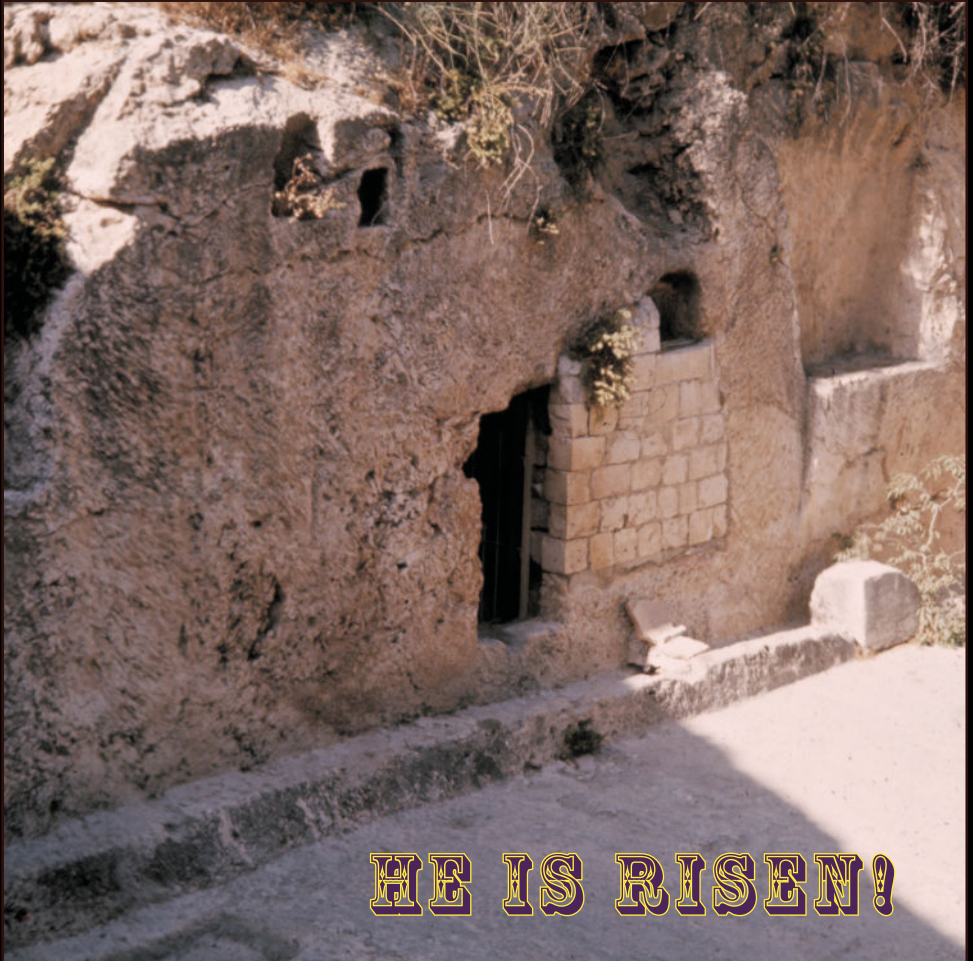


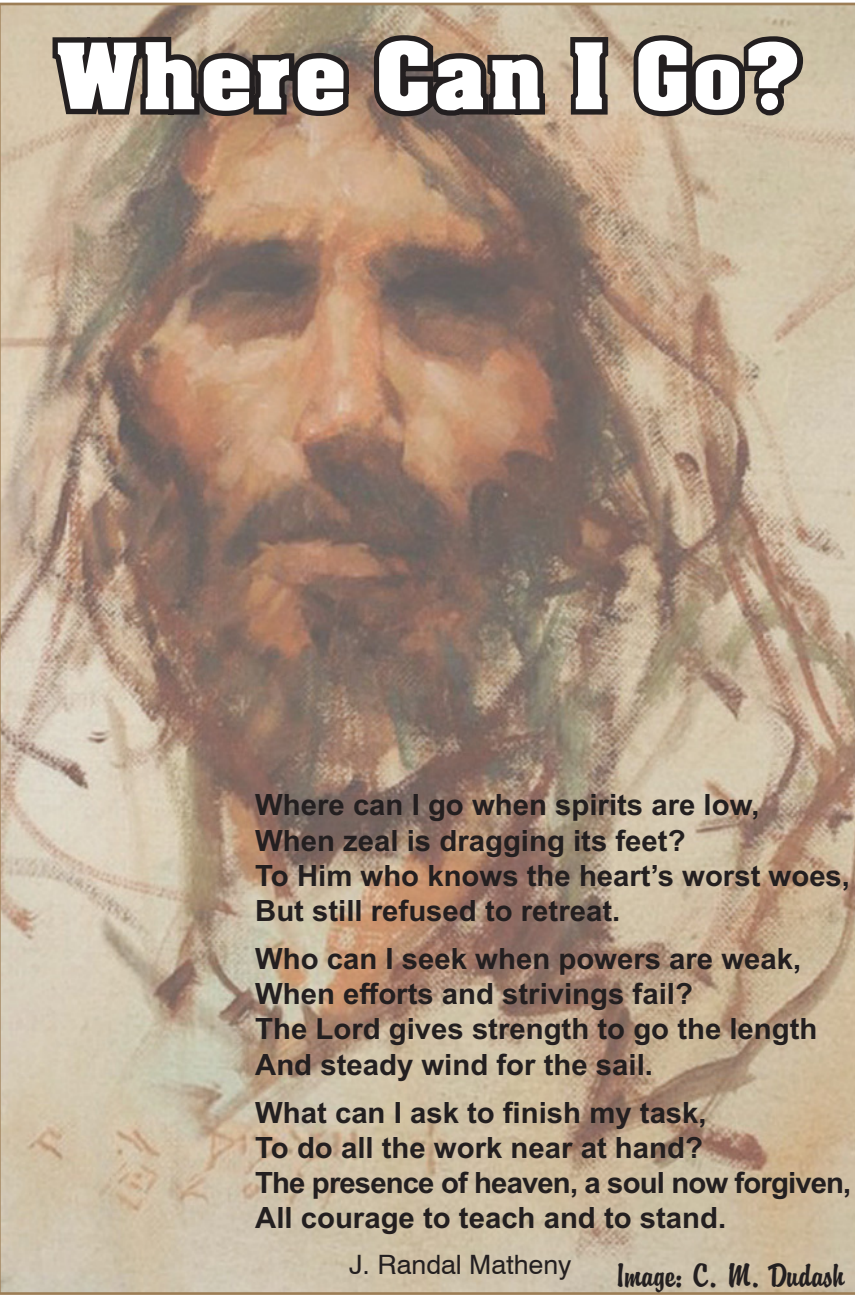
VOLUME NINETY - SIX

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



HE IS RISEN!

Where Can I Go?



Where can I go when spirits are low,
When zeal is dragging its feet?
To Him who knows the heart's worst woes,
But still refused to retreat.

Who can I seek when powers are weak,
When efforts and strivings fail?
The Lord gives strength to go the length
And steady wind for the sail.

What can I ask to finish my task,
To do all the work near at hand?
The presence of heaven, a soul now forgiven,
All courage to teach and to stand.

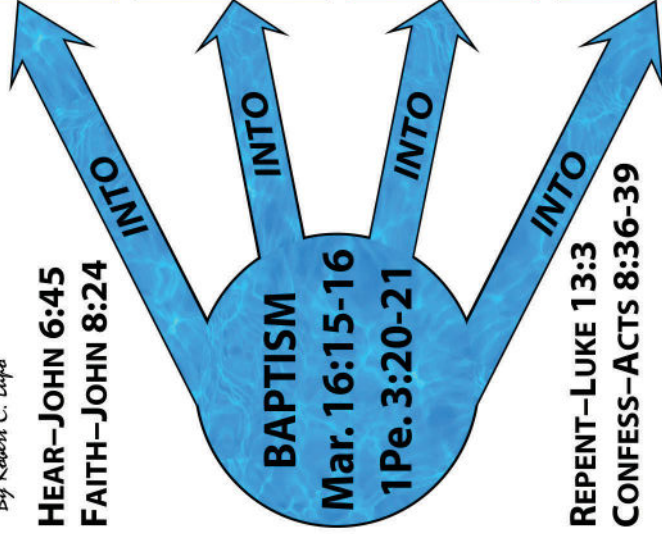
J. Randal Matheny

Image: C. M. Dudash

BAPTISM'S RELATION

By Robert C. Lupton

HEAR—JOHN 6:45
FAITH—JOHN 8:24

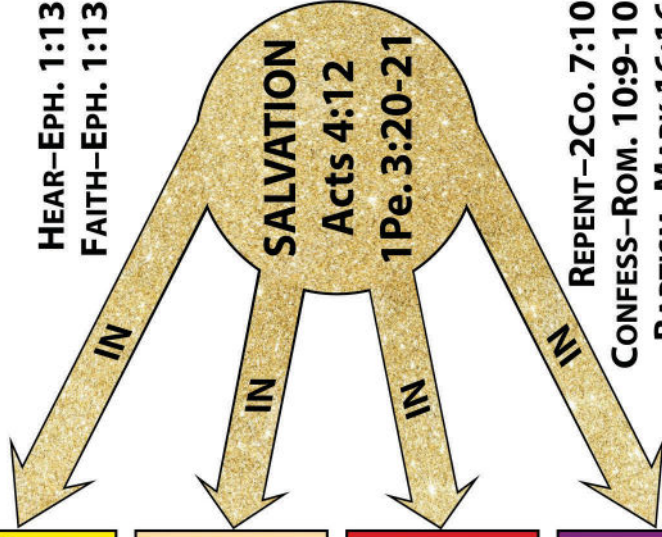


REPENT—LUKE 13:3
CONFESS—ACTS 8:36-39

1. ONE CANNOT BE BAPTIZED UNLESS HE OR SHE
HEARS, BELIEVES, REPENTS, AND CONFESSES CHRIST.

...TO SALVATION

HEAR—EPH. 1:13
FAITH—EPH. 1:13



REPENT—2Co. 7:10
CONFESS—ROM. 10:9-10
BAPTISM—MARK 16:16

2. ONE IS BAPTIZED INTO THE NAME, BODY, DEATH,
& CHRIST HIMSELF WHERE SALVATION IS LOCATED.

JESUS IS NOT THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH IF:

**1. THE CHURCH DETERMINES
HOW THE SAVED ARE ADDED
TO THE CHURCH (ACTS 2:47).**

NO PROBATION IN BIBLE. NOT VOTED
IN. NOT BY APPROVAL OF MEN, BUT BY
OBEDIENCE (ACTS 2:47, 41;).

**2. THE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED ACCORD-
ING TO DOCTRINES OF MEN (COL. 1:18;
1 TI. 3; TIT. 1). NO POPES, NO CLERGY/**

LAITY SYSTEM, NO EARTHLY CHURCH
HEADQUARTERS, ETC. TAUGHT IN BIBLE.

**3. THE CHURCH DETERMINES WHAT
IS ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP (JOHN 4:23-24).**

A. LORD'S SUPPER: NO LORD'S SUPPER/NOT EVERY 1ST
DAY. CHANGE EMBLEMS (MAT 26:26-29; ACT 2:42; 20:7).

B. MUSIC: ADD MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC.
ADD SOLOISTS OR CHOIRS (EPH. 5:18-19; COL 3:16-
17).

C. TITHING/NOT GIVING AS PROSPERED
(1Co. 16:1-2; 2Co. 9:6-7).

**4. THE CHURCH ADDS TO AND
TAKES FROM THE REVEALED WORD
OF GOD (REV. 22:18-19).**

By Robert C. Lugo

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU
(ROMANS 16:16).



The Authority of Biblical Silence

Louis Rushmore

Sometimes biblical silence is as outspoken as any scriptural statement. What the Bible does not say contributes as much to Bible authority as what the Bible does say on any particular subject. It is precisely because the Bible does say something regarding a topic that causes biblical silence on the same topic to be authoritative. In areas, though, where the Bible stipulates nothing, in the same areas, silence does not constitute Bible authority.

Music in New Testament worship illustrates this axiom. Scripture clearly authorizes **singing** as the kind of music to be used in New Testament worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Therefore, silence regarding other kinds of music reinforces what God did say. Humming, whistling, other extraneous vocal sounds, clapping, stomping, drumming and



mechanical instruments of music are: (1) antagonistic to what God did say, (2) opposed to biblical silence, (3) extra-biblical and anti-scriptural and (4) sinful. They go **beyond the authority of Christ** and His doctrine (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-11).

The writer of Hebrews expected that the recipients of his epistle would acknowledge **silence as authoritative in matters already addressed by God**. Based on Old and New Testament statements, Jesus Christ is not qualified to be a priest on earth (Hebrews 8:4; 7:13). Hebrews 7:14 is an ar-

gument from the silence of the Scriptures to prove the same thing. “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses **speak nothing** concerning priesthood.”

The inspired penman matter-of-factly used **silence of the Scriptures as biblical authority**. Likewise, we, too, should recognize the hermeneutical principle of biblical silence where it applies. However, protagonists of alleged new hermeneutics disregard the role of biblical silence or tragically abuse it. Thus, erring brethren hazard their own souls and jeopardize the spiritual welfare of many others. Biblical silence and God’s Word both need to be handled correctly. 



The Deity of Jesus

Jerry Bates

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most confusing and hard to understand doctrines in Scripture. It seems contradictory. How can God be one God and at the same time be three persons? People have several different reactions to this problem.

Some openly deny it. Some reinterpret it in such a way that it becomes understandable; however, attempts such as that end up denying the Trinity. Others simply shrug their shoulders and refuse to consider it, since they can't understand it anyway. We want one clear concise statement that will settle the problem once and for all. Yet, one does not exist.

Many argue that since we cannot understand the Trinity, it simply cannot be true, and they refuse to believe it. However, just because we cannot really understand something does not mean it is untrue. For example, we cannot truly comprehend emotions. One person said of love, "We should not think that we have figured this out, because it is not a problem; it's a mystery and always will be." Does that mean emotions such as love and hate do not exist? Physicists have a problem understanding and explaining light, but clearly light exists.

