor.
   You will rest from your labors, Revelation 14:13

And one more thing you did this week that you will not do in heaven…

10. You said a prayer.
    You will speak with God and Christ face to face, Revelation 21:4

Don't you look forward to going to heaven? ✝

Mark Ray is a Gospel preacher serving the Benton Church of Christ in Benton, Kentuckty, USA.

5-Minute Bible Study

PROPHETS

Paula Bates

1. My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the _____, as an example of _____ and _____. James 5:10
2. Who killed both the _____ _____ and their own _____, and have persecuted us; and they do not _____ God and are contrary to all men. 1 Thessalonians 2:15
3. Who say to the seers, "Do not _____," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us _____ things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Isaiah 30:10
4. Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my _____, and the Lord said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and pull ____, To _____ and to throw down, To build and to plant." Jeremiah 1:9,10
5. He who _____ a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's _____. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. Matthew 10:41
6. Love never fails. But whether there are _____, they will fail; whether there are _____, they will cease; whether there is _____, it will vanish away. 1 Corinthians 13:8

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1. Lord, suffering, patience
2. Lord Jesus, prophets. Please
3. See, right
4. Mouth, down, destroy
5. Receives, reward
6. Prophecies, tongues, knowledge

The Childless Home — by Choice

Brad Harrub

"The Childfree Life: When Having It All Means Not Having Children," reads the cover of this week's issue of *Time* magazine. The cover story goes on to detail how a rapidly increasing number of American couples are foregoing children to pursue their careers. After all, children cost a lot of money and require a lot of time. The solution — if you believe that children are a drain on your time and money, don't have any. The article quotes some statistics that show just how far the numbers are falling.

The birthrate in the U.S. is the lowest in recorded American history. From 2007 to 2011, the most recent year for which there's data, the fertility rate declined 9%. A 2010 Pew Research report showed that childlessness has risen across all racial and ethnic groups, adding up to about 1 in 5 American women who end their childbearing years maternity-free, compared with 1 in 10 in the 1970s."

This should come as no surprise, though. Without even touching on the problem of abortion and pregnancies out of wedlock, this discussion illustrates

just one more way our society is moving away from God's plan for the home. Marriage rates are going down and the average age of marriage is rising all the time, as young men and women in many cases are refusing to settle down because marriage means a change in lifestyle that they don't want to make. Feminism has changed the role of the wife and mother and subsequently the role of the husband and father, making marriage a social contract between two people who effectively have no differences.

All of these cultural changes stand in direct contrast to God's plan for the family. From the beginning He created them male and female. God said, *"It is not good for man to be alone."* The Hebrews writer commanded that the marriage bed be kept undefiled. Solomon told us in Psalm 127 that children are a blessing, which is something we believed until the last two or three generations, when children became burdens that hindered our own selfish pursuits. The church has bought into the world's view of children as well. If you don't believe me, just ask any family that has been blessed with more than three or four children what kind of comments they've heard from other Christians. As always, we must ask ourselves where our beliefs come from, and if we go back to the Bible we see that God is pleased by marriages that honor Him and model Christ's relationship with the church, and also by parents who think of their children as disciples and future workers in His kingdom.

Those foundational principles, established by God with the first man and woman, are not subject to the interpretation of the post-1950 American society. It's time we stop letting the culture and our selfish desires dictate what we believe about the home and the roles God has given the family. ✞

Brad Harrub is Director of Focus Press, Inc. and lectures on evidences and Christianity. He lives in Brentwood, Tennessee, USA.

Having looked in the tearful eyes of many parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned there are a million miles between our children "going through the motions" in reference to their spiritual lives, versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this book, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my children and those whom I love. -
Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

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What Constitutes Marriage?

Ian McPherson

Marriage was ordained in the Garden of Eden by God (Genesis 2:23-25). It provides man with suitable companionship (Genesis 2:18), and a secure environment for raising children (Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 127:3-5; 128; Malachi 2:14,15). The attack by Satan on the home today is relentless and has caused much confusion. Many do not even know whether or not they are actually married. Let us therefore go back to Bible basics to define what constitutes marriage.

MARRIAGE IS AN INSTITUTION OF GOD. *"Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6). No man or government has authority to join people in marriage or grant a divorce without God's approval.

MARRIAGE IS REGULATED BY THE LAW OF GOD. *"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 7:39). *"The law"* here is God's law. An example of an unlawful marriage is that of King Herod to Herodias. Even though they were married and divorced according to the law of the land (Mark 6:17), John the Baptist still told Herod that *"It is not lawful for thee to have her"* (Matthew 14:4). Notice also that although Herod was not a Christian, he was still accountable to God's law of marriage. Christians and non-Christians alike therefore are accountable to God in their marriage.

Christ stated that fornication is the only ground for divorce and remarriage. *"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matthew 19:9). (See also Matthew 5:32, Romans 7:2,3).

MARRIAGE IS UNDEFILED AND HONOURABLE. *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). To be valid, marriage must be honourable in all (before both God and man). All societies require some form of legal marriage ceremony that is publicly witnessed and accepted. If a marriage has not complied with the legal requirements of the land, it is not honorable for man. De facto relationships — "live in" relationships — do not constitute marriage.

The motor car is a great blessing to man if driven responsibly. Imagine, however, what carnage would result on our roads if all men were free to drive cars without a license, or according to any rules they set. In the same way, sex, if confined to the marriage bed, is honorable and undefiled, and should be practiced freely and romantically. (See also 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Song of Solomon 4:8-16). Fornication and adultery, however, have devastating fruits — broken homes, parentless children, crushed spirits, suicide, loneliness, disease, and murder are just a few of the consequences.

MARRIAGE IS FORMED BY COVENANT. It is not formed by the first sexual union. *"Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant"* (Malachi 2:14). (See also Proverbs 2:17,18). Marriage is actually a three-way covenant. The man, the woman, and God must all agree. Also, the couple become husband and wife at the ceremony, not in the honeymoon bed. Sex does not form the marriage, but is a blessing within the marriage.

MARRIAGE IS BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN. "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24). Many governments today are actually legalizing homosexual marriages. Same-sex unions are described in the Bible as vile, unnatural, and sinful, and therefore can never form any part of a valid marriage (Romans 1:26,27).

Let us close with an admonition from the Proverbs to married people. *"Let thy foundation be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger"* (Proverbs 5:18-20)? ✞

Ian McPherson works for the Lord in Australia.

We're Not Raising Grass

Patrick Morrison

Major League Baseball Hall-of-Famer Harmon Killebrew once told about the influence of his father in helping him to become a great ball player. He told of the times his father would take him and his brother into the backyard to throw the ball around. On one occasion, Harmon's mother told the rough and tumble boys, as well as their father, "You're tearing up the grass." Mr. Killebrew wisely replied, "We're not raising grass; we're raising boys."

It's easy to get our priorities out of line, isn't it? We get so caught up in the frenetic pace of the world around us that we wind up devoting our time and attention to raising "things" instead of raising children. We want to have a nice house so that we can at least be on par with those around us, so we raise up an edifice that serves as a *house* while forgetting to make it a *home.* We want the lawn to look nice, so we spend hours manicuring and

landscaping in order to raise grass and flowers. We want to earn more money in the workplace, so we spend longer hours raising our salaries. The god of this world has a way of shifting our focus from the eternal to the temporal, from the spiritual to the physical. If we are not careful, we leave the raising of our children to television, the internet, and their peers.

nurture and the admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). While we want them to be successful in a chosen field of employment, in marrying, and raising their own families, in securing a home, in enjoying some of the niceties of life, above all we want them to be faithful servants of God! It won't be long until we must turn them loose into a world seeking to lead them astray from God.

"We're not raising grass; we're raising boys."

One of the greatest blessings of living in this world is the joy of having children in the home. Truly children are a heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3). I cannot imagine my life without the four precious blessings that God has bestowed upon my wife and me. I will never forget the moment that we headed to the hospital to welcome the arrival of our firstborn. There was so much elation leading up to the impending arrival, but all of a sudden, I also realized the amazing responsibility that we would now have as parents. God was entrusting a precious little one into our care. The blessings over which He had made us stewards was now encompassing even more!

With each passing moment, I am reminded of how fleeting time is (James 4:14), especially as I see it flying so rapidly by in the lives of my children. My wife and I are charged with raising these precious souls in the

How they fare largely depends on whether or not we have grounded them in the truth of God's Word and modeled Jesus before them (Colossians 1:23; Galatians 2:20).

So, please pardon me if our house is not kept up to the white-glove standard of cleanliness. Please excuse me if my lawn is a little unkempt, or if the shrubs are not trimmed quite right. Please forgive me if my vehicle is not washed and waxed to a showroom shine. I'm probably busy playing with my kids, or teaching them about God's creation, or spending time together doing a little bit of nothing. It won't be too much longer before I will have a lot more time to focus on those other things, but for now, I want to use the time God has given me with my children to raise them for His honor and glory. ✞

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue congregation in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

Is It Wrong to Spank Your Child?

Dan Wheeler

For over a generation there has been mounting pressure to vilify parents who spank their children as a form of discipline. For example, Dr. Spock's *Baby Book* advocated positive reinforcement for children. Since then, experts have disputed the Bible (Proverbs 23:13,14) and argued that spanking teaches the child to be violent. A recent 20/20 TV program tried to use expert testimony to prove the harm of spanking, but was unable to convince the parents interviewed in the program that spanking was bad. Despite the claims that spanking is actually child abuse, 84% of parents still believe that it is okay to spank their child.

I'm convinced that most adults who were spanked as children have "fond" memories of their parents' discipline because they learned the lessons that their parents were trying to teach them through discipline. Perhaps even more telling is the informal poll of my three teen children who were watching the 20/20 with my wife and me. They all agreed that the expert was wrong. Each of them had their share of spanking, and they knew that they were better people for the experience.

All discipline must be done in love, and is to be done for the child's own good (see Ephesians 6:4). Therefore, one should keep in mind certain safeguards when administering corporeal punishment:

1. Don't spank when you've lost your temper.
2. Make it short — know ahead of time how many swats will be given, tell the child, and then follow through. Know when to stop.
3. Reserve spanking for the most serious offenses. Find alternative punishments as much as possible.

God's Word should be the last word. The Bible sums up the whole process by telling us that spanking is not pleasant, but is beneficial: "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness until them which are exercise thereby*" (Hebrews 12:11). ✞

Dan Wheeler preaches for the Concord Street church in Orlando, Florida, USA.

On his first visit to the zoo, a little boy stared at the caged stork for a long time. He waved, jumped up and down, and stared at the stork a while longer.

Finally, turning to his father, he exclaimed, "Daddy, he doesn't recognize me!"

Bart was single, living at home with his father, and working in the family business. When he found out he was going to inherit a fortune once his sickly father died, he decided he needed a wife with which to share his fortune.

One evening at an investment meeting, he spotted the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He walked over and introduced himself to her, and then he said, "I may look like just an ordinary man, but in just a few years my father will die, and I'll inherit 20 million dollars."

The woman was obviously quite impressed and asked for his business card. Three days later she became his stepmother.

Women are a lot better at estate planning than men.

"It's no use, sir," the pupil said to his English teacher. "I try to learn, but everything you say goes in both ears and out the other."

"Goes in both ears and out the other?" asked the puzzled teacher. "But you only have two ears. "You see, sir? That's just what I'm talking about. I'm no good at math, either."

Two elderly women were out driving in a large car. Both Georgia (the driver) and Madge (the passenger) could barely see over the dashboard. As they were cruising along they came to an intersection. The traffic light was red, but Georgia drove on through it. Madge thought to herself, "I must be losing it. I could have sworn we went through a red light!"

After a few more minutes, they came to another intersection, and the light was red again. Georgia cruised right through it. This time Madge was almost sure that the light had been red, but was really concerned that she was

losing it. She was getting nervous and decided to pay very close attention to the road and the next intersection to see what was going on.

At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was definitely red, and they went right through it!

Madge turned to Georgia and said, "Did you know we just went through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us!"

Georgia quickly turned to her and said, "Oh dear, am I driving?"

An elderly man was stopped by a policeman around 1 a.m.

Question: "Where are you going at this time of night?"

Answer: "I am going to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body."

Question: "Oh, really? Just who is giving that lecture at this time of night?"

Answer: "My wife."

A couple was vacationing in Yosemite. The wife expressed her concern about camping because of bears, and said she would feel more comfortable in a motel. The husband said that he'd like to camp, and to calm her concerns, they'd talk to the park ranger to see what the likelihood of a bear encounter would be.

The ranger told them, "Well, we haven't seen any grizzlies in this area so far this year, or black bears, for that matter."

The wife shrieked, "There's TWO types of bears out here? How can you tell the difference?

Which one is more dangerous?"

The ranger answered, "Well, that's easy. See, if the bear chases you up the tree, and if it comes up after you, it's a BLACK bear. If it shakes the tree until you fall out, it's a GRIZZLY."

The motel room was quite nice.

Diagnosing my problem as water on the knee, the doctor prescribed complete bed rest. When we got home, my husband set me up in a lounge chair and brought my knitting and some books.

As he packed ice around my knee, he said, "Now, Honey, I don't want you to move until it's time to get dinner ready."

A man was lying on the operating table, about to be operated on by his son, the surgeon. The father said, "Son, I just want to remind you…if anything happens to me, your mother is coming to live with you."

Do You Want To Live?

Neal Pollard

Amos writes Israel to warn about the captivity to come, yet he writes to urge and warn the nation to repent for as long as God will forbear. In Amos 5, God gives a three-fold encouragement to preserve or regain spiritual life. All three required Israel to "seek", with the promise that the Israelites would find. What was God's prescription for life in this chapter?

"SEEK ME" (Amos 5:4,5). In these verses, God contrasts Himself with Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, three prominent cities in the northern kingdom. Ward and Smalley show the extreme alliteration about Gilgal (*"Gilgal shall surely go into exile"*), considering it a literary device to drive home the fact of their punishment (cf. *A Handbook on the Book of Amos*, p. 102). Bethel means "house of God," but they had made this and their other dwelling places "Beth Aven" (the house of evil). Beersheba and the other two cities were sites for worship. Yet, their worship and their lives had turned from God. The point with all three cities is that they represented the people turning somewhere else for help and purpose rather than to Him. All generations should mean what we ask in song, "Where could I go but to the Lord?"

"SEEK THE LORD" (Amos 5:6,7). Amos ends this short section by adding his inspired echo to the Lord's. Instead of exposing false alternatives, now Amos is warning of spiritual consequences. Punishment awaited those who did not recognize and submit to the rule and authority of God. He warns against twisting justice and perverting righteousness.