One important part of this doctrine is the relationship of Jesus and God and the incarnation of Jesus. Many deny the Deity of Jesus or attempt to place Him in a subordinate relationship to God (i.e., he becomes less than God the Father). Of course, I cannot adequately cover this subject in one short article, but let us notice a few important considerations regarding the Deity of Jesus.

Several verses clearly point out the fact that Jesus had a part in creation just as God the Father did (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17). Since only God can create anything, Jesus must be Deity just as God the Father is Deity.

Jesus is also unchangeable. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8). Of Jesus the writer of Hebrews also stated, *“Like a cloak You will fold them up [the earth and heavens], and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail”* (Hebrews 1:12). Only Deity is unchangeable; therefore, we at once see that Jesus is Deity.

We can also see from Scripture that Jesus is eternal. He did not come into existence at His birth; rather, He only humbled Himself and assumed a fleshly body at his birth. Jesus was in the beginning—at creation—with God and *“was God”* (John 1:1). He was and always will be *“everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6). His *“goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”* (Micah 5:2). Only Deity can be eternal.

To some extent, Jesus gave up His Divine power while here on this earth; thus, we often read of Him being in complete subjection to His Father. However, that does not mean He was not [or is not] God. Paul wrote, *“...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2:6-7). In this passage, Paul stated that Jesus was **equal** with God the Father before His incarnation and before He voluntarily chose to empty Himself of Divine privileges when He became a man.

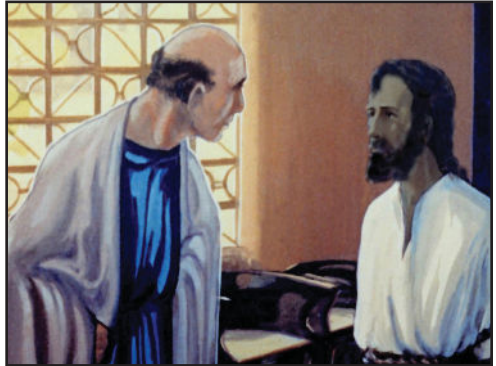
However, even while on the earth, Jesus was still God. Jesus was not merely a prophet. He was not just an emanation or an inferior messenger from God. The fullness of God dwelt in the incarnate Word. Paul proclaimed, *“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell...”* (Colossians 1:19). In Colossians 2:9, Paul added, *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* Paul wanted his readers to understand that all the fullness of God dwelt in the Son of God. Jesus was the union of God and of man. He is God. In reference to Christ, the word *“fullness”* (Greek: *pleroma*) refers to the totality of power and of attributes that are possessed by God, which are also possessed by Christ. In other words, whatever characteristics make God Divine or Deity are also present in Jesus.

In Scripture, Jesus as the Son is referred to as God on many occasions. This is especially remarkable considering the strong monotheism of the Jews. They knew that there was only one God; yet, they understood that Jesus was also God. John affirmed that Jesus is now *“the true God and eternal life”* (1 John 5:20). Paul stated that Jesus is now *“over all, the eternally blessed God”* (Romans 9:5). As Christians, we are *“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13). Notice that Jesus is referred to as both *“God”* and *“Savior.”* To the Son it was said, *“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever”* (Hebrews 1:8). When Jesus appeared to all His apostles after the resurrection, we find Thomas making his confession, *“my Lord and my God”* (John 20:28). The word for *“God”* is *“Theos,”* the same word that is usually used to refer to God the Father. Furthermore, Jesus did not rebuke Thomas; thus, this is equivalent to His own claim to being Divine.

Furthermore, we find that Jesus accepted worship while here on earth. The Old Testament forbade worship of anyone but God (Exodus 20:1-4; Deuteronomy 5:6-9). Men are not to be worshipped (Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-15). Even angels are not to accept worship (Revelation 22:8-9). Nevertheless, Jesus accepted worship (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20). Jesus also accepted worship after the resurrection (Matthew 28:9, 17). Since only God is to be worshipped, and Jesus accepted worship both before and after His death, surely, we can conclude that Jesus knew He was God, and others knew that He was God. We can also safely conclude that if it was acceptable to worship Jesus while on the earth, it is certainly acceptable to worship the glorified Christ. However, Jesus Christ taught that worshippers under Christianity primarily ought to worship the Heavenly Father, for instance, in prayer (Matthew 6:6, 8-9). Note also, *“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him’”* (John 4:21, 23).

Some critics attempt to claim that Jesus never claimed to be Divine. Clearly, though, Jesus Christ claimed to be Divine, and His Jewish critics were well aware of our Lord’s claim. *“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’ Therefore*

the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:17-18). “Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God” (John 10:32-33). “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). “But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death” (Mark 14:61-64).



Notice two other statements from the mouth of Jesus. In John 10:30, we find Jesus saying, *“I and My Father are one.”* No godly Jew would ever make a statement like that unless he was claiming to be God. He also said, *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father...”* (John 14:9). Clearly, Jesus was not professing a physical appearance like God, since God does not have a physical body. He was asserting that He possessed all the Divine characteristics of God the Father.

Plainly, this is a very brief discussion of a complex subject, but hopefully, none will doubt the full Divinity or Deity of Jesus. Jesus is as much God as God the Father is God, and this is one of the great doctrines of the Bible. God became flesh (1 John 4:2) to provide an atonement for our sins. Never should we attempt to downgrade Jesus to a status less than God, because the Bible clearly teaches otherwise. 



1932—2008

What Will Heaven Be Like?

J.C. Choate

The Bible teaches that all of us will die, or put off the mortal body at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). We are also told that *“it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).

The apostle Paul declared, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Perhaps the most important question at this point would be, “What happens to one between the time he dies and the Judgment?” In other words, during that time, where does one abide? Is he still alive? Is he conscious? Or, does he remain in the tomb or in the place of the dead in an unconscious state?

In Luke 16:19-31, Christ told the story of the rich man and Lazarus. He said that both of these men died. The poor man’s soul was taken by angels to Abraham’s bosom or to the place of the righteous dead, which is described as being Paradise. However, the rich man’s soul went to a place of torment in flames. Then he cried out to Father Abraham to have mercy on him and to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. Abraham reminded the rich man that in his life he had received all of the good things the physical world had to offer but Lazarus’ life had been one of misery and deprivation. He concluded by saying that now Lazarus was comforted while the rich man was tormented.

Abraham explained that Lazarus could not come to him since a great gulf was fixed between the two and that no one could pass over to the other. The rich man then asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house to warn his brothers not to come to that place of torment.

Abraham answered that they had Moses and the prophets, and if they would not hear them, they would not listen even though one rose from the dead to warn them. The obvious truth being taught here is that the dead cannot change their place of habitation, nor can they return to earth to make appearances to living humans.

When Do the Resurrection and the Judgment Take Place?

“Yet,” someone might object, “in Jesus’ account, the rich man was already in torment and Lazarus was already in Paradise. What about a resurrection (John 5:28-29), and the general resurrection and judgment for all?” There is no problem here. In this life, if a murderer is caught, he is kept in prison until his judgment day and the time he is sentenced to pay for his crime. The Scriptures, therefore, teach that when the righteous man or the faithful Christian dies that he will go immediately to Paradise, to the place of the righteous dead; when the wicked person dies, he will go immediately to torment, to the place of the wicked dead.

However, when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16), **all** will hear His voice, and the physical bodies will be resurrected from the grave to be reunited with the souls that have been in paradise or in torment, to be transformed into immortal substance and to appear before the Lord to be judged and sentenced (Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-46). Finally, the record says in the words of Jesus that the wicked, ***“shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”*** (Matthew 25:46).

Is It a Parable?

While some would say that the account of the rich man and Lazarus is only a parable, it is not called such in the Scriptures. Also, in no account that is a parable are people identified by name. Regardless, **parable or not, the truth being taught doesn’t change.** That means, then, that those who die remain conscious of who they are, of what they have done and of the people they have known in this world.

The souls go into Paradise or Torment, according to whether they are saved or lost. On the Day of Judgment, it would seem that their lives will be made an open book and that they will be allowed to speak in their defense (Revelation 20:12; Matthew 25:31-46). They will be sentenced by the righteous Judge to an eternal hell with the devil and his angels or to live with the Lord in that new heaven and earth with all of the saved forever more.

Death and the judgment will be final, and one's destination will be eternal. There will be **no second chance**, and neither will the wicked simply cease to exist. The soul will live on forever, either in Heaven or Hell.

How Do the Scriptures Describe Heaven?

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8:20-22).

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1).

My friend, we have today to prepare to meet the Lord and to get our souls ready to live in that new and perfect creation. Please do not neglect your salvation and hear the Lord say, **“Depart from me...”** to be lost for all eternity. ☠





5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

Gospel

1. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me His _____, but share with me in the sufferings for the _____ according to the _____ of God. 2 Timothy 1:8
2. For indeed the gospel was _____ to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not _____ them, not being mixed with _____ in those who heard it. Hebrews 4:2
3. Furthermore, when I came to _____ to preach _____ gospel, and a door was opened to me by the _____. 2 Corinthians 2:12
4. For I am not _____ of the _____ of Christ, for it is the power of _____ to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Romans 1:16
5. In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from _____ and round about to _____ I have fully preached the _____ of Christ. Romans 15:19
6. Now you Philippians know also that in the _____ of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no _____ shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. Philippians 4:15
7. And sent Timothy, our brother and _____ of God, and our fellow laborer in the _____ of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith. 1 Thessalonians 3:2



- Answers:**
1. Prisoner, Gospel, power
 2. Preached, profit, faith
 3. Troas, Christ's, Lord
 4. Ashamed, Gospel, God
 5. Jerusalem, Illyricum, gospel
 6. Beginning, church
 7. Minister, Gospel

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"I Love You"

Betty Burton Choate

How often would the king of an empire turn to one of his subjects and humble himself to the point of openly declaring a deep and abiding love for that one, even before words or expressions of love had been shown to the king? Rereading the Book of Deuteronomy 7, I was struck by the awesomeness of the fact that God repeatedly stated His love for the chosen nation of Israel, leaving Himself open to the real possibility that the love He was offering could be rejected.

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you..." (Deuteronomy 7:6-13).

Then, in the following words there is such longing for faithful love in return. ***"Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"*** (Deuteronomy 5:29).

The church today is God's chosen people, His spiritual Israel, the ones He loves—not because we are great and powerful in the world but because He has made us to be His. First John 4:10 says to us what was proclaimed to

GOD

Israel: *“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**”* Yet, there is a great contrast between the way the Israelites perceived God and the way we know Him.

A few days ago, we had a thunderstorm, and there were loud booms of thunder and sharp explosions of lightning, frightening because of the overwhelming enormity of the danger crashing down again and again. Have you paid attention to the description of events when God appeared on Mt. Sinai, revealing His greatness to the Israelites? Exodus 19:16-19 records:

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were **thunderings and lightnings**, and **a thick cloud on the mountain**; and **the sound of the trumpet was very loud**, so that all the people who were in the camp **trembled**. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in **smoke**, because **the Lord descended upon it in fire**. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when **the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder**, Moses spoke, and **God answered him by voice.**”*

If I stood at the foot of a mountain and experienced terrible thunder and lightning, fire, smoke covering everything, an earthquake seeming to shake the whole mountain, a loud blowing of a trumpet sound, and then the enormity of the Voice speaking, I would probably be as terrified as the Israelites were.

However, how does God present Himself to us in the Christian age? As our compassionate **Father**, loving us to the extent of allowing **His only Begotten Son** to die on a cross to atone for our sins. Have you noticed that in the Old Testament era, the people did not usually address God as **“Father”**? Through the blood poured out on the cross, we have been adopted as the actual children of the God of Heaven (Galatians 4:4-7), with the promise that it is **our Brother** who continually makes intercession for us: *“It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”* (Romans 8:34,35). 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of *The Voice of Truth International*.

Some Things Jesus Did Not Say

Bill Dillon

Often people talk of what Jesus said, but there are many things people think Jesus said that He did not say.

1. Jesus did not say, “Ye shall be sincere in your beliefs and your sincerity shall make you free.” But He did say, ***“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:32). It is possible for good people to be sincere in their religious convictions and be sincerely wrong.
2. Jesus did not say, “Upon this rock I will build my churches and men shall worship at the one of their choice.” However, He did say, ***“... On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”*** (Matthew 16:18). If people can worship in the church of their choice, then they can worship the Christ of their choice. Jesus built only one church, and He is its Head (Ephesians 1:21-22). Jesus did not say, “Whosoever divorces his wife for any cause and marries another woman is free from adultery and can go on his way,” but Jesus did say, ***“...Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery”*** (Matthew 19:9). The looseness with which marriage vows are taken and broken today is a disgrace too great to be measured.
3. Jesus did not say, “He that believeth is saved and can be baptized later if he wants to.” Instead, He did say, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”*** (Mark 16:16). The order Jesus gave is belief, baptism and then salvation—not belief, salvation and then baptism. Think about it!

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4. Jesus did not say, “A man can worship God according his natural leanings, according to the way he is best able to express himself.” Yet, Jesus did say, ***“God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth”*** (John 4:24). Since the ***“truth”*** is God’s Word (John 17:17), our way of worshipping God must be shown in the New Testament, God’s will for man in this age. Can you show New Testament authority for every practice you have in worshipping God?
5. Jesus did not say, “Be tolerant of religious error; all men have a religious right to be wrong, after all, no harm is done.” He did say, ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!’ ...‘Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?’”*** (Matthew 23:13, 33). ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 7:21).

Reader, to which will you pay attention—to what Jesus did not say or did say? 

Bill Dillon preaches for the Lord’s church in Cotter, Arkansas, USA.