"SEEK GOOD AND NOT EVIL" (5:14ff). It seems that Israelites were saying the right things, but they were not living the right life. Their mouths professed, but their lives denied. An omniscient God was not fooled, and for that reason, He could reject their pleas for help and deliverance. Repentance means truly reaching for right and rejecting wrong from the inside out, heart and actions. If we truly want life, our hearts and lives will tend toward God. Otherwise, whatever our lips say in worship or in trouble, God knows the truth.

Many have suggested that "seek" better means "come back" in the case of Amos Five. Today, one may be seeking for the first time or seeking to come back to God again. Either way, God and good are the ways to life! ✞

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Abundant Life From an Abundant Shepherd

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Psalm 23, the world's favorite Psalm, promises abundance. The infinite storehouse is God Himself. As the psalmist expressed, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."* According to the psalmist, the Good Shepherd provides:

- **Food:** *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."*
- **Water:** *"He leadeth me beside the still waters."*
- **Refreshment:** *"He restoreth my soul."*
- **Guidance:** *"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness."*
- **Assurance:** *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death…"*
- **Freedom from fear:** *"I will fear no evil."*
- **Fellowship:** *"For thou art with me."*
- **Discipline:** *"Thy rod…"*
- **Rescue:** *"Thy staff…"*
- **Comfort:** *"They comfort me."*
- **Prosperity:** *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."*
- **Healing:** *"Thou anointest my head with oil."*
- **Joy:** *"My cup runneth over."*
- **Triumphant faith:** *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me."*
- **Confidence:** *"All the days of my life."*
- **Inheritance:** *"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* ✞

Apostolic Ambassadors

David R. Pharr

The message of salvation came from the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is given to us through the teaching of His apostles. Hebrews 2:3-4 explains that what "*began to be spoken by the Lord*" was "*confirmed unto us by them that heard him*." The apostles were chosen and commissioned to be Christ's representatives on earth after He returned to heaven. With the power of the Holy Spirit, they had perfect memory of all Jesus taught and they were guided into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Christ appointed Peter and the other apostles to be the earthly ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). Their special position meant that what they required (*"bound"*), and what they did not require (*"loosed"*), was by the authority of heaven (Matthew 18:18). This included declaring the requirements for forgiveness of sins. The apostles, and only the apostles, were told, "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained unto them*" (John 20:23). Thus, the apostles spoke with authority when they required repentance and baptism in Christ's name in order to have "*remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

Though chosen later than the others, Paul was not in the least an inferior apostle (1 Corinthians 15:8; 2 Corinthians 11:2). As a specially-commissioned representative of Christ, he could demand that his instruction be followed (1 Corinthians 11:1,2), because he had *"received of the Lord that which also I have delivered unto you"* (1 Corinthians 11:23; cf. 15:3). What Paul (and the other apostles) wrote were "*the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 14:37). The "orders" he gave were not mere recommendations by a concerned brother, but requirements by one of Christ's official spokesmen (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; cf. 4:17).

There were enemies of the truth that questioned Paul's apostleship. In several of his epistles it was necessary for him to write in his own defense. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 he defended the apostolic role in *"the ministry of reconciliation"* by declaring: "*Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*." The term translated *"ambassadors"* referred to one who was appointed by the king to act in the king's place. One does not appoint himself to be an ambassador. Neither is one an ambassador simply because he is a faithful follower.

Christ's ambassadors are the apostles. This special appointment is indicated by the words, "*in Christ's stead*." The "*word of reconciliation*" is the Gospel plan

of salvation. As we have already seen, it was the apostles who were given the keys of the kingdom. The apostles were the ones who were given authority to bind and loose. They were the ones guided into all truth, with perfect remembrance of the doctrine of Christ. Only *they* were appointed to reveal how sins could be remitted. As Christ's ambassadors, they wrote commandments of the Lord and gave orders to the churches. Peter wrote that Christians should be mindful "*of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior*" (2 Peter 3:2). Every Christian should teach others the Gospel, but they can do so only by repeating the message which was revealed through the apostles (Ephesians 3:5; Jude 3).

Jesus Christ is the King over His kingdom. The ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven were/are the holy apostles. These royal ambassadors have no successors, but though they are no longer on the earth, they still have authority as Christ's ambassadors because Jesus promised to be with them, to be with their teaching, "*even to the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:20). All Christians are citizens and servants in the kingdom (Ephesians 2:19), but all Christians are not ambassadors. ✞

David R. Pharr is Editor of *Carolina Messenger* and lives in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:2-4 NKJV). ***"And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles"*** (Acts 1:26). ***"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God…"*** (Romans 1:1).

What the Rich Man Learned in Hades! (Luke 16:19-31)

Mark N. Posey

The Rich Man in Luke 16 begged Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue because, he said, *"I am tormented in this flame"* (24). I believe this is a true story. Therefore, the rich man has been tormented in the flames of hell for almost 2,000 years. Notice some lessons the rich man learned in Hell (KJV) or Hades (NKJV). The Rich Man learned…

The meaning of eternity. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Notice the word "everlasting."

There are no second chances after death. Death seals our destiny. Hebrews 9:27 says, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."*

One cannot leave the torments of Hell for the comfort of Heaven. The *"great gulf"* is a definite dividing line.

The real meaning of pain. He said, *"I am tormented in this flame."*

The meaning of accountability. Romans 14:12 says, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

The meaning of Hell. Revelation 20:15 says, *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* Revelation 21:9 says that all sinners *"shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."* If we could see sin as God sees it, we would understand why Hell exists!

The meaning of Evangelism. He said, *"father…send him to my father's house... for I have five brethren."* He learned the value of a soul, but it was too late.

It was too late to pray. He said, *"Father Abraham, have mercy on me... I pray thee."* Prayer is a wonderful thing. Pray to God while there is still time!

God meant what He said. God will punish the unbeliever and the unfaithful (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Do you believe that?

Death is not the end. The soul goes on living even though the body dies; it is eternal! David said, *"your heart* [soul] *shall live for ever"* (Psalm 22:26).

Conclusion: Please, do not wait until judgment to learn these valuable lessons. Your soul is too important and eternity is too long to *"gain the whole world and lose your own soul"* (Mark 8:36)! ✞

Mark Posey preaches for the Austinville Church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

The Wise Men

Bill Nicks

This oft told story is found in Matthew 2:1. They are commonly considered to be the "*three* wise men", but the Scriptures do not say this, so we know they were only a plurality of men. What matters is what they did, not the number of men.

These men were wise before they began the search for the Christ child. Adam Clarke says the star was probably a meteor provided for the occasion. The "magi" were perhaps held in high esteem for their learning. The star was let down in Bethlehem over where the babe lay in a manger.

Jeremiah 9:23 tells us the truly wise do not glory in their wisdom, might, or riches, but in their understanding and knowing the true God. James, brother of the Lord, speaks of *"the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy"* (James 3:17).

These wise men were so earnest in their search that they had prepared beforehand with gifts and had marks of conduct proving they were wise.

1.They were interested in Christ, *"who is our hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27). He is the only door (John 10:10) and the only Way (John 14:6). He is our only means of salvation (Hebrews 5:9).

2.They were ready to search for Christ. Some are interested, but not enough to

search for Him. We must seek Him *"while he may be found"* (Isaiah 55:6) and seek in the right place (Isaiah 34:16).

3. They did not have to be begged to seek for Christ, but sought for Him voluntarily because they adored the Christ child. Herod had the opposite attitude in that he hypocritically asked them to return and tell him where He was so that he could worship Him (kill Him).

4. They did not let someone else do their searching. Herod wanted the wise men to do his searching. We cannot let our wives or husbands do our searching, or our parents. We are told, *"Believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they be of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1).

5. They were not too proud to ask for guidance. They were like the eunuch who said, *"How can I except someone guide me"* (Acts 8:31)? Or like Apollos, who heeded the words of Aquila and Priscilla, giving up his teaching about the baptism of John.

6. They were content with the light God gave them. God has made provision for guiding us through His Son (John 14:6). He guided them by a star in the sky, whereas we follow the light of the Gospel.

7. They listened to the voice of God, not man (Acts 5:29).

8. They were willing to pay the price to find Christ. They did not know the distance or the expense, or the barriers, or the time. He is our everything, *"our all in all"* (Colossians 3:11).

9. They showed their devotion by worshipping Him. Some fail to worship Him after finding Him. Finding Christ is not an end, but a means to an end. It is not a graduation, but a commencement. *"Walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4).

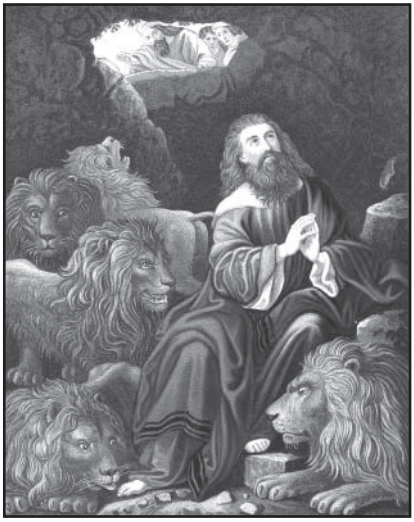
10. They proved their sincerity by giving to the Lord the very, very best gifts, not mere scraps. So should we (2 Corinthians 9:7). *"Every good and precious gift is from above"* (James 1:17). We must first give ourselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5). No doubt they had planned and purposed before leaving home, and so should we.
    How does our wisdom compare with theirs? ✞

Bill Nicks (1919-2012) served as a foreign missionary for several years, and he was living in Decatur, Alabama, USA, at the time of his death.

The Greatness of Daniel

Vance Hutton

Daniel was listed by Ezekiel as one of three great men of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14,20). The others were Noah and Job. There have been and were other great people of righteousness, but these excelled in their time. These sought to live by the Lord's commands, to do right, and to be in a right relationship with God. Daniel was praised by the Lord like unto Joseph of the older days. References are made to his prophetic work in the gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark. Although his name is not recorded in Hebrews 11:33, there is likely reference to his great life in that faith chapter of the Bible. He stands as a beacon in our lives. We should walk in the way of this good man (Proverbs 2:20). We are admonished and challenged by his good life (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). There is so much to be said about Daniel, but let us note the three following things.



Friend of God

People who do what the Lord has commanded are His friends (John 15:14). Daniel was so loyal in obeying the commands of God. He would not eat the forbidden (Daniel 1:8). He would not pay homage to any other but God and would not fail to pray (Daniel 6). His life glorified God. He was in youth a man of wisdom and purity (Daniel 1:17; 2:14). Daniel was not a friend of the world (James 4:4; Daniel 1:8). He received favor from God because he lived in innocence before God (Daniel 6:22). His critics could find no fault in him (Daniel 6:4). Daniel was charged as a man of God and found guilty (Daniel 6:5). This was such a great tribute to him.

Faith in God

Faith in God led and motivated Daniel to be different from the world in youth (Daniel 1:8) and to continue faithful on into the older years of his life.

Many years had passed between Daniel 1 and Daniel 5 and 6. He was still growing in faith. Faith caused him to be the man of prayer that he was. He had great trust in God's presence, power, and providence. His faith led him to act in view of the future world. He could see beyond death, lions, and the grave (Daniel 6). Daniel always believed God would provide. His faith caused him to be humble; he would not receive praise that belonged to God (Daniel 2:28). Daniel's interest did not rest in things, but in God and right when Belshazzar tried to give him gifts (Daniel 5:16,17). Truly, Daniel finds his way to the great list of heroes of faith.

Fortitude for God

God has not given any a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Daniel didn't allow the devil to give him one either. Daniel lived the command of ours to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). He was willing to lose his life for the Lord (Matthew 10:38,39). As a youth, he was willing to defy the decree of a king when such was at variance with a command from heaven (Daniel 1). He would continue that courage until older age (Daniel 6:1-10). It is not always convenient to do right. Daniel would have the courage to give an unwelcome message to both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar (Daniel 4-5). He exemplified his courage by praying to God three times daily, knowing the decree had been made that any who did so would be cast into a den of lions (Daniel 6:7). May God give us greater virtue in conjunction with faith (1 Peter 1:5-7). The fearful will be lost (Matthew 25:25). Daniel was truly a great, great man. ✞

Vance Hutton preaches for the Lord's church in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

A Neighbor Like Job

Ernest S. Underwood

God said of Job that he *"was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil"* (Job 1:1). What a wonderful epitaph. To be *"perfect and upright"* is to be complete. One becomes this way, and only becomes this way, as he listens to and follows God's Word. To fear God is to hold Him in deepest reverence and highest respect. One who lightly uses the phrase "Oh my God" is not one who has such reverence for Him. Job also *"eschewed"* evil. He hated it. He had contempt for evil. He avoided evil. If God said it was a sin, Job hated it as sin. It would not have mattered to him how many of his friends or relatives may have practiced; it was still sin. Wouldn't you like to live in a community where everyone would be like Job? Heaven will be that way. ✞

Demas, the Forsaker

Maxie B. Boren

The apostle Paul, having appealed unto Caesar (Acts 25:11,12), was transported to Rome on a perilous and hazardous voyage (Acts 27:1-28:16). Once there, he was placed under what we might call "house arrest", being permitted to abide in his own *"hired dwelling"* (ASV) for the two years he was there (Acts 28:30,31). During that time, which most scholars believe to have been about A.D. 61-62, Paul wrote four letters, which are known to us as the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

In two of these letters Paul made mention of a Christian man named Demas. One such occasion was in the epistle to the Colossians, Chapter 4, in the context of verses 10-14. There, Demas is listed along with a few others, in favorable light. Again, in Paul's writing to Philemon, Demas is named along with Mark, Aristarchus, and Luke, as *"my fellow-workers"* (24).

But some five or six years later (about A.D. 67 or 68), when Paul was taken back to Rome the second time, resulting in his martyrdom, things had changed as far as Demas was concerned. When the great apostle to the Gentiles wrote to Timothy shortly before his demise, he urged him to come to him in Rome as quickly as he could, and then penned, *"for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica…"* (2 Timothy 4:9,10).

What did Paul mean in reference to Demas? Did he mean that Demas had become enamored with drinking, dancing, carousing, reveling, and such like, as some have assumed…the sort of thing the Scriptures warn against in such passages as 1 John 2:15-17 and Galatians 5:19-21? No, I do not believe that is what Paul meant by his expression concerning Demas. Rather, it was that Demas' attachment to the continuation of his existence on this earth was greater than his willingness to forfeit his life for Christ while remaining in company with Paul. Undoubtedly, Demas perceived that if he chose to stay with Paul, the Romans might well kill him along with the apostle. Therefore, he forsook Paul, and fled to Thessalonica. He was not committed to Christ to the same extent the apostle was, as voiced in Paul's declaration, *"I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die… for the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 21:13, NKJV). Demas had not imbibed in full-measure what Jesus later wrote through John to the church in Smyrna: *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10b).