Robison’s Rubies

When Paul went to a Thessalonica in the first century, as recorded in Acts 17, he used logical techniques to make his case for Christ. He ***“reasoned”*** with them from the Old Testament Scriptures, showing the prophecies of Christ. He was ***“explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.”*** That is, the Old Testament Scriptures predicted the suffering and resurrection of Christ. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled those Scriptures in what was to them, at that time, recent history. Paul laid the Scriptures on the one hand and the facts on the other and compared them, reasoning, explaining and demonstrating. As was usually the case, some believed, and some got angry. Some things never change.

Unseen but Not Unknown

David R. Pharr

When Peter wrote to Christians who lived in the provinces of Asia Minor, his purpose was to encourage their steadfast faithfulness even when being subjected to a *“fiery trial”* by their enemies (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12). Such should be expected because of their love for and faith in the Savior. He explained: *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). They had not themselves ever seen Jesus, yet they loved and believed in Him. In their faith, He was **unseen**, but **not unknown**!

Some today might imagine that it was easier for those who lived in New Testament times to be believers because they were closer to the time Christ was on the earth. The fact is that most Christians in the early church never saw Jesus in person. His ministry was in a very small part of the world, and though He was seen by many of His own countrymen, that was a very small segment of humanity. What is yet more significant is that it is His resurrection that is the basis of our faith, and only a few—very few—saw Him after He was raised. In 1 Corinthians 15:4-8, Paul gave a partial list of those who saw Him, to which can be added Mary Magdalene, certain other women, and Cleopas and his friend who walked with Him to Emmaus. The emphasis is on the apostles, to whom Jesus *“showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3). Paul was the last person given this privilege (1 Corinthians 15:8).

It is fair to ask, therefore, “How was it that so many became believers in the resurrected Christ when they had never seen Him?” The answer is that they were convinced by the eyewitness testimony of the apostles. That this was the Lord’s method is explained in Acts 10:40-42, where the apostle spoke of Christ being raised and shown openly; *“not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us [apostles]. . .”* The divine method was that the truth about Christ would be made known to the world by the testimony of the apostles, who were appointed for this task. In giving them their commission, Jesus said, *“And ye are witnesses of these things”* (Luke 24:49; cf., Acts 1:8). Thus, their preaching emphasized, *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses”* (Acts 2:32).

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However, this raises the question: “Why should the testimony of these men be accepted? What makes them credible?” Jesus had explained that their testimony would be joined with that of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27; cf., Acts 5:32). The Spirit would guide them *“into all truth”* (John 16:13), which assures us the Spirit guided their testimony in the New Testament. Yet, how can we know that their witness is true? Every eyewitness must be measured by the following standards.

Were the witnesses competent? Were they capable of giving facts intelligently? The New Testament itself demonstrates their intelligence and ability. Incompetent men could not have produced such documents.

Were they in a position to know the facts? One cannot testify unless he has seen the thing and unless he recognizes what it is that he has seen. Jesus was not a stranger to the apostles. When he showed them that he was alive *“by many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3), they knew it was certainly Him and that they had watched Him die and He had been buried.

Was their testimony because of preconceived bias? Were they so expectant that He would be raised that they assumed it was true? The fact is that they did not expect the resurrection at all. They thought the cross was the end of their hopes and could not believe until Jesus proved Himself to them.

Did the witnesses agree among themselves? It was accepted that two or three witnesses could establish a matter. Yet, even two or three sincere witnesses might have some disagreements. Among the apostolic witnesses, however, there are no contradictions. Their testimony is 100% in perfect harmony.

Finally, it is obvious that witnesses are not credible unless we are convinced they are reliable persons. Can we be sure the apostles were men who could be trusted to tell the truth? We can indeed be sure because they were willing to die for their testimony. Men may do many things to cover a lie, but none will die for a cause he knows is false.

We have not seen Jesus, but we know Him by the message of the Gospel (John 20:30-31). In the words of Simon Peter, *“We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (John 6:69). **He is unseen, but not unknown!** 

David R. Pharr is retired from local ministry, and he is now working in Gospel meetings and in writing. Brother Pharr resides in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

THE CRYPT-KEEPER WASP

David Everson

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). In this verse, Paul described the fact that by looking at the *“things that are made”* we can *“clearly see” “invisible things”* that show the *“eternal power and Godhead”* of the Creator. In 2015 a discovery from the *“creation of the world”* shows again the mystery and the wisdom of our Creator. Let’s take a look at the discovery and the amazing life of the Crypt-Keeper Wasp.

In the summer of 2015, a scientist walking through the woods in the southeastern United States noticed small swellings on the twigs of sand live oak trees. He was familiar with gall insects where the mother lays her eggs in oak trees and the larva develops in the limb in a small enclosed area called a “gall,” taking nutrients from the host tree. So he collected a few twigs and watched the development of these insects, and to his amazement, a story began to develop that was unlike anything known to science. His discovery was a new parasitic wasp species with a life cycle so diabolical, they named it after “Set,” the Egyptian god of evil and chaos; they named it the crypt-keeper wasp, *Euderus Set*.

The reason for such a dark name of this new species of wasp has to do with its hyperparasitic life style. A hyperparasite is a parasite living on another parasite. The mother crypt-keeper wasp looks for a very specific location to lay her egg when spring comes. She looks for an existing crypt of a “crypt gall wasp,” which is another species of wasp that is a parasite of the oak tree. The crypt is the location where an egg has been laid and a baby wasp is developing. The mother crypt-keeper then lays her single egg in the same gall. It is now that the story turns gruesome!

As the crypt-keeper larva, which is iridescent blue, hatches, it will begin to eat and burrow into its gall companion. There are many species of parasitic wasps that lay eggs on other wasps that the babies eat as they

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grow but the crypt-keeper baby has been created with very special abilities. It creates a zombie of its host taking control of its mind and changing the behavior of its meal. Once hatched, the crypt-keeper larva manipulates its crypt-mate into chewing an escape hole that is smaller than it usually would use to through which to exit. The crypt gall wasp host then plugs the small hole with its own head, while the crypt-keeper larva devours it alive. Eventually, the crypt-keeper larva turns into an adult and chews its way to freedom, **through the head** of its host, exiting through the hole wall-plug.

So the crypt-keeper wasp lives up to its namesake in so many ways. Set was thought by the ancient Egyptians to have controlled other animals like hyenas and serpents. He was also to have trapped his brother, Osiris, in a crypt, where he murdered him and mutilated his remains. So the crypt-keeper wasp fills the role of “zombie maker” to a tee, controlling its host’s normal behavior to chew an exit hole, then consuming it and leaving through the head plugging the exit hole. How does the larva crypt-keeper wasp know what it is to do to take this kind of mind control over its unwitting host? Without the Creator designing that knowledge into its genetic makeup, it would be impossible! That **“invisible”** knowledge is evidence that God is, and anyone who willingly rejects that is **“without excuse.”** †

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Robison's Rubies

The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is inspired of God. Proverbs 6:16-19 reads, ***“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”***

It doesn't require much comment to see how that applies in many arenas today, does it? God loves and teaches attitudes and actions that are good, holy and benevolent. He hates the sin that causes so much suffering. Would to God that more of mankind hated evil the way God does.



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Creation or Evolution?

Rex Banks

As he witnessed the frantic attempts of the religious leaders in the 19th century to reconcile the biblical account of creation with the theory of evolution, Thomas Huxley scornfully dismissed the Bible as "...so marvellously flexible that it could be made to mean whatever its users might wish it to mean!" Some 50 years later during the so-called "Scopes Monkey Trial," the press heaped ridicule upon the attempts of William Jennings Bryan and the creationists to defend Genesis by equating the "days" of creation with the vast "ages" of geology.

Time and again, the Bible has suffered when it was "defended" by those who sought to reinterpret it in the light of current evolutionary teaching. Such misguided efforts at compromise have stemmed from a failure to recognise that **the theory of evolution is the mortal enemy of Christianity**. On the other hand, many leading proponents of this theory openly acknowledge that evolutionary doctrine is the cornerstone of today's most virulent anti-Christian systems of thought. Consider some of Christianity's most uncompromising enemies—Atheism, Communism, etc.—in the light of some of the following comments by leading evolutionists.

Atheism

"In the evolutionary system of thought there is no longer need for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved—and so did religion. Evolutionary man no longer takes refuge from his loneliness by creeping for shelter into the arms of a divinised father figure whom he himself has created" (Sir Julian Huxley).

Communism

"In an age of social Darwinism the combination of the ideas of struggles, of historical evolution and of progress proved irresistible. In urging these lessons Marx and Engels set the pattern of all subsequent Marxist polemics

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by using what may be called the evolutionist's double standard; 'when you do it, it's wrong, because you are the past; when we do it, it's right, for we are the future.' The mood—borrowed from science—is that of a mighty ruthlessness. History, like nature, is tough" (Jacques Barzun).

Social Darwinism

"To see evolutionary measures and tribal morality being applied vigorously to the affairs of a great modern nation we must turn again to Germany of 1942. We see Hitler devoutly convinced that evolution produces the only real basis for a national policy. ...The means he adopted to secure the destiny of his race and people were organised slaughter, which has drenched Europe in blood....Such conduct is highly immoral as measured by every scale of ethics, yet Germany justifies it; it is consistent with tribal or evolutionary morality. Germany has reverted to the tribal past and is demonstrating to the world, in their naked ferocity, the methods of evolution" (Sir Arthur Keith).

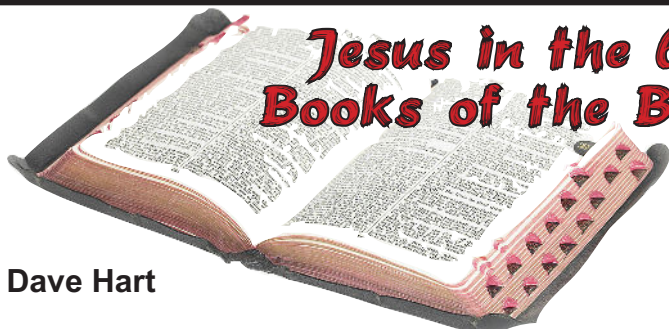
Situation Ethics

"An ethical system that bases its premises on absolute pronouncements will not usually be acceptable to those who view human nature by evolutionary criteria" (Arno G. Motulsky). Quotations are from *The Troubled Waters of Evolution* by H. M. Morris.

Some evolutionists may protest that they accept the Bible as the Word of God and reject all of the above views. However, this is possible only for those who are able to ignore the implications of the theory. One of the greatest modern evolutionists, Sir Arthur Keith, wrote in his book, *Evolution and Ethics*, "The law of Christ is incompatible with the law of evolution—as far as the law of evolution has worked hitherto. Nay, the two laws are at war with each other; the law of Christ can never prevail until the law of evolution is destroyed." Jesus said, ***"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit"*** (Matthew 7:18). 

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THE WORD OF GOD



Dave Hart

- **in Genesis:**
The Seed of the Woman
- **in Exodus:**
The Passover Lamb
- **in Leviticus:**
The High Priest
- **in Numbers:**
The Cloud & the Fire
- **in Deuteronomy:**
The Prophet Like Moses
- **in Joshua:**
The Captain of Our Salvation
- **in Judges:**
The Judge & Lawgiver
- **in Ruth:**
The Kinsman Redeemer
- **in 1 & 2 Samuel:**
The Prophet of the Lord
- **in 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles:**
The Reigning King
- **in Ezra:**
The Faithful Scribe
- **in Nehemiah:**
The Rebuilder of the Broken Down Walls
- **in Esther:**
Mordecai
- **in Job:**
The Dayspring from on High
- **in Psalms:**
The Lord Who Is Our Shepherd
- **in Proverbs & Ecclesiastes:**
Wisdom
- **in The Song of Solomon:**
The Lover & Bridegroom
- **in Isaiah:**
The Prince of Peace
- **in Jeremiah & Lamentations:**
The Weeping Prophet
- **in Ezekiel:**
The Wheel Turning
- **in Daniel:**
The 4th Man in the Fiery Furnace
- **in Hosea:**
The Bridegroom Married to the Backslidden Woman
- **in Joel:**
Baptized with the Holy Spirit & Fire
- **in Amos:**
The Burden Bearer
- **in Obadiah:**
The Mighty Savior
- **in Jonah:**
The Forgiving God
- **in Micah:**
The Messenger with Beautiful Feet
- **in Nahum:**
The Avenger of God's Elect
- **in Habakkuk:**
The Great Evangelist, Crying for Revival
- **in Zephaniah:**
The Restorer of God's Lost Heritage
- **in Haggai:**
The Cleansing Fountain
- **in Zechariah:**
The Merciful Father

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- **in Malachi:**

The Son of Righteousness, Rising with Healing in His Wings

- **in Matthew:**

The Messiah

- **in Mark:**

The Wonder Worker

- **in Luke:**

The Son of Man

- **in John:**

The Son of God

- **in Acts:**

The Ascended Lord

- **in Romans:**

The Justifier

- **in 1 & 2 Corinthians:**

The Gifts of the Spirit

- **in Galatians:**

The One Who Sets Us Free

- **in Ephesians:**

The Christ of Riches

- **in Philippians:**

The God Who Meets Our Every Need

- **in Colossians:**

The Fullness of the Godhead

- **in 1 & 2 Thessalonians:**

The Soon Coming King

- **in 1 & 2 Timothy:**

The Mediator Between God & Man

- **in Titus:**

The Faithful Pastor

- **in Philemon:**

The Friend That Sticks Closer Than a Brother

- **in Hebrews:**

The Blood That Washes Away My Sins

- **in James:**

The Great Physician

- **in 1 & 2 Peter:**

The Chief Shepherd

- **in 1 & 2 & 3 John:**

Everlasting Love

- **in Jude:**

The Lord Who Came Down with 10,000 Saints

- **in Revelation:**

The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!

- ◆ **2 Peter 1:21** 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.
- ◆ **1 Corinthians 2:13** Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
- ◆ **Psalms 119:105** Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- ◆ **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart
- ◆ **Psalms 19:7** The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.