Notice, that Jesus said *"unto"* death…not "until" death. Certainly *"unto"* would include "until," but the idea is that a Christian should be willing to actually give his life in order to be faithful to the Lord. This measure of devotion was absent in Demas.

Demas failed *"to endure to the end"* (Matthew 24:13). Life on earth was more important to him than eternal life in heaven, the promise of which is only to those who *"overcome"* (read Revelation 2:7,11,17, 26ff; 3:5, 12; 21). In view of all this, let us resolve to be faithful come what may, and NEVER, NO NEVER, FORSAKE OUR LORD! ✞

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

Epitaphs

John Stacy

An epitaph is a brief statement that commemorates or summarizes a deceased person or past event. On the tombstones of many we have seen words like, "Beloved Wife of…," "Gone to be with God", or "Safe in the Arms of Jesus". What will be put on your tombstone? What really should be engraved on your headstone that summarizes your life? Would someone put on your tombstone, "He Obeyed Not the Gospel"? Men must obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Obedience is essential. There is nothing that can take its place (1 Samuel 15:22). Obey the Gospel now. Obey the facts of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Obey the commands of the Gospel (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15,16). Then and only then will you receive the promises of the Gospel (Luke 24:47; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 1:16).

If you are a child of God, I ask you what will they put on your headstone? Will they put, *"He Hath Loved This Present World"*? Demas forsook Paul, having loved this present world and all that in it is (2 Timothy 4:10). God said, *"Love not this world, neither the things that are in this world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). Jesus said we must be careful lest *"the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful"* (Mark 4:24). ✞

Seven I Am's of Christ

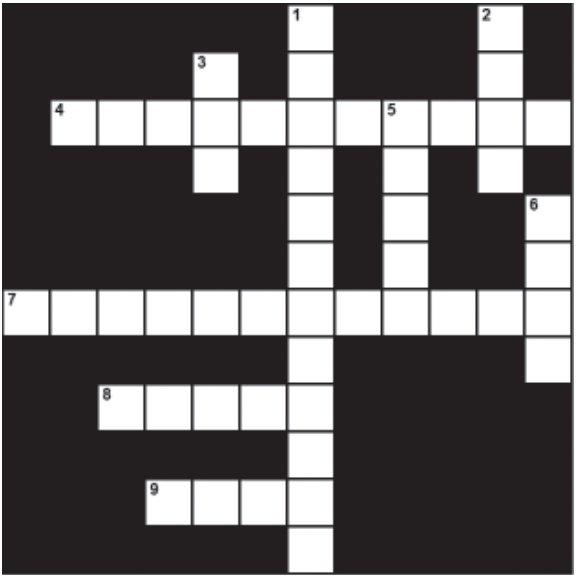
Bonnie Rushmore

Across

4. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 6:35. (three words)
7. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 11:25.
8. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 14:6.
9. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 10:9.

Down

1. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 10:11. (two words)
2. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 14:6.
3. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 14:6.
5. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 8:12.
6. Jesus said "I am" the_____ in John 15:5.



What Is the Christian View of Yoga?

Vinay David

Answer: For many Christians in the West who don't understand the history behind it, yoga is simply a means of physical exercise, strengthening, and improving flexibility of the muscles. However, the philosophy behind yoga is much more than physically improving oneself. It is an ancient practice derived from India, believed to be the path to spiritual growth and enlightenment.

The word "yoga" means "union", and the goal is to unite one's transitory (temporary) self with the infinite Brahman, the Hindu concept of "God". This "God" is not a literal being, but is an impersonal spiritual substance that is one with nature and the cosmos. This view is called "pantheism", the belief that everything is God, and that reality consists only of the universe and nature. Because everything is God, the yoga philosophy makes no distinction between man and God.

Hatha yoga is the aspect of yoga that focuses on the physical body through special postures, breathing exercises, and concentration or meditation. It is a means to prepare the body for the spiritual exercises with fewer obstacles in order to achieve enlightenment. The practice of yoga is based on the belief that man and God are one. It is little more than self-worship disguised as a high level of spirituality.

The question becomes, "Is it possible for a Christian to isolate the physical aspects of yoga as simply a method of exercise without incorporating the spirituality or philosophy behind it?" I don't believe so. Yoga originated with a blatantly anti-Christian philosophy, and that philosophy has not changed. It teaches one to focus on oneself instead of on the one, true God. It encourages its participants to seek the answers to life's difficult questions within their own consciences instead of in the Word of God. It also leaves one open to deception from God's enemy, who searches for victims he can turn away from God (1 Peter 5:8).

Whatever we do should be done for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), and we would be wise to heed the words of the apostle Paul: *"Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise"* (Philippians 4:8). ✞

Vinay David works for the Lord in India.

Was Jesus Disrespectful to His Mother?

Dennis Gulledge

In preparing a lesson recently on John 19:25-27, Jesus' words, *"Woman, behold thy son"* (verse 26) stood out as interesting. It has long been thought that such a statement reflects a tone of discourtesy in Jesus' addressing His mother. Certainly, I would never have addressed my own mother, while she was living, with the word "Woman".

Bible critics have taken advantage of this seemingly crude salutation and accused the Lord of dishonoring His mother. For example, Dennis C. McKinsey, a noted Bible skeptic, said, "Imagine someone talking to his own mother in such a disrespectful manner and addressing her by such an impersonal noun as 'woman'. Talk about an insolent offspring!" (Cited in *Reason & Revelation*, May 2006, p. 39). It would seem that those who are predisposed to find fault in God's Word are not giving Scripture a fair shake in considering such statements in their first century context.

Some have also suggested that Jesus' address constitutes at least a mild rebuke to His mother. While admitting that Jesus' use of the word "woman" in that time and culture was not insulting, David Roper suggests, "Nevertheless, Christ's words [in John 2:4, DG] were a mild rebuke" (*The Life of Christ*, 1, p. 121). Guy N. Woods observed, "The word 'Woman' with which he addressed Mary, His mother, carries none of the coldness and unconcern involved in our English word. The word so translated is one of great respect, akin to our word *lady*, and is a term of distinction and honor" (*A Commentary on the Gospel According to John,* p. 50). The mild rebuke may be found in Jesus' response to Mary's impatience for the hour when her Son should reveal Himself as Messiah before all men. Jesus said, *"Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come"* (John 2:4). In other words, Jesus' divine powers were not to be made subservient to human aims and motives. It was as if Jesus had said, "Leave the matter to me; let me handle it in my own way." His mother must leave Him to follow His own course. So, the thing Mary asked was done, but from a point of view different from her own. At this point there is a change of relationship between Jesus and His mother. From here on her place would be behind the scenes. "No longer could he be his mother's son, now He was His mother's Lord" (David R. Pharr, *Voices of Calvary,* p. 86).