THE WORD OF GOD

A Most Neglected Book

Dalton Key

The Bible is the best book and also one of the most neglected books in all the world. Because it is the best, it is a wonder that it is so sorely neglected.

The Bible works as seed, bringing forth children into the family of God. In Jesus' Parable of the Sower, He made it clear that ***“the seed is the word of God”*** (Luke 8:11), and ***“the sower sows the word”*** (Mark 4:14). Only by God's Word are God's children begotten (1 Peter 1:23). One simply cannot come into God's family while ignoring or bypassing this seed. Yet, too many careless souls of our day fail to allow the seed of God's Word to take root in their hearts.

The Bible is alive and active and ***“sharper than any two-edged sword”*** as it pierces into the heart, discerning the heart's innermost thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12). The people of Acts 2 heard the inspired Word, were ***“cut [“pricked,” KJV] to the heart”*** (37), were instructed to ***“repent, and...be baptized...for the remission of sins”*** (38) and were obedient to God's message, thus enjoying freedom from their bondage of sin. Unlike these wise hearers, many unconcerned souls of our day foolishly ignore the one book with the solution to their greatest problem—the problem of sin.

The Bible is called ***“the sword of the Spirit”*** (Ephesians 6:17). As a sword, it protects the Christian soldier as he stands against ***“the wiles of the devil”*** (Ephesians 6:11). Because our ***“adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”*** (1 Peter 5:8), we need all the weaponry Heaven has to offer. Yet, too many Christians seem content to face the devil unarmed and unconcerned concerning his devious devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Does it make any sense at all that such a practical and profitable book would be so sadly neglected? Is your Bible neglected? 

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

Too Late to Stop the Train

Bobby Dockery

A public service ad on TV urged motorists to exercise caution when approaching railroad crossings. According to the ad, a train traveling at 30 mph takes half a mile to come to a full stop. Many tragic accidents result from careless drivers approaching a train track when it is too late for an oncoming train to stop.



The story of King Josiah in the Bible provides a striking parallel. Josiah was the best of Judah's kings though not the wisest, richest or mightiest militarily. No other king matched his wholehearted devotion to God! When Josiah began his reign, he initiated a policy of reform aimed at purging the land of idolatry and apostasy. He began extensive repairs of the Temple in Jerusalem, which had fallen into ruin. While this work was in progress, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the God's law in the ruins. When the Word of God was read in the presence of King Josiah, he tore his clothes in alarm! He was horrified to learn that his people had departed grievously from God's will because they had lost touch with His Word.

Josiah sent to hear from a prophetess of God what the fate of the nation would be. Back came the warning that God would pour out his wrath on Jerusalem and Judah because of their sinful neglect of His Word! Though Josiah himself would be spared, destruction was coming and nothing could halt its inexorable march. The reforms of Josiah had come too late! God had already set in motion processes of history by which Jerusalem would be destroyed. It was too late to stop the train!

The lesson is clear: There is a point of no return in God's dealings with mankind.

1. This Is True of Nations. Man in the 21st Century has tried to remove

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God from history. We assume that God's sphere of operation is the church house, while the affairs of state are directed by congresses and parliaments. We talk blithely about the "separation of church and state" as though such a thing were even possible! It is not and never can be. God cannot be separated from the State because governments rise and fall at His will. Acts 17:26 proclaims that it is God who determines the appointed times of nations and sets the boundaries of their habitation. History is nothing but the record of God at work among nations. The Bible affirms that God has repeatedly overthrown nations when their cup of iniquity became full (Romans 1:18). What about America? Pray it is not too late to stop the train

2. **This Is True of Families.** Most people if asked admit the need for spiritual training for their children. Yet, many make no attempt to attend church regularly. Life's spiritual dimension is totally neglected. They are content to promise themselves, "Someday we will start taking the kids to Sunday school and church... Someday we will find time for God!" But Solomon warned that we can wait too long! ***"Remember also our Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you shall say, 'I have no delight in them'"*** (Ecclesiastes 12:1). We can wait too long to bring our families to God!
3. **This Is True of Individuals.** We can wait until it is too late to escape the consequences of sin. God has natural laws as well as spiritual laws. In both realms we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8). It is possible to remain so long outside of Christ that no place is found for repentance (Hebrews 12:17). Hearts can harden in neglect; we can become so entangled in sin that we find it impossible to leave! There is a point of no return for the soul!

Though most people try not to think about it, there is a coming day of reckoning with God. The time to prepare for that coming Day of Judgment is now. A time will come when it will be too late! 

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

SALVATION

The High-Cost of Low-Living

Michael L. King

Numerous Bible characters and people contemporary to our generation can attest to the fact that the ***“wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23). A simple definition of death is “separation.” When one receives the payment for his sin, it separates him from everything that stands for right and good. Sin estranges family members, splits marriages and alienates church members, not only from their God but from their spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. “Low-living” causes one to be separated from this life in literal death due to habits and personal conduct that threaten his health and safety. **So many people are living a life that is on a collision course with eternity rather than in harmony with it.**

Our world today is being plagued with the fallout from illicit sexual relations, such as AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, psychological disorders, birth defects and births out of wedlock. What might seem to be pleasure at the time of engagement in these behaviors pales in comparison to the miserable lifestyles they create. The real high-cost for this low-living may not be fully realized in this life, but it will manifest itself in the Judgment, rendering one totally unacceptable for entrance into Heaven. We should be haunted by the thought of hearing the Lord say in Judgment, ***“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’”*** (Matthew 25:41).

There is a high cost to replacing the Living God with the god of this world—materialism! We are warned to ***“not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”*** (1 John 2:15-17). Did you notice another separation is taking place in this verse? When loving the world and the things of the world, the love that one has for the Father dies (v. 15). We have nothing to show for a lengthy life

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of waste on selfish endeavors to the total neglect of ***“laying up treasures in heaven”*** and enjoying the accrued interest while living here in anticipation of it (Matthew 6:20). We have been promised that if we ***“seek first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”*** (Matthew 6:33). Another provocative thought is considered a paradox in the Scriptures. ***“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it”*** (Matthew 16:25).

The ***“Prodigal Son”*** is a perfect example of someone who was compelled to pay a high price for a low form of living (Luke 15:12-14). The separation was of his accord; he was not compelled or coerced by any outside influence, but from within by his own troubled heart. By interpretation, the father in the story was God and the prodigal represented one who had estranged himself in seeking fulfillment of passions that would not and could not be tolerated by his father. James so advised that this could and would happen to an individual.

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14-15). Notice the “drawing” influence that is relentless. Sin takes one farther, keeps him longer and does far more damage than could ever be imagined.

The entire human race was victimized by the making of a poor decision



SALVATION

by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to partake of the forbidden fruit. There again, one finds a separation that took place, for after they had trespassed into God's forbidden territory, ***"they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden"*** (Genesis 3:8). They withdrew themselves ***"from the presence of the Lord"*** because there was not agreement between what God wanted and what they were doing (Genesis 3:23-24). They exchanged the beauties of the Garden for toiling, tilling the ground and earning their way by the sweat of their brows. Have you ever wondered what things might have been like had they complied with God's wishes concerning the fruit of the tree? In addition, pain came about for women in childbirth, the ground became plagued by thorns and thistles, and death passed upon the whole of humanity (Genesis 3:14-18). Even the serpent received a bum deal because of influencing Adam and Eve to stoop to the low-life of disobedience; thereafter, it was consigned to crawling on its belly and eating dust all the days of its life (v. 14).

There is a fool-proof solution to correcting the sin problem and low-living, by which one can be exalted to honor and recognition in God's sight. It does not cost but pays dividends. James expressed, ***"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up"*** (James 4:7-10). There was a time when God's people, the Jews, became so corrupt that His Shekinah departed the Temple (Ezekiel 11:23). He later returned when they made a holy presence for Him. (The **Shekinah** means the **God-Who-Dwells-Within**.) How saddening and threatening it would be for God to withdraw Himself from any heart or life today! 

Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

Verse Search



1. Name four things that Paul said happened to all the Jewish fathers while in the wilderness. (v. 1-4)
2. Who was the spiritual Rock from which they all drank? (v. 4)
3. What happened to most of those in the wilderness and why? (v. 5)
4. The things that happened to the Israelites became _____ for us that we might not _____ like they did. (v. 6)
5. Some of them were also _____. (v. 7)
6. We must also not commit _____ as some of them did (v. 8)
7. How many died in one day due to sin? (v. 8)
8. Some of them _____ Christ and were destroyed by _____. (v. 9)
9. Why were all these things written? (v. 11)
10. What should the one who becomes proud of himself and his position do and why? (v. 12)
11. Is anyone ever tempted in a way different from anyone else? (v. 13)
12. What does Paul mean when he said "God is faithful"? (v. 13)
13. What did Paul say God would also do for His people when they face temptation? (v. 13)

(See inside the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

NOTES: Paul was striving to encourage the Corinthians to be watchful and persevere in the Lord’s work. He reminded them of all the spiritual blessings that their forefathers had received in the wilderness. They all received the same blessings; however, most of them died in the wilderness because of their sin. Paul said that those things are examples to us. They show us that just because we receive spiritual blessings is no guarantee we will eventually receive eternal life. This was Paul’s key point. Most failed to please God, and they fell in the wilderness. Likewise, we must be careful to continue living for Christ and to obey His commandments. If we do not, we will also come short of heaven.

This section closes with an exhortation. Often man thinks that our temptations are unique or that we are tempted far more than we are able to withstand. We wonder where God is. Paul explained that God is faithful (reliable) and will not allow us to be tempted more than we can stand. He also stated that there will always be a way of escape. This way may not be easy. It likely will require much effort and maybe some suffering; nevertheless, the way is there. We always need to look to God, especially when we think we are so strong. That is the very time when we are actually the weakest and the time when Satan will strike. We must not ever use the excuse: “The devil made me do it.”

I HAVE A DREAM

Ronald D. Reeves

Perhaps the above caption and quote will be echoed for many years through the halls of institutions dedicated to preserving God-given freedoms that each of us no doubt have come to cherish as citizens in a free society. In years past, I have listened with rapt attention to the speech that immortalized the above words. As many others, I have strong feelings about such issues, and my passions are certainly stirred in the face of historical abuse of any of our people in our nation and society. As the leader of the civil rights movement during the decade of the 60's formulated and shared his dream about pertinent issues of the day related to the restoration of a free and balanced society, each of us today, as members of the New Testament church, should formulate and share our dream about the future prosperity of the Lord's church in our generation.

The time has come, not only one's local congregation, but in congregations across the land, to face the reality of one's needs and challenges, and to address them with vigor, while we yet have the time, opportunity, energy and ability to do so. May it be that elderships across the land throughout our beloved brotherhood will not only listen with renewed interest to the voice of the people they serve, but will also covet the wisdom to discern between the array of proposals that may be set before them. May our esteemed leaders in each of our congregations actively lead the people of God in pursuit of worthy spiritual goals that must be addressed if we, the people of God, have valid hope of successfully accomplishing the work of God in our community.

Yes, I have a dream for the people of God. I dream of the day when all of God's people can worship together because every barrier has been scripturally removed, regardless of the barrier. I dream of the day when servant leaders as elders embrace the congregations they serve rather than crushing their spirit, either by design or accidentally. I dream of the day when memberships respond to quality spiritual leadership by voicing the

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spirit of Isaiah and therefore say, ***“Here am I, send me.”***

I dream of the day when deacons in every congregation of the people of God are given weighty responsibility to direct and implement specific efforts designed to impact the local community as we together seek to truly fulfill the mission of the church. I dream of the day when elderships across the land so trust the brethren whom they serve that the memberships, including the body of deacons, take much of the burden that elderships typically bear, so that elderships can truly concern themselves about the spiritual welfare and eternal destiny of the souls under their charge. I dream of the day when programs of work are no longer being proposed as the means of motivating the children of God to do the work of children of God, all because we as brethren of the Christ are self-motivated and are already actively using the talent with which we have been blessed.

Yes, I have a dream. I dream of the day when the vibrant spirit of a congregation devoted to genuine and manifold growth is maintained, regardless of the historical success achieved. I dream of the day when conflict resolution is the norm in our congregations rather than the exception. I dream of the day when the spirit of self-denial for the benefit of others will so pervade our spirit that all of our congregations will be known by their caring spirit. I dream of the day when our congregations are all impacting in benevolent work as we work with vigor evangelistically.

**YES, I HAVE A DREAM FOR
THE PEOPLE OF GOD.**

I dream of the day when our people will again be known for their Bible knowledge, the ability and the desire to teach any one at any time. I dream of the day when fellowship among children of God is developed in accordance with the New Testament concept of fellowship. I dream of the day when visitors are so impressed with our quality and scriptural basis for our worship that they can hardly stay away. I dream of the day when the needs of each of the sub-groups in our congregations are addressed without favor of one above another.

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I dream of the day when... Yes, I have a dream—and I want you to develop one too! Yet, this is not enough. To have a dream that may never have the hope of fulfillment fosters despair. I truly want more than the despair of an unfulfilled dream. May we daringly, through God-ordained leadership, dare to say, ***“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*** Let us arise and with courage meet the challenges of our generation. Let us with boldness begin to do what we should have been doing long ago. May we truly be men and women of faith. We can afford to be nothing less. ✝

Ronald D. Reeves preaches for the College Avenue Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

The Root of Sin

Bonnie Rushmore

Could it be said that putting our wants and desires above the wishes of others is the root of all sin? Since sin is a biblical subject, we will observe a few passages from the Bible to reach a God approved answer to this question.

First, we must define sin. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). We sin when we fail to fulfill any or all of God's laws. One can sin in thought (Matthew 5:22, 28; 1 John 3:15), by actions (Romans 2:32) and by our words (Colossians 3:8-9). All sin falls into these three categories of our lives. The apostle John stated, ***“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world”*** (1 John 2:16). All sin is a product of the world and cannot be associated with our Heavenly Father.