Having now established that no air of disrespect exists in Jesus' use of the word "woman" toward His mother, one other matter needs to be considered. The point should be made that honoring one's mother or father does not mean that a caring son or daughter cannot correct them when necessary. Parents certainly display love for their children by correcting them when it is needed (Hebrews 12:9). In the same sense, God lovingly corrects His children (Hebrews 12:6-8). So, in John 19:26 Jesus' parting words to His mother as "woman" marked a severance of the strongest of human ties — mother and child. Mary was given a relationship better than mother. She was allowed to be a believer (Acts 1:14)! ✞

Dennis Gulledge preaches for the church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

"Mary and Martha"

Julene Nulph

Mary and Martha: Martha and Mary.
Two sisters are they, yet their views are contrary.
One sister sits at the Master's feet.
The other one worries, what will her guests eat?
Mary and Martha: Martha and Mary.
Two sisters are they; one is calm, one is weary.
One sister scurries about in a rush
The other one listens in the still silent hush.
Two sisters trying to put forth their best.
One is so busy and one is at rest.
One sister wants to make her home so clean
The other wants wisdom from Jesus to glean.
Two sisters whose views of both I can see,
One sets the table and gets water for tea.
The other puts spiritual things ahead of the rest
Two differing views, yet which sister was blessed?"✞

Why???

Betty Burton Choate

There are commands in God's word that seem to pervade all cultures and all time. There are other practices that seemed to change to fit the current culture. Under the Old Testament laws, God allowed and regulated slavery, though the effects of following the principles laid down in the New Testament have been to abolish slavery throughout most of the world.

Multiple wives were common in pagan cultures and even among God's people throughout much of the Old Testament, contrary to His plan at creation. Evidently, God tolerated the violation of His original formation of the home, with one man and one woman in marriage, because of the corrupted culture that so permeated humanity. Again, as the principles laid down in the New Testament spread and had their influence, God's plan for the home and family became widely accepted.

With the giving of His final message to man in the New Testament, God has clearly delineated exactly what He requires of all people of all ages throughout the world. The time of ignorance and of excuse-making is gone. Acts 17:30, 31 declares *"Truly, these times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained..."*

But Satan works tirelessly, and he is again re-defining what is acceptable: live-in relationships, adultery, fornication, divorce, homosexuality, bestiality, pedophilia ... The list of deviant behaviors goes on and on, as well as the list of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual consequences that invariably result.

In order to safeguard His creation from the devastating corruption that follows sexual immorality, God's word is filled with instruction and warnings. If we listen, we will be spared; if we ignore what He says, we will inevitably suffer severe consequences.

In this study, I want to consider the references in Scripture concerning the differences between men and women. First, Genesis 2:23,24 shows that from the time of creation, God designated that they are male and female, and that the two joined together were to become one flesh, husband and wife.

Surprisingly, there are references in the Old Testament as well as in the New that required that the dress and appearance of men and women be distinctly

differentiated. Women were not to dress like men; even the hair should be different. But clothing changes with the times and the cultures; hair styles change with the times and the cultures. So what is the point? *Styles and customs* may change, but the *principle* remains the same: Men and women were created as distinct from each other; their *appearance* is also to be distinct.

Why would such a thing matter to God? There would seem to be an obvious reason, one that has become increasingly clear with the drastic changes in our own culture. What are the atheists and humanists demanding? Same sex marriage; that homosexuality be accepted as simply an alternate life style; the acceptance of trans gender identities — the attempted eradication of the lines of distinction between men and women. What is the real definition of this type of thinking? It is a total rejection of the strong line of delineation God made between the sexes in the creation.

Look at the participants in these immoral life-styles. Do you see masculine appearance and behavior on the part of the women? Do you see feminine appearance and behavior on the part of the men? Is this mix-up of identity not one of the grievous sins that God could foresee, as Satan would spread his influence in the world? In order to build a wall against such forbidden behavior, the command was made from the beginning that male and female were the two halves of the whole, that they were to be married and to become one flesh. This command excluded any possible consideration of any co-joining of men with men or women with women or humans with animals.

Why would God deal with the seemingly unimportant question of women not wearing clothing identified with the clothing of men, or why would He require that even their hair not be worn like a man's? My thinking is this: He drew lines concerning appearance because He knew that Satan would be doing all he could to corrupt the normal and moral relationships between the sexes. One of the easiest ways to begin accomplishing that would be to have cross-overs in dress and physical appearance.

We can see the result today with "same-sex marriage" legally recognized in a growing number of states, with "trans gender" children allowed to choose which bathroom to use or which sports to play, according to their "identification", with the mushrooming acceptance of all types of immoral relationships, and the breakdown of the stable home that is essential if a people and a nation are to survive. Have we reached the point where *"... God ... gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves..."* (Romans 1:24)? ✞

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, living in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Why Is It Necessary to Be Immersed in Water in Order to Be Saved?

Cecil May Jr.

The short answer is, "Because God said so." And, following whatever further discussion ensues, that is still the essence of any longer answer as well.

Why was it necessary for Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5)? Because God, through His prophet's messenger, told him to do so.

Why was it necessary for the Israelites to march around the walls of Jericho for seven days, blow trumpets, and shout (Joshua 6), even though from man's standpoint that is an absurd way to capture a walled city? Because that is what God said to do. *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days"* (Hebrews 11:30).

Faith is the key. Naaman did not deserve his healing because of his dipping in the Jordan River, but his dipping showed his faith, and God saw his faith and healed him by grace.

The Israelites did not earn the city of Jericho by marching and shouting. *"The Lord said to Joshua: 'See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and its mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city . . . '"* (Joshua 6:2,3).

God gave them the city. They marched as God told them to, and by marching, they showed their faith. The city fell by grace through faith, but only after they marched as God told them to do.

Jesus has said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). When one hears the Gospel, believes and is baptized, that does not earn salvation. Salvation is a gift of God. Being baptized shows that the person believes what God says, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."* Refusing to be baptized shows disbelief, *"and he who does not believe will be condemned."*

Salvation is not by works of merit, not by works that would enable us to boast

(Ephesians 2:8,9). Baptism is distinguished from that kind of work. God saves us, but *"not by works of*

Why Is It Necessary to Be Immersed in Water in Order to Be Saved? The short answer is, "Because God said so." And, following whatever further discussion ensues, that is still the essence of any longer answer as well.

righteousness which we have done," but *"through the washing of regeneration"* (Titus 3:4-6). Baptism shows our faith (James 2:18), completes our faith (James 2:22), and makes our faith a living, active, effective faith instead of a dead, vain faith (James 2:20).

So we have come full circle. The answer is, "Because God said so." He promises; we believe. He commands; we show our faith by our obedience. When we have obeyed, God gives what He promised.