Several New Testament passages list the sins in which one might engage. These verses outline the types of behavior that are unacceptable to God (Romans 1:29-32; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; Revelation 21:8; etc.). ✝

Bonnie Rushmore (1956-2015) was wife of and coworker with her husband Louis Rushmore. She was a Staff Writer for *The Voice of Truth International and Gospel Gazette Online*.

THE CHURCH

Why Not the Church of the Lord's Choice?

Maxie B. Boren

For as long as I can remember, I've heard the expression, "Join the church of your choice." This is the denominational concept of "Christianity," pure and simple—the idea that there are many churches, all of which are pleasing to God. Therefore, as the theory goes, people can just pick and choose which one they will "join." The perception is somewhat like a high school graduate selects the college of his or her choice.

Most people readily accept this approach to religion because this is what they have heard, as well as what they have been taught all of their lives. Most people have no earthly idea what the Bible teaches on the matter, and they don't really care.

Though not cognizant of the importance of it, yet people desperately need to hear the truth! The truth is that Christ *"loved the church and gave himself for it"* (Ephesians 5:25). He purchased the church with His own *"precious blood"* (Acts 20:28). God gave Him to be *"head"* of the church, and in it He is to have *"all the preeminence"* (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18).

During His personal ministry, Jesus plainly said that He would *"build"* His church (Matthew 16:18). Obviously, the Lord spoke of the **spiritual building**, not a material structure, because the Bible speaks of *"living stones"* framed together as the spiritual temple of God. Read and consider such Scriptures as 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Corinthians 3:16:17 and 1 Timothy 3:15. These *"living stones"* are people who have heard, believed and obeyed the Gospel of Christ, which is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). Obedience to the Gospel is the submission to the commands plainly given in that message to those who believe it. Believers must repent, confess faith in Christ and be baptized to enter Christ and

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have their sins washed away through His blood. Read such Scriptures as Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 3:19; 17:30; 8:12, 35-39; 10:48; 22:16, 1 John 4:15, Romans 10:9-10, Galatians 3:26-27 and Romans 6:17-18, 3-6. Such obedient believers are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), and thus, the church is that spiritual body of the saved (Ephesians 5:23), that body of the reconciled (Ephesians 2:16), that spiritual kingdom of the redeemed (Colossians 1:13-14, 18, 24).

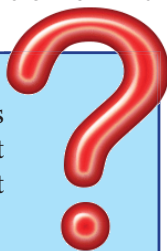
In another depiction of the church, the Bible plainly indicates it is the ***“bride of Christ.”*** Read Ephesians 5:22-32 and 2 Corinthians 11:2. Since ***“all scripture is given by the inspiration of God”*** (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21), can anyone explain why the Holy Spirit would so have pictured the church if He had not wanted us to receive and perceive the point made? Jesus Christ chose His bride! Not **just any** would do! That is so obvious that even a child should be able to understand!

We might expect the denominational world to try to defend its concept of **many churches, and one is just as good as another**. Its efforts are feeble, since the concept is blatantly false! Stubborn departures from what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6), nevertheless defended, also occurred anciently. The Ephesians elders received such a warning, ***“from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them”*** (Acts 20:30). That is exactly what is happening among us today!

It is of extreme importance and a matter of urgency that we get back to the fundamentals and basics. We need to preach and teach anew about **the church of the Lord's choice!** 

Maxie B. Boren (1932–2016) was a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

Did You Know? The Jordan River is 200 miles long from where it begins in northern Palestine to where it empties into the Dead Sea. It drops an average of 22 feet per mile and feeds the lowest body of water on earth.



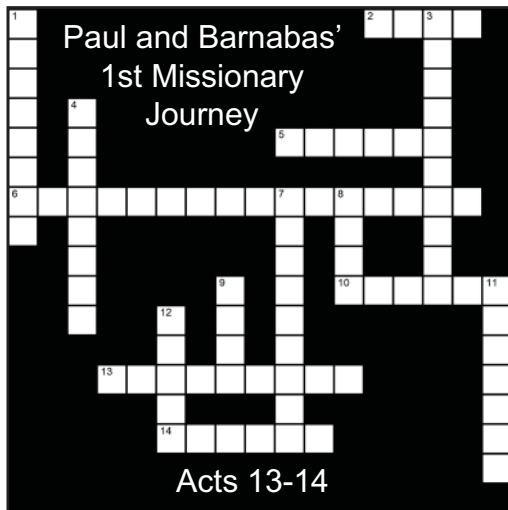


Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Across

2. Who left Paul and Barnabas on this journey? Acts 13:13
5. Paul was called name of what god? Acts 14:12
6. City Paul and Barnabas shook dust off their feet. Acts 13:14-51
10. City where Paul healed a lame man. Acts 14:8-10
13. To what city did John Mark go? Acts 13:13
14. The sorcerer's name. Acts 13:8



Down

1. Partner with Paul. Acts 13:2
3. Who sent them out on this journey? Acts 13:4
4. To whom did Paul and Barnabas open the door of faith? Acts 14:27
7. Roman province to which they came after passing through Pisidia. Acts 14:24
8. Paul's other name. Acts 13:9
9. Barnabas was called the name of what god? Acts 14:12
11. City from which they left. Acts 13:1
12. City to which Paul went after being stoned. Acts 14:20

Help in our Weakness

Wayne Barrier

First century Christians were taught that they would suffer (Romans 8:17-18; 1 Peter 4:12-13; James 1:2-3) and that God is aware of our struggles. Trials and tribulations actually can result in improvement, and they may be blessings to the person who endures faithfully. We see suffering and struggling brethren every day. Life can be very hard, and brethren are not spared difficulty.

Consider the many promises to brethren in Romans 8:26-39. First, Paul penned in Romans 8:26-28,

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

These promises are further emphasized as we continue reading Romans 8:31-35,

What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

We are promised victory in these times. In Romans 8:37-39, Paul stated,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The help we need in our times of disaster and trouble is available and will be provided, if we are faithful to Christ. What a blessing! 

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

Third Verse

Tom Steed

The third verse of a four-verse song is omitted so often it has become the subject of jokes. Song leaders, please pay attention to the words and sentiment of each verse in the songs you select. Sometimes the third verse is the most meaningful, as in “How Great Thou Art.” Sometimes all the verses are needed to complete the thought of the song. Sometimes a verse, perhaps other than the third, should be omitted because it is not true, as the second verse of “Jesus Is Coming Soon.”

Be aware. Do not lead “Why Not Tonight?” at a morning service. Do not lead “Ready to Suffer” as the song before the sermon. Do not say “Because of the time, we will sing just one verse of a closing song, “Take Time to be Holy.” 

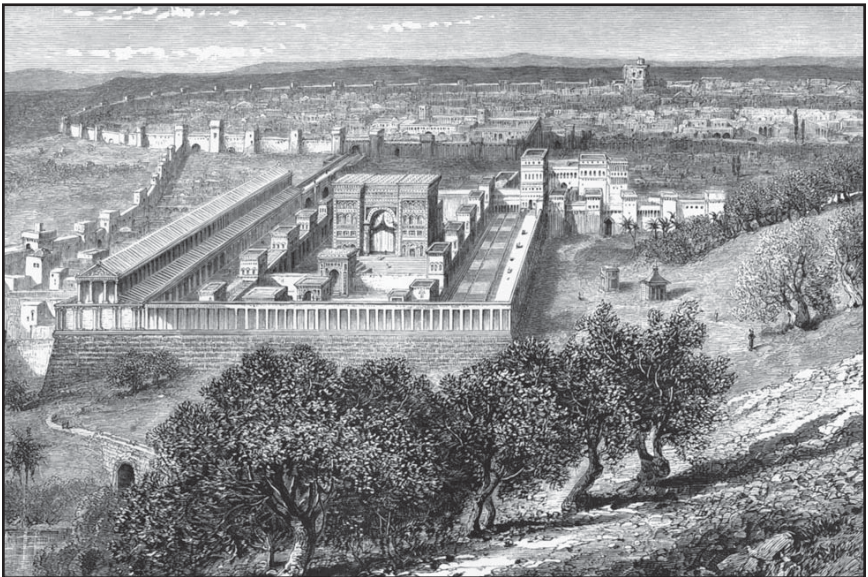


DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

A LESSON FROM JEREMIAH CHAPTERS 37-39

David Conley

The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar (also spelled Nebuchadnezzar in other texts) was making plans to attack Jerusalem. Since Babylon was the world's superpower of the day, this was of great concern to the residents of Jerusalem. The king in Jerusalem at that time was Zedekiah. Zedekiah had been very disobedient to God. God sent the Babylonians to Jerusalem as punishment for his disobedience.



Zedekiah was very concerned about the intelligence reports that he had received. Babylon was indeed preparing a mass attack on his city. He did the wisest thing that he could do. He called Jeremiah and asked him to pray to God for the country. This was a very smart move! Most people would have

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

called for the generals and colonels to ask them for a battle plan!

Unfortunately, Jeremiah had bad news for Zedekiah. God **intended** for the Babylonians to punish Jerusalem for its sins. The answer to Jeremiah's prayer was to surrender to the Babylonians! Zedekiah had received the answer to his question, but it was not the answer he wanted! Since it was not the answer for which he was hoping, should he obey?

Instead of obeying the Lord (which he was not in the habit of doing), he allowed Jeremiah to be thrown into the dungeon by the rulers of the city. After Jeremiah had been in jail for a long while, Zedekiah called for him and asked him again, ***"Is there any word from the Lord?"*** Jeremiah said, ***"There is: for, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."*** Jeremiah told him the truth once again. Zedekiah treated Jeremiah a little better for a while, but later allowed the city rulers to put him in another dungeon where Jeremiah sank in the mire!

Jeremiah was about to die in this horrible place when one of Zedekiah's eunuchs begged him to get Jeremiah out of there. Zedekiah, once again, removed Jeremiah from prison and asked him if there was word from God. Jeremiah told him once again that if he refused to surrender to the Babylonians that he would be punished, and the city would be burned!

Zedekiah did not obey. Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city, killed Zedekiah's children before his eyes and then put out his eyes! Then the city was burned, just like God said it would be!

Do we only obey God when it suits us? Have you received the answer to your prayers but are unwilling to obey? Shouldn't we obey God in **all** things?✚

David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.

Kenney's Pennies

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Have you ever seen a badly-behaved person and said within yourself, "He deserves a beating?" Well, Jesus took the beating that we all deserve so we could be spared, healed and forgiven of our offenses to God.



Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

(Philippians 3:20-21; Luke 24:39-43)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

What will our bodies be like in the resurrection?

According to the passage in Philippians, our bodies will be like Christ's after His resurrection. Analyzing what is revealed in Scripture, what are some facts we learn?

The body seen by the witnesses was indeed the resur-

rected body of Christ, transformed into an immortal state: *"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have...But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence"* (Luke 24:39, 41-43). Just as was true of the three spirit beings who came to Abraham in Genesis 18, who ate the food prepared for them, our Lord in His transformed body could eat physical food. This does not prove that food will be required in the new earth, but it does show that the immortal body can do physical things when necessary.

Yet there were differences from the mortal human body: *"Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.'"* In this changed body, He could appear and disappear, not having to pass physically through open doors.

While it seems that angels—*spirit beings*, not resurrected humans—can assume whatever body is needed for an specific work assigned to them, resurrected humans will dwell in their own bodies, brought forth from the dead and transformed into immortal substance, like that of our Lord, never to die again.

1st Century Christian in a 21st Century World

Derek Broome

I have grown up in a world where technology is the norm. From the



time that I was born until this very day, I have never known a time without technology. Now, that does not mean that my parents did not insist that I go outside. In fact, most summer days were spent outside working, running and playing ball. Yet, the stories one hears of days before technology took over the world are not my stories. They are stories I have been told by people who lived in a different period than me. They are from people who have experienced life differently than I ever have and probably differently than I ever will.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

If you were to take somebody that lived one hundred years ago and compare him to somebody living today, you would see a lot of differences in their life experiences. The advances in industry, machinery, medicine and technology have been astounding. In many ways, the advances of the modern era have revolutionized the entire world. However, is there a downside to so much technology?

Our world is more connected than ever. Phones, internet, social media, airplanes and cars have improved so much that just about anything a person wants to do and anywhere he wants to go can be done quickly. With all of those things being said and true, I still have some questions. With all of the connectivity, why are we as people living in our culture so disconnected? Are we as Christians using the resources that are at our fingertips for the glory of God?

Imagine you are a Christian living in the 1st century, and someone from the future gives you all of the tools that we have at our disposal today. What do you think would be accomplished with those tools? No longer would it take days to get somewhere because planes and cars would make spreading the Word to the world faster and more convenient. Modern medicine would allow you to live longer and spend more time teaching. Computers, phones and other devices would allow you to communicate with people hundreds and thousands of miles away. Checking on the status of fellow Christians and congregations could be accomplished with just the push of a button.

What do you think would be accomplished if you had a 1st century Christian living in the 21st century world? The answer to that question should be answered by our lives. We are Christians just like those people in the 1st century. The same responsibility has been given to us to spread the Word of God to the world. Are we spreading the Word as we should? Are we using the tools we have at our disposal? Let us make a point today to tell somebody about Christ. ***“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light”*** (Ephesians 5:6). ✝

Derek Broome is the Associate Minister of the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

What did Paul do in Arabia?

Kevin L. Moore

After his conversion to Christ, the apostle Paul spent the first three years of his Christian life in the Syrian city of Damascus and the adjoining country of Arabia (Acts 9:3-19; Galatians 1:15-18). Arabia was the Roman name of the Nabatean Kingdom, ruled for approximately forty-eight years (9 B.C.-A.D. 40) by King Aretas IV, mentioned by name in 2 Corinthians 11:32. During the Middle Nabatean period (30 B.C.-A.D. 70), its boundaries fluctuated but would have included what is today known as the Sinai, the Negev, the east side of the Jordan Valley, much of Jordan and part of Saudi Arabia. At times it



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incorporated the cities of the Decapolis and Damascus, and Paul probably did not venture far from Damascus during his time in Arabia.

The apostle was in Damascus at least twice: (a) when he was converted to Christianity (Acts 9:8-19) and (b) when he returned from Arabia (Galatians 1:15-17). His initial departure was prompted by a Jewish plot to kill him (Acts 9:23-25), and his second departure was instigated by the governor of Damascus desiring to arrest him (2 Corinthians 11:32-33). On both occasions Paul escaped by being let down in a basket through the city wall.

Whether the apostle (as a young Christian) went to Arabia for a period of isolation and renewal or as a missionary, the biblical record does not say. Neither does it indicate for how much of the three years he was there. However, in view of his preaching Christ almost immediately after his conversion (Acts 9:20-22) and subsequently arousing the disfavor of the Nabatean king (2 Corinthians 11:32), missionary activity seems likely.

While in Arabia, Paul may not have been the only disciple of Jesus there. Seeing that Arabian Jews were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when thousands were converted to Christ (Acts 2:11, 41) and later scattered abroad (Acts 8:4; 11:19), it is certainly plausible that there were fellow Christians in Arabia with whom the apostle worked.

Whatever Paul did in Arabia, he was no doubt preparing for a lifetime of service as an ambassador of Christ to the Gentile world. While specific details have not been disclosed, we do know the nature of his convictions following that initial encounter with the Lord at Damascus. ***“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them [the other apostles], though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me”*** (1 Corinthians 15:10 ESV). 

Kevin L. Moore serves as Director of Missions Studies at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

Did You Know?

The phrase “Word of God” appears 48 times in the NKJV of the Bible. “Words of God” appears an additional six times.



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Zeal for God but Not According to Knowledge

Sunny David

Affirming his interest and concern for his own Jewish people, the apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans that his heart's desire and his prayer to God was that they may be saved, but then he said, ***"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge"*** (Romans 10:2). They were not consciously rebellious to God; in fact, they manifested an apparent zeal for God in their pursuit of the righteousness that they believed would come to them by obeying the Law of Moses (Romans 9:31-32). However, they were not enlightened concerning the righteousness that God grants to all who will accept it in faith (Romans 4:16), even the righteousness that is through the faith of Christ (Philippians 3:9). It was their ignorance of the righteousness that comes from God that prompted them to continue in their vain efforts to obtain their own righteousness through their own religious, good works. They were not deliberately resisting God's will; they just did not understand what His will truly was. While it was commendable that they had a zeal for God, yet, zeal without knowledge is dangerous. It's like someone wanting to fly an airplane without any knowledge of flying an aircraft. That would destroy both the airplane and the flyer if flight were attempted. There is such a thing as a blind, misguided zeal.

In the religious world today, there is a great deal said about the Holy Spirit, especially about the feeling many have concerning a direct leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Numerous people believe that the Holy Spirit is working today in the same way He did in the past when the Scriptures were being written—directly and miraculously. This concept that so many have today concerning the Holy Spirit causes them to have a tremendous enthusiasm and zeal. Certainly, this is a response based upon their emotions rather than on the revelation of God; their zeal is without the knowledge of the written revelation of the Holy Spirit, which is evident in their preaching of contradictory and conflicting doctrines that have produced religious confusion and division. They all claim to be led by

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

the Spirit of God, but they believe and teach differently. They are neither consistent nor in harmony with what the Spirit actually teaches through the Scriptures. Is God the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)?

The point is that the miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit is no longer available to man today. The Holy Spirit works today by and through the written revelation of God's Word, the Bible, and not directly or independently of the written Word. *"All Scripture,"* says 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *"is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

There was a time in history when men did not have the Scriptures, God's instruction to man, in its written form as we have the Bible today through which God speaks to all men. The writer of the Book of Hebrews penned, *"God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"* (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Son, Christ, while He was on earth, chose twelve men to be His spokespersons. To them He promised that after He would go back to the Father, He would send upon them the Holy Spirit, who would guide them into all truth and teach them all truth. Further, the Holy Spirit would remind them everything that Jesus had taught the apostles while He was with them on earth (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13).

This promise of Christ was fulfilled on the Jewish Day of Pentecost fifty days after the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit was given to the apostles to enable them to speak in languages that they had never learned (Acts 2:6-11), to give them power to perform miracles (Acts 2:43), to confirm the Word and to make believers (Mark 16:19-20). This was during the time before the New Testament had been given in its written form. Once it was completed, however, then there was no longer any need for miraculous works and direct revelation. Therefore, miracles ceased. That was to happen according to 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, when the perfect would have come, that is, the perfect will of God as we have it today in the New Testament of the Bible. James 1:25 describes it as *"the perfect law of liberty."*

We are, therefore, living in an age when God speaks to us by His Son Jesus Christ through His New Testament (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1). According to Romans 10:17, *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Both the Old Testament and the New Testament contain the revealed

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

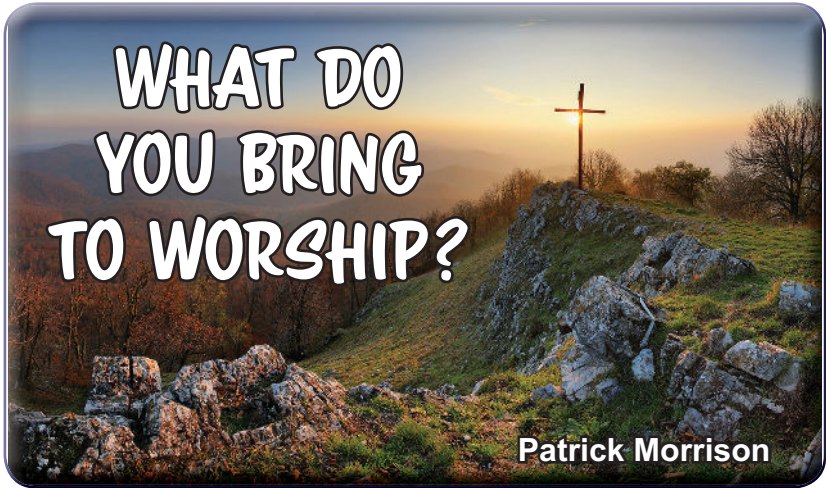
will of God for mankind. The whole Bible was written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. *“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 2:21). God gave the Old Testament Law through Moses to His chosen people Israel, who lived before Christ’s death on the cross. After His death, resurrection and Ascension to Heaven, the New Testament of the Bible was written, which is God’s law for us and under which we live today.

Surely no one can deny the essentiality of zeal in the life of the child of God. It is this quality that should move us forward with great energy and eagerness to do the will of God. However, it is not enough to realize that we should be zealous, but something must produce that zeal and fuel the fires of fervency in our daily walk with God. The knowledge of God’s Word, not a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, ought to produce this zeal. The Holy Spirit leads God’s children today by the written Word of God in the Bible, not separately, apart from or independently of the written Word. Thus, it is most important that people read and study the Bible, meditate and learn to gain knowledge of the Word of God—His will—and live by it.

There are many who zealously preach Christ today and who are claiming that the Lord is performing many miracles through them. They are on television, on radio and in large assemblies of people everywhere. They are not less zealous and sincere in their claims than those whom Christ described in the passage of Matthew 7:22-23 by saying, *“Many will say to Me in the last day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”* What was the problem? They did everything in their zeal without realizing what the will of the Lord is.

Many will diligently, selflessly and zealously serve the Lord, only to hear the Lord say, on the Day of Judgment, *“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”* What is lawlessness? That which is not done in accordance with the law—in this case, the law of Christ, the New Testament—is lawlessness. This warning of Christ should stop every person short and suddenly until he is sure beyond all possibility of deception that he truly is doing God’s will. To do God’s will, one must first learn His will. ✝

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WHAT DO YOU BRING TO WORSHIP?

Patrick Morrison

The Old Testament required all Jewish males to appear in Jerusalem three times per year to worship and offer sacrifices. *“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty”* (Deuteronomy 16:16). It was imperative that those who made the journey to Jerusalem to worship God not come before Him empty-handed. The Old Law even made provisions for those who could not afford to offer the customary sacrifice for sin of a lamb or a goat (Leviticus 5:7-11). From the wealthiest prince to the lowliest pauper, all were to come before God in worship with something to offer. Herein lies a fundamental principle of our worship to God: Worship is something that we offer, something that we bring before God, and when done in accordance with His Divine will, we know that such offerings will be acceptable to Him.

The idea of worship has been lost on many within our generation. For most it is a time to be entertained. Worship has become just another spectator sport, a place to be seen or something to check off the to-do list. It is a shame to see those who claim to love the Lord coming to worship with nothing to offer. Some sit as silent as the tomb while praises are being sung to our Heavenly

WORSHIP

Father. **Empty-handed!** Some cling tenaciously to the material wealth with which God has blessed them as the time for giving back to Him as He has prospered us comes. **Empty-handed!** Some pass notes, talk, daydream as God's Word is being read or proclaimed. **Empty-handed!** Some slip in, take some unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, thinking they are observing the Lord's Supper, and slip out, ignoring the rest of the worship of Almighty God. **Empty-handed!** Some show up every once in a blue moon [infrequently] and expect everyone to notice the effort they put forth to be there. **Empty-handed!** Brethren and friends, how can we ***“offer...unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing”*** (2 Samuel 24:22)?

Worship is not about man. It has never been about man. It will never be about man. Worship is about bowing the knee in reverence to God and coming before Him with that which we know will please Him. We dare not come empty-handed. ***“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”*** (Hebrews 13:15). ***“But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple”*** (Psalm 5:7). ***“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”*** (Psalm 29:2). ***“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker”*** (Psalm 95:6). ***“I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord”*** (Psalm 116:17). ***“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name”*** (Psalm 138:2). ***“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 2:5). ***“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him”*** (Psalm 2:8).

The worship of the God of Heaven demands that we come before Him with something to offer, something that all can afford: our prayers, our praise, our time, our talents, our money and ourselves!✚

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



A man had just finished reading the book, *Man of the House*, while riding the commuter train home from work.

When he reached home, he stormed into the house and walked directly up to his wife. Pointing his finger in her face, he said, “From now on I want you to know that I am the man of this house and my word is law! You are to prepare me a gourmet meal tonight, and when I’m finished eating my meal, I expect a sumptuous dessert afterward. Then, after dinner, you’re going to draw my bath so I can relax. And when I’m finished with my bath, guess who’s going to dress me and comb my hair?”

His wife sternly responded, “My guess would be the funeral director.”



At the company water cooler, I bragged about my children’s world travels: one son was teaching in Bolivia, another was working in southern Italy and my daughter was completing a yearlong research project in India.

One coworker’s quip, however, stopped me short. “What is it about you,” he asked, “that makes your kids want to get so far away?”



A passenger on a Southwest flight says that he once faced a flight delay just before boarding time.

A flight attendant picked up the microphone and announced:

“We’re sorry for the delay. The machine that normally rips the handles off your luggage is broken, so we’re having to do it by hand. We should be finished and on our way shortly.”



A little child in church for the first time watched as the men passed the offering plates.

PROVERBS 17:22

When they neared the seat where he sat, the youngster spoke up so that everyone could hear: “Don’t pay for me, Daddy. I’m under five.”



A new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses. She started her class by saying, “Everyone who thinks they’re stupid, stand up!” After a few seconds, little Larry stood up. The teacher said, “Do you think you’re stupid, Larry?” “No, ma’am, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself!”



Signs Found in Kitchens

- A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.
- A messy kitchen is a happy kitchen, and this kitchen is delirious.
- Countless numbers of people have eaten in this kitchen and gone on to lead normal lives.



11 Lessons from Noah’s Ark

1. Don’t miss the boat.

2. Better listen to God, rather than to men!
3. Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark.
4. Stay fit. When you’re 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
5. Don’t listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety’s sake, travel in pairs.
8. Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
9. When you’re stressed, float a while.
10. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic was built by professionals.
11. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there’s always a rainbow waiting.



Did you ever notice when you blow in a dog’s face he gets mad at you? But when you take him in a car he sticks his head out the window!

How Do You Measure Up?

I waited patiently for the Lord;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.

He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;

Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the Lord.

Blessed is that man who makes the
Lord his trust,

And does not respect the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.

Many, O Lord my God, are Your
wonderful works

Which You have done;

And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in
order;

If I would declare and speak of
them,

They are more than can be
numbered.

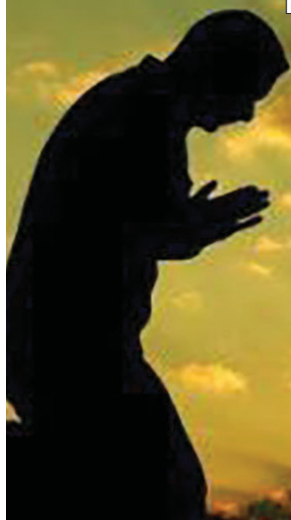
I have proclaimed the good
news of righteousness

In the great assembly;

Indeed, I do not restrain my
lips,

O Lord, You Yourself
know.

Psalm 40:1-5, 9



Gains and Losses

J. Randal Matheny

Throughout life we lose. Be it relationships or loved ones, jobs or health, possessions or innocence, dreams or security, we often feel what is precious to us being wrenched away forever.

By our losses, God seeks to strengthen our tie to Him. In losing things and people in this life, we can make gains in the spiritual realm. Such gains do not come automatically. Our hearts must move from love of this world to desire and to appreciation for the next. Loss can also make us bitter or resentful, if we choose that path.

As we move through life (that's a euphemism for growing older), a Christian gains much: wisdom, a greater desire for Heaven, a stronger faith, holiness, a deeper love for others, a wider circle of spiritual family and a closer walk with God, to name a few. With such a perspective, truly one can say that, for the Christian, ***"Christ is all"*** (Colossians 3:11). Or as David expressed it in his loss of security, ***"I have no good besides You"*** (Psalm 16:2).



The questions I need to ask, then, are ones like these: "What is God teaching me in this loss?" "How can I be a better disciple because of this loss?" "How can I find a spiritual gain in this loss?" "Where can I identify selfishness in my feelings about this loss?" "Where is the Lord in this loss?"

Judith Voirst called life a process of "Necessary Losses." The Bible shows us how those can become Eternal Gains. Then, what Eliphaz spoke will be true of us, who will "fear no loss" (Job 5:24). 

J. Randal Matheny is a missionary to Brazil.

THE TONGUE CAN NO MAN TAME...

Alvin Jennings

1. Too much talking about what “I think” (Proverbs 18:2)
2. Trapping self with contradictory words (Proverbs 18:7)
3. Gossip sinks deep and hurts hearts (Proverbs 18:8; 20:19; 25:9)
4. Answering before listening or thinking (Proverbs 18:3, 17)
5. Perverse speech makes a fool (Proverbs 19:1)
6. Lying and failing to keep promises (Proverbs 19:9; 14:8; 20:25)
7. Nagging, brawling wife is like a dripping faucet (Proverbs 19:3; 25:24; 27:15)
8. Making fun of wisdom (Proverbs 19:25)
9. Boasting (bragging) about one’s own deeds (Proverbs 20:1; 27:2; Ecclesiastes 2:4-10; James 3:5)
10. Talking too much when should be listening (Proverbs 20:19; 10:19; Ecclesiastes 10:14)
11. Threatening to pay back evil for evil (Proverbs 20:22)
12. Complaining; grouchy (Proverbs 21:9,19)
13. Speaking evil of one’s own father or mother (Proverbs 19:26)
14. Praising your own self (Proverbs 25:27)
15. Giving a foolish answer (Proverbs 26:4)
16. Belittling your neighbor, saying “I was joking!” (Proverbs 26:18)
17. False praise; flattery (Proverbs 26:28)
18. Boasting about what will accomplish tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1)
19. Greeting neighbor loudly early in the morning (Proverbs 27:14)
20. Slander (Proverbs 10:18)
21. Cursing and taking God’s name in vain (Exodus 20:9; 1 Kings 18:20; Deuteronomy 5; James 3:9-10)
22. Euphemisms (words sounding like curse words) “Dadgummit, Heck,

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Gee Whiz,” etc.

23. Denying the truth. (Matthew 26:34; Proverbs 30:9; 1 Timothy 2:12)
24. Teaching and preaching false doctrine (2 Peter 2:1)
25. Sticking tongue out in derision (Job 30:1)
26. Whispering; backbiting (Proverbs 16:28)
27. Hissing (Jeremiah 18:16; 51:37; Lamentations 2:16)
28. Remaining silent when should be speaking truth (1 John 4:3)
29. Bearing false witness; accusing falsely (Exodus 20:16; Matthew 19:18; Acts 6:13)
30. Failing to keep secrets (Proverbs 11:13)
31. Discouraging words (Numbers 32:19; Deuteronomy 1:28)
32. Disputing about doubtful matters (Romans 14:1; Job 6:25)
33. Habitual, baseless arguing; stirring trouble (Proverbs 6:14; Numbers 32:19; Deuteronomy 1:28)
34. Dividing what God has joined in marriage (Matthew 19:6)
35. Disrespecting and rebuking aged men (Job 15:10; 1 Timothy 5:1)
36. Discriminating against the poor (James 2:3-4)
37. Slandering the noble name of Jesus (James 2:7-8)
38. Talking when should listen: This is “miserable!” (Job 15:17; 16:1-2)
39. Cursing men and blessing God Who made them (James 3:9)
40. Denying faith in Jesus (Matthew 10:32-33)
41. Calling a person a “fool” (Matthew 5:22)
42. Taking God’s name in vain: example is “OMG” (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11)
43. By not saying: “If God wills I will do this...” (James 4:15)
44. Failing to keep promises, vows (Ecclesiastes 5:4; Numbers 30:2-3; Job 22:27)
45. Criticizing rich people (Ecclesiastes 10:20)
46. Breaking a promise. (Proverbs 4:5-7)



Alvin Jennings is the author of the *Star Telegram Paper Pulpit*.

“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS”

Raymond Elliott

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 the apostle Paul wrote, *“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* A preacher by the name of Martin Rinkhard wrote the lyrics of the song, “Now Thank We All Our God” to be used as an expression of gratitude by his family at meal time. The unusual background of this song of praise was that it was written during the “Thirty Year’s War” when the preacher was conducting as many as forty funerals a day, including that of his own wife. Yet in spite of war and plagues, he was able to give thanks to God for his blessings. The lyrics of the first stanza of his song are as follows:

**“Now thank we all our God,
With heart, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother’s arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.”**

This true story amazes me but it does not surprise me. It seems that in times of extreme and difficult circumstances, people who believe in God can find in their heart expressions of gratitude.

In contrast, when a nation is greatly blessed with a bounty of material and physical substances, there is a tendency of man to forget the source of such blessings. Someone has suggested that our lack of expressing our gratefulness to God for the blessings we receive would be like animals eating the acorns that have fallen to the earth without ever realizing the source of their food. The lesson is obvious and clear. Most of God’s

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children are more apt to make requests, petitions and supplications rather than to give thanks. The nation that is greatly blessed with a bounty of material and physical substance is most likely to forget the source of such blessings. The writer James declared that *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (James 1:17). The psalmist encourages us in this manner by his response from being a recipient of God’s blessings, *“What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people...I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And I will call upon the name of the Lord”* (Psalm 116:12-14, 17).

The children of the Heavenly Father should remember daily the blessings that flow from His bountiful hand of grace. Especially there should be an awareness of *“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). Everyday is a day of thanksgiving for the redeemed. Let us never forget the sacrifices made by our forefathers and loved ones to ensure for us the liberties and the freedoms we now enjoy and experience. *“O that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!”* (Psalm 107:8). *“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms”* (Psalm 95:2).

**“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”**



Raymond Elliott preaches for the Capitol Heights congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Thank You God!



Godly Parental Protection

Darrell Surret

At some point in time, every person will make decisions that are outside of God's will and intent for His children. Hence, we have the need for Jesus for our forgiveness, and our children are no different. Their experiences yield fruit forged by the consequences of decisions they made. These decisions can sometimes be very painful for us as parents to observe. We see more than the pain our children experience. We also observe the signs, patterns and trends that may reveal additional underlying problems.

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For Aaron, this observance was no doubt very difficult and painful. In Numbers 10:1-3, Nadab and Abihu made a decision that cost them their lives. Not only did Aaron lose two sons, but the loss was due to sin that was made very public. How might you as a parent receive God's instruction after such an occurrence? Aaron was silent in God's judgment of his children. He surly felt hurt, but he remained submissive. It is easier for parents to immediately come to the defense of their children, as opposed to making a fair and an impartial judgment. I cannot warn you enough of how dangerous this can be. ***"Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction"*** (Proverbs 19:18).

Most parents want their children to do right, but rather than allowing discipline to achieve that outcome, they often bargain in an attempt to spare them. The result is children who will make the same costly decisions of disobedience as Nadab and Abihu. Nonetheless, few parents want to be preached to about how to ***"train up a child in the way he should go"*** (Proverbs 22:6).

Your children might regard your instruction as trivial, and if they are a little older, even outdated. They might be quick to interrupt your warnings with, "I know Dad," in an attempt to avoid a deeper discussion of their motives, or to hurry and get back to what they were doing. In the worst cases, they may mislead you for selfish and sinful intent. We cannot afford to be naïve, and **they cannot afford for us to be so!**

We can't see our children's every move, make their decisions for them or protect them twenty-four hours a day. The time will come when they will not be protected by our direct oversight, or sheltered by our home, and they will not be present for the prayers around our dinner table. So what do we do? I guess you could have a canvas painted with Ecclesiastes 12:1 on it that says ***"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them,'"*** and send it with them when they leave for college, but something tells me it might not make it to the dorm room wall.

Yet, I do know this: Even though we may not have control over the choices our children make, day-to-day, God has given us a mighty force to guard, teach, prepare and protect them. ***Influence!*** Influence backed by

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years (perhaps decades) of Godly, parental experience and knowledge. You have proof of your love for your child with tangible memories. Don't be afraid to remind them. You have your testimony of how God has proven Himself to be merciful to you and to be One Who can sympathize with your weaknesses. Remind your child of these things. You have your child's ear! It may be that you have to support those words with tough love (taking the keys away, physically removing them from sinful surroundings, refusing money, etc.), and it is a must that **YOU** defeat the temptation of making light of their sins, in order that you don't become the primary enabler of them! When parents go to the extreme in their parenting—being too tough or too soft—their children ultimately pay the price. Don't be guilty of either.

Someone once told me in my early years as a leader in the Army, **“There is no need to get mad about the decisions that your soldiers made or to raise your voice. Tell them what you want done, and let them make their decisions. The consequence is theirs, regardless.”** Parents who serve the living God are trying to help their children avoid the worst of eternal consequences and, subsequently, to draw them nearer to God. However, giving loud, violent instruction doesn't lead to the desired result. Instruct your children to live as God directs, provide them with the resources to do that (with example, to boot), and pray to the Father.

God's Word warns us not to exasperate our children, **“lest they become discouraged”** (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). You need to be the one to whom they want to come when others and the world let them down. As they come to you, you can in turn point them to the one true God of Heaven Who has brought you through your own difficulties.

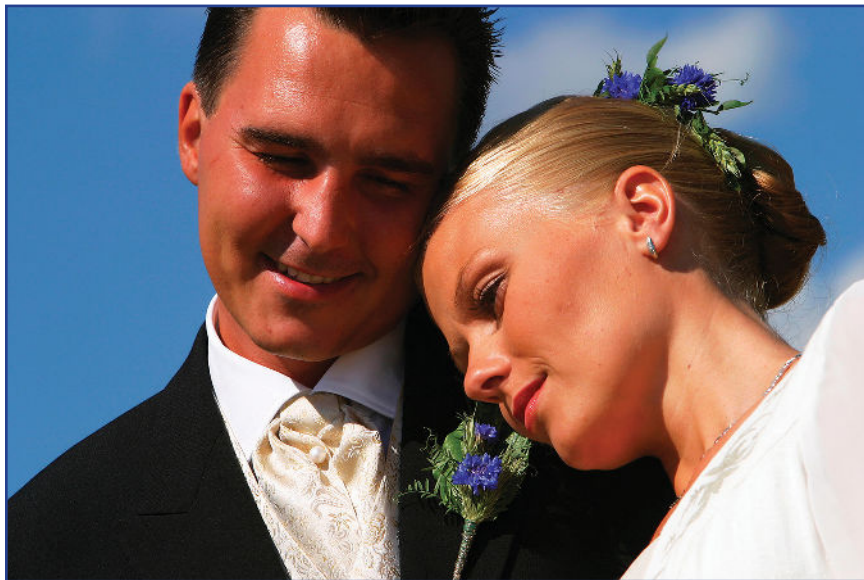
I wish I could always be there to ward off any bad decision my child makes, but the truth is, I can't. Like Aaron, we may find ourselves silent before God for a time. We don't have power over their decisions, but we do have a tremendous amount of influence, by our words, by our example and by the totality of our lives. Don't be afraid to use it. God gave it to you for this reason, for their guidance and ultimate salvation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). 

Darrell Surretts worships with the Huntsville Church of Christ outside of French Camp, Mississippi, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

BUILDING GOOD MARRIAGES

Dan R. Owen



Next to the church for which Jesus died, marriage is the most sacred divine institution. Marriage is part of God's plan for human society and is as old as creation. It is the basic building block of human society as God has planned it. Therefore, it stands to reason that the church should put much effort into helping people build good marriages. Building a good marriage requires several key things. Consider these:

First, building good marriages takes covenant commitment. Through Malachi, God told His people that He is a party to the marriage union and that marriage is a sacred covenant. A covenant commitment is a moral commitment arising from the moral conviction of the people involved. Since true moral commitment arises from God, covenant commitment in marriage is based on a relationship with God. People with

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this kind of commitment do what it takes to build a good marriage because it is the will of God, and it affects their relationship with God. Since commitment in marriage affects the very salvation of our souls, it is very compelling and very personal. Covenant commitment is the foundation of a good marriage.

Next, building a good marriage takes love. One does not fall into or out of this kind of love. One loves this way by choice. This love can be given even when no love is received. This love is doing and does not depend on how one feels on a given day. This love imitates the love of Christ who loved first while we were still sinners. This kind of love is patient and forgiving. This love arises from covenant commitment. It is a choice to seek the best interests of another for life.

Building a good marriage takes purposeful effort. To have a good marriage, people must work at good communication, learning to express their feelings and becoming good listeners. To have a good marriage, couples must work on a history of shared experiences that give them common ground. Couples who do things together, work on projects together and go places together share a common thread in life. Couples must also work on their sexual intimacy, making the time and taking the time to keep this part of marriage alive while keeping the devil at bay.

Through it all, building a good marriage takes plenty of prayer. Constant prayer helps us trust God. It enhances each party's personal relationship with God, which only strengthens the commitment on each one's part. Prayer brings the much-needed blessings of God into the equation. These blessings can make the crucial difference in marriage.

If you are committed to building a good marriage, it will take covenant commitment, agape love and a consistent effort at building good communication, shared experiences and sexual intimacy. Attention to these things, combined with much prayer, will make our marriages what God intends for them to be! 

Dan R. Owen is the preacher for the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

Holy and Reverend Is Thy Name

Dennis Gulledge

The religious title “Reverend” is typically used by well-meaning people as a designation of honor and dignity for a minister or preacher. In the urgency of people to append a title of honor to those of a sacerdotal caste in the sectarian world, they have gone far beyond the Bible in so doing. No preacher should allow himself to be called “Reverend” or by any other title. The word “holy” is also misused as a title of religious significance as in “Holy See.” Some even use “Brother” as a title. The reason such titles are wrong is because there is no “clergy and laity” distinction in the church of Christ. Jesus condemned all titles of honor in religion (Matthew 23:8-9).