It is necessary to be immersed in water to be saved because that is what God, who has salvation in His hand, says to do in order to receive it. ✝

Cecil May Jr. is Dean Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

The Old Testament Written for Our Learning Romans 15:4

G.L. Mann

INTRODUCTION

A. Paul had just quoted from Psalm 69:9
B. This passage refers to the Old Testament
C. It was written for our benefit also – for our learning
D. "Through" these Scriptures and steadfastness we may have comfort and hope
E. Jesus said, *"Search the Scriptures",* John 5:39
F. The Old Testament has many lessons for us

I. WE LEARN ABOUT CREATION AND THE ORIGIN OF MAN

A. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" Genesis 1-31; 2:7; Hebrews 4:12; 1:3
B. God created man: Genesis 1:26; 2:7

II. WE LEARN ABOUT OBEDIENCE

A. The forbidden fruit: Genesis 2:16,17
B. The temptation: Genesis 3:1-6

III. WE LEARN ABOUT WORSHIP

A. Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4
B. Cain and Able worshipped God: Genesis 4:4,5
C. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice

IV. WE LEARN ABOUT WALKING WITH GOD

A. Enoch walked with God: Genesis 5:24
B. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

V. WE LEARN TO GIVE OUR BEST

A. God called for Abraham's best: Genesis 22:1-19
B. We must give our best: Matthew 6:33

VI. WE LEARN TO BE PROMPT

A. God hastened Lot to leave Sodom: Genesis 19
B. God calls on us for promptness: 2 Corinthians 6:2

VII. WE LEARN THAT WE CAN BE A WINNER

A. Caleb was a winner: Numbers 14:24

B. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" Revelation 2:10

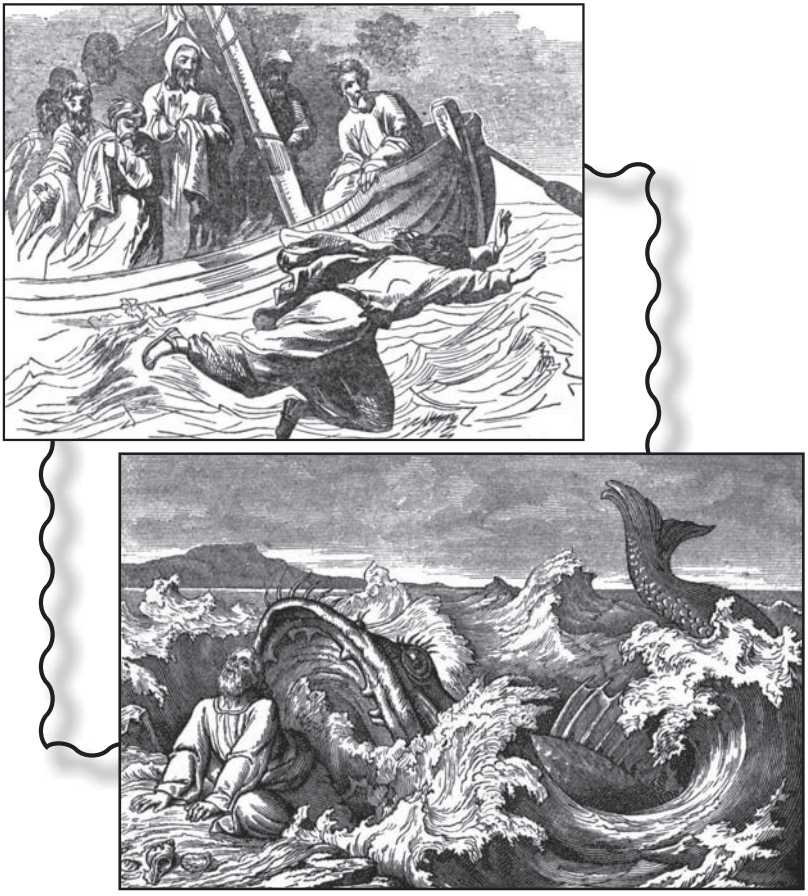
VIII. WE LEARN THAT WE CANNOT RUN FROM GOD

A. Jonah tried it without success (Book of Jonah)

B. God wants to save us: Luke 19:10

C. "Come unto me." Matthew 11:28-30 ✞

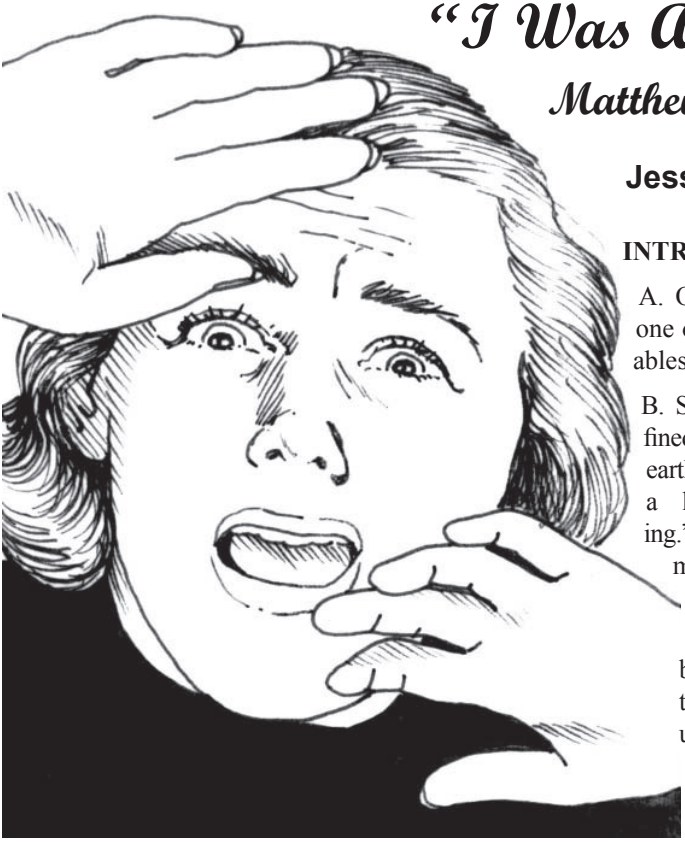
G.L. Mann preached for many years, especially in the southeastern USA.



"I Was Afraid"

Matthew 25:25

Jess Nutter



INTRODUCTION

A. Our text contains one of the many parables of our Lord.

B. Someone has defined a parable as "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning." Parable actually means, "To throw alongside."

C. A parable, then, is something commonly understood in the physical or material realm that is thrown alongside a truth in the spiritual realm to make the spiritual truth easier to understand.

D. Lessons from the parable include:
   1. Talents are given according to one's ability.
   2. Talents must be used or forfeited.
   3. There are no "Zero" talented servants. Everyone has at least one.
   4. Reward depends upon the use of talent given.
   5. Failure to use talent evoked the wrath of the servant's lord.

E. In this lesson we will focus on the reason given by the "One talent servant" for not using the talent. *"I was afraid."*

I. FEAR IS A GREAT OBSTACLE IN SERVING THE LORD

A. Notice some examples of those who were influenced by fear.
   1. The ten spies. Numbers 13:31-33 (Joshua and Caleb had a different report, 14:9).
   2. 22,000 of Gideon's army. Judges 7:3-8.
   3. The chief rulers. John 12:42.
   4. Joseph of Arimathaea. John 19:38.
   5. Peter. Matthew 14:30.

B. Just as fear robbed these of precious blessings, it robs many today of progress and blessings.

C. Some churches are afraid.
   1. To take reasonable risks to advance Lord's cause. (Borrow money to build adequate facilities for worship and classrooms.)
   2. To appoint elders. Titus 1:5 (Go shepherdless for years).
   3. Practice discipline. 1 Corinthians 5:6,7; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
   4. To *"Earnestly contend for the faith."* Jude 3; Philippians 1:17.

D. Some individuals are afraid.
   1. To obey the Gospel.
   2. To lead prayer, teach class, lead singing, etc. (Obviously everyone is not "cut out" for these tasks, but many are doing them today who were "scared stiff" the first time they tried.)

II. FEAR IS TRAGIC BECAUSE OF WHAT IT PRODUCES IN SERVANTS OF GOD.

A. This can be seen in the Lord's reply to the servant. *"Thou wicked and slothful servant."*
   1. Wickedness in that fear causes one to disobey the Lord. 1 John 3:4.
   2. Slothfulness or laziness in that fear causes inactivity. Romans 12:11; Hebrews 6:12.
   3. Unprofitable. He is useless to his Lord.