In their refusal to apply the title of “Reverend” to men, well-intended brethren often cite Psalm 111:9 and say that this is the only time the word is used in the Bible, and further, that it is used here only in reference to God, not man. The problem is that this argument is true only after a fashion. The word “Reverend” appears only once in the *King James Version* of the Bible. The Hebrew word from which “Reverend” is translated appears over three hundred times in the Old Testament.

It is true that the word “Reverend” comes from the Hebrew word *yare*. This word occurs 373 times in the Old Testament. It is translated in the *King James Version* by “be afraid” (76 times), “dread” (1 time), “fear” (242 times), “reverence” (2 times), “afraid” (3 times), “be feared” (4 times), “be had in reverence” (1 time), “dreadful” (5 times), “fearful” (2 times), “fearfull” (1 time), “reverend” (1 time), “terrible” (24 times),

TEXTUAL STUDIES

“terrible acts” (1 time), “terribleness” (1 time), “terrible things” (4 times), “affright” (1 time), “make afraid” (2 times) and “put in fear” (2 times).

In Genesis 19:30, Lot “feared [yare] to dwell in Zoar.” The word is used two times in Deuteronomy 28:58, “...that thou mayest **fear this glorious and fearful name, the LORD thy God.**” A form of yare is used in Isaiah 18:2 to describe the Ethiopians as “terrible.” David employed a form of yare in Psalm 139:14 to say, “**I am fearfully and wonderfully made.**”

The words “Holy” and “Reverend” are not used as titles for God, but as terms descriptive of His character. Psalm 111:9 is a text exalting the name of God. The name of God is deserving of respect, godly fear and awe. Where is the deep veneration that we ought to feel toward the name of God Almighty? Is it evident among us when we speak His name, when we approach Him in worship and when we live before Him? †

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KENNEY'S PENNIES

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28 NKJV.)

Christ will come again, but He will not be coming to make Himself a sacrifice for sins, as He did this the first time. He will be coming to judge those who have obeyed His Gospel and to punish those who have not obeyed the Gospel. What is the salvation from? The Second Death.

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Scavenger Hunt

through Jonah

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. To what city did God command Jonah to go?
2. To what city did Jonah try to flee?
3. What did Jonah do after the fish swallowed him?
4. What made the fish vomit Jonah onto dry land?
5. How large was the city to which Jonah preached?
6. How many days did Jonah say the city had before God would destroy it?
7. How did Jonah feel when the city repented?
8. What did Jonah ask God to take from him?
9. Name three things God prepared to teach Jonah a lesson.
10. How many people did God say lived in the city?



SATAN'S GRAND LIE

Gary C. Hampton

Jesus called Satan ***“a murderer from the beginning”*** and the father of liars (John 8:44). He referred to the incident recorded in Genesis 3 when Satan deceived the woman. There are some important lessons for us in this tragic story.

Satan focused on the prohibition instead of the provision (Genesis 3:1). He subtly got her to focus on the only fruit in the garden she could not eat. Today, there are those who whine because of what they do not have. We need to focus on giving thanks instead (1 Thessalonians 5:18). After all, God has given us the greatest possible gift of all (2 Corinthians 9:15; Romans 8:32).

Satan denied the reality of the curse of death (Genesis 3:4). The father of lies called God the Father a liar (Genesis 2:17). Some live today as if there were no death, much like the rich man in Jesus' parable (Luke 12:16-21). Everyone needs to realize that even with the great advances in medicine, each has an appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27).

Satan denied God's loving kindness by saying God denied man access to something good (Genesis 3:5). We need to recognize that God is good and the source of every good gift (Psalm 136:1; James 1:17). God and His Word have been charged with being anti-woman when He actually made her the crowning act of creation (Genesis 2:22-23). The virtuous wife is praised, and husbands are commanded to love their wives in the strongest of terms (Proverbs 31:10; Ephesians 5:25-28).

Satan said man could set his own law by telling him ***“you will be like God”*** (Genesis 3:5b). Some would have us believe we can set our own path to salvation. Jesus said we must do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). Paul said God no longer will overlook ignorance, but He insists that

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all repent (Acts 17:30). The way to the new life is through being buried with Christ in baptism and raised to live a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

Ignore Satan's lies. Live each day according to God's will, knowing that is the path to entering Heaven. 

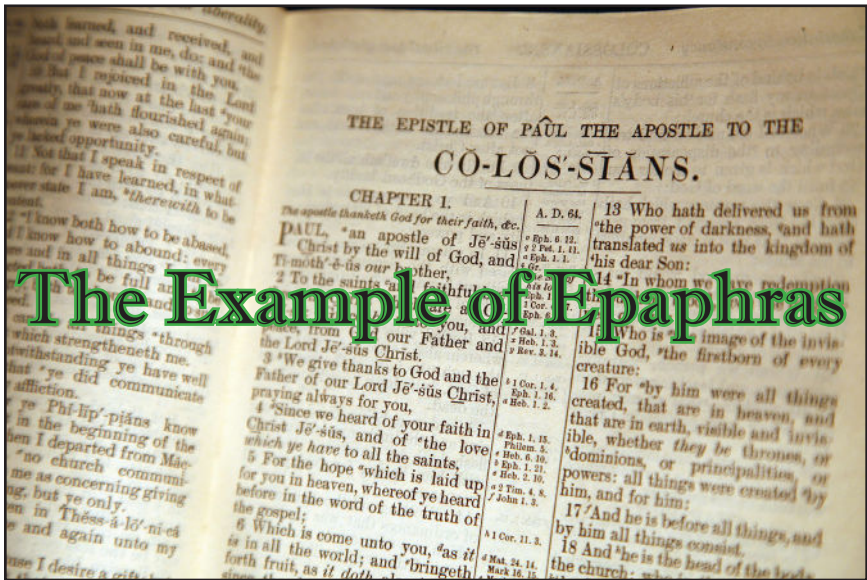
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25 Things Satan Cannot Do

Tim Childs

1. Wish God out of existence
 2. Diminish the power of God's love
 3. Relocate us to a position outside the reach of God and His love
 4. Confuse God so He is unable to know those who belong to Him
 5. Tempt God to do evil
 6. Change God's character
 7. Make God lie
 8. Overpower God
 9. Destroy the seed of the kingdom
 10. Make false what is true, nor make true what is false
 11. Defeat God's revealed truth
 12. Force God to fellowship those who embrace doctrines of demons
 13. Steal God's grace, mercy, love and forbearance
 14. Weaken the power of the Gospel of Christ
 15. Force me to sin against God
 16. Block the path God has prepared for my use when temptation comes
 17. Tempt me beyond what I am able to bear and resist
 18. Forcibly remove me from God's watchful care and saving grace
 19. Cause the universal church of our Lord to cease to exist
 20. Prevent Jesus' coming again
 21. Stop the dead from being raised at Jesus' command
 22. Change the standard of God's Word by which all men will be judged
 23. Prevent God's faithful children from going home to the heavenly city
 24. Shield his angels and followers from God's wrath and punishment
 25. Change the destiny God has prepared for him
- 

BIBLE CHARACTERS



Neal Pollard

Apparently, Epaphras lived in what is now Turkey somewhere on the south bank of the Lycus River valley around Colosse or Laodicea. There were several communities in this vicinity that had congregations of the Lord's people. In fact, the area might be called the ancient "Bible Belt" of Asia.

As God guided the process of assembling the inspired, written New Testament, the doctrine of Christ revealed by the hands of penmen like Paul quickly spread. Inspired epistles (letters) were shared among the large number of congregations meeting in Asia minor and eastern Europe, as well as in the regions of Palestine, Egypt and North Africa. In these epistles were innumerable commands, new revelations, examples for conduct in worship and principles to be drawn from illustrations and biographies. Reproving, rebuking and exhorting were all done through these different avenues.

One of the men about whom the Spirit moved Paul to speak, who is somewhat obscure to most Bible students, is Epaphras. Mistaken by some to be the Epaphroditus lauded by Paul in the Book of Philippians,

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Epaphras is nonetheless worthy of imitation for several reasons.

Epaphras agonized over his brethren in the posture of prayer.

In tones of commendation, Paul wrote, *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”* (Colossians 4:12). Paul said he was fighting for them in prayer. He not only prayed for them, but he did so with great fervor.

It would be interesting to know how often and how many individual Christians not only mention the church in their prayers, but who plead for and beseech God for their brethren before the mercy seat. What did Epaphras want God to grant his fellow servants? He apparently wanted them to *“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18). He cared whether they were faithful and growing. He proved that devotion by prayer. How thrilling to think of even one Christian brother or sister who takes a list of specific Christians with him or her to the throne room of prayer, speaks their names before the Father with sincerity and pleads to Him on their behalf. Is that why James assured Christians, *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”* (5:16)?

Epaphras had an overflowing desire for his brethren. Paul, in the epistle to the Colossians, further penned of Epaphras, *“For I bear him record, that he has a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis”* (Colossians 4:13). His heart was with God’s people! Epaphras was a Christian who loved the brotherhood (Hebrews 13:1). The word translated *“zeal”* in Colossians 4:13, in its original language, denotes either a passionate emotion for good or for evil, depending on the context. The context clearly shows that Epaphras possessed that good kind of zeal that drew him to be devoted to his brethren.

In practical terms, what will one do for brethren for whom he has such feelings? When a brother is in error, will he not seek him (James 5:19-20)? When a fellow Christian is lonely or discouraged, will he not lift him (Hebrews 12:12-13)? When another Christian stands for the truth, despite the world’s criticism, will he not boldly praise him (1 Corinthians 11:2)?

Epaphras was a loyal servant of his brethren in Christ. Paul wrote,

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“As ye also learned of Epaphras—our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ” (Colossians 1:7). Lipscomb held that Epaphras founded the Colosse church of Christ. Having possibly even opened the doors of his own home, Epaphras undoubtedly loved the Lord’s church and made himself available to it. As a *“minister,”* Epaphras served the brethren. Being *“faithful,”* he steadied the church by his conviction. Being *“of Christ,”* he showed the Lord’s people how much Jesus meant to him.

Jesus taught both the greatness of servitude (Matthew 23:11) and the importance of loyalty (Matthew 24:25). Loyalty to Christ must inevitably manifest itself in serving others (John 13:12-17). Maturity in Christ leads one to that conclusion. When love is perfected, the child of God strives within his congregation to promote the spiritual health and growth of others. Epaphras must have so *“tasted”* the Lord (1 Peter 2:3).

The brethren were with Epaphras in his prayers, in his heart and in his duty. Paul praised him to individuals (Philemon 23) and whole congregations (Colossians 1:7, 12-13), obviously, because he was a fruit-bearing branch in the vineyard of Christ. More Christians who imitate the prayer life, the love and the servanthood of Epaphras with reference to the church will help to promote the biblical unity (John 17:20-21) and brotherly love (John 13:35) so stressed by our Savior. †

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Robison’s Rubies



In Acts 12, a Jewish ruler named Herod received praise from people as a god. He did not rebuke them, so the real God struck him so that he died. In Acts 14, the people of Lystra began to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Those Christian servants tore their clothes and firmly rebuked the people, saying, *“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them...”* (v. 15). **God is the only one who deserves worship. All men are created as equals.** These points must be to us embedded and guiding truths.

What about the Thief on the Cross?

Brian R. Kenyon

When studying the necessity of baptism with some members of particular denominations, a common response is to bring up the “thief on the cross.” They often ask, “What about the thief on the cross? He wasn’t baptized, was he?” The implication is that if the thief on the cross was not baptized, yet was promised by Jesus to be in paradise, then we do not need to be baptized. Does the thief on the cross prove that baptism is not necessary for salvation? Let us consider this incident as it relates to salvation.

The Setting

The dialogue between Jesus and the thief on the cross occurred while the Savior was being crucified (Luke 23:39-43). There were two criminals who were crucified with Jesus on that dreadful day (John 19:16-18). At first, both criminals blasphemed (Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32). However, one of them had a change of heart. Before considering him, note what Luke says of the other, ***“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us’”*** (Luke 23:39). “Blaspheme” [***“railed,”*** KJV] means to speak against (Mark 3:28-29; John 10:36; Acts 13:45; 1 Corinthians 4:13). ***“If You are the Christ...”*** was said in sarcasm just as others who passed by the cross had said (Matthew 27:39-44). In contrast to this, the other criminal, ***“answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong’”*** (Luke 23:40-41). This criminal showed a penitent heart. ***“Dost thou not fear God?”*** shows that this criminal recognizes that there is a God. This may possibly even be recognition by this one that Jesus is God (cf., John 1:1-3)! This penitent criminal acknowledged that he and the other criminal were justly receiving their death sentence (Acts 25:11). He also recognized the innocence of Jesus.

Having rebuked the other criminal, the thief on the cross ***“said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom’”*** (Luke

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23:42). ***“Remember me”*** here carries the idea of remember me for good! ***“When You come into Your kingdom”*** shows that this criminal was aware of Jesus’ claim to establish His kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). This could indicate that he was a Jew, even a disciple of John, who had heard of Jesus’ preaching and teaching (Mark 1:15), or it could be that he was a Gentile, aware of the accusations hurled at Jesus (Luke 23:10-11), His response (John 18:33-37), the mockery with which His enemies led Him to the cross (Matthew 27:27-31) and the sign that was placed on Jesus’ cross (John 19:19). In any case, this thief knew that death was not the end, and he wanted to be remembered in the afterlife.

Assuring the penitent thief on the cross, ***“Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise’”*** (Luke 23:43). “Today” means right now, as if to say, “You do not have to wait until the kingdom.” “Paradise” is from a word of Persian background that literally meant “park” or “garden.” (The only other occurrences of the word are in 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7.) Jesus assured this criminal the bliss that was to be associated ***“with Me [Jesus] in Paradise.”***

The Solution

Does the thief on the cross prove that baptism is not necessary for salvation? In answering this question, three factors must be considered. First, consider the chronology. This incident happened while Jesus was dying on the cross. Jesus did not require baptism for all until after His resurrection