III. THE DESTINY OF THE FEARFUL

A. Cast the unprofitable servant into *"outer darkness"*. Matthew 25:30.

B. The *"lake of fire",* the *"Second death"*. Revelation 21:8.

CONCLUSION

A. May we say with the Hebrew writer, *"The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."* Hebrews 13:6. ✞

Jess W. Nutter (1911-1997) was a well-known Gospel preacher, working primarily in Ohio and West Virginia, USA.

Who Am I in the Life of Paul?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. I baptized Saul (Paul) after he was blinded on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-18)
2. I was a false prophet who was blinded by Saul (Paul). (Acts 13:6-11)
3. I went with Paul on his second missionary journey. (Acts 15:40)
4. Paul taught me the Gospel by the river in Philippi. (Acts 16:12-15)
5. Paul lived with us in Corinth. (Acts 18:1-3)
6. I was a silversmith who objected to Paul's teaching about Jesus. (Acts 19:23-41)
7. I fell out of a window while Paul was preaching. (Acts 20:6-10)
8. I foretold that Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem. (Acts 21:8-11)
9. Paul preached to us after his arrest in Jerusalem. (Acts 24-26)
10. I told Paul he almost persuaded me to become a Christian. (Acts 26:28)

See answer on inside back cover

My Score:_____

Where Am I in the Life of Paul?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. Where did Barnabas find me? (Acts 11:22-26)
2. Where was the starting point of my three missionary journeys? (Acts 13:1-3; 15:35-39; 18:22,23)
3. Where were Barnabas and I called gods? (Acts 14:8-12)
4. Where did I find Timothy? (Acts 16:1-3)
5. Where was I when I received the call to go to Macedonia? (Acts 16:8-10)
6. In what city of idols did I preach about the "unknown god"? (Acts 17:16-23)
7. Where did I work and preach for a year and a half? (Acts 18:1-11)
8. Where did I rebaptize some men? (Acts 19:1-7)
9. On what island did I shipwreck? (Acts 27:39-44; 28:1)
10. Where did I go for trial? (Acts 25:12; 28:16-19)

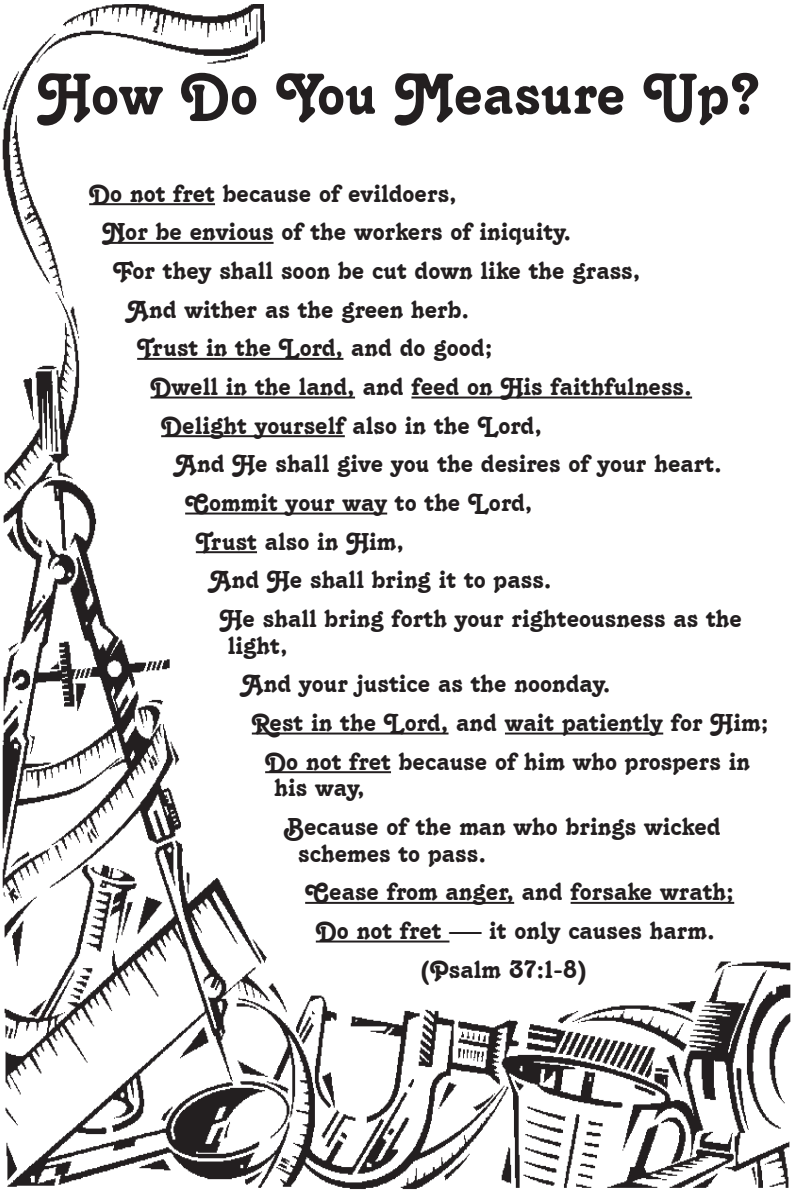
See answer on inside back cover

My Score:_____

How Do You Measure Up?

Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
Trust in the Lord, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.
Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.
Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;
Do not fret — it only causes harm.

(Psalm 37:1-8)



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NAME _____
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Verse Search (page 29)

1. No
2. To warmly welcome him into one's fellowship in the spirit of love.
3. Those who believe it is wrong to eat meats.
4. God.
5. No. See Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16.
6. No.
7. God.
8. That he might be the Lord of both the living and the dead.
9. By thinking they are morally lax or not really a Christian.
10. By having a disdaining condescending attitude towards them.
11. Christ.
12. Isaiah 45:23.
13. Because it will be too late, or it will be done out of terror or grudging resentment.
14. Resolving never to put a stumbling block in the way of another.

Who Am I? (page 106)
Answer: 1. Ananias; 2. Elymas or Bar-jesus; 3. Silas; 4. Lydia; 5. Aquila and Priscilla; 6. Demetrius 7. Eutychus; 8. Agabus; 9. Felix, Festus, Agrippa; 10. Agrippa

Where Am I? (page 107)
Answer: 1. Tarsus; 2. Antioch in Syria; 3. Lystra; 4. Lystra; 5. Troas; 6. Athens; 7. Corinth; 8. Ephesus; 9. Melita; 10. Rome

Bible Find (page 94)

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For Further Information, Please Contact:

Sweet Words of Love

Sweet words of love:
"I have *redeemed* thee..."

The Son of Heaven,
Weighing out my worth to Him against the bitter cup,
Laid down His life and bought me for His own.

Sweet words of love:
"I have called thee by *My name*..."

Precious gift
That He would let me wear — as though it were my own —
That name of His, unblemished from the dawn of time.

Sweet words of love:
"Thou art *Mine*..."

No human holds possessively a worthless thing,
Nor does my Lord.
His words — declaring me His own —
Exclude all others' claims and seal my worth.

Sweet words of love:
"I have *redeemed* thee,
And called thee by *My name*;
Thou art *Mine*..."

Commitment — eternal — demanded my redemption,
Freedom from the slavery binding me...
Yet even that was not enough:
Love bought my soul, but a like love given back to Him
Was what He wanted
And so, with His own name He honored my unworthiness,
And now..... [front cover; poem by BBC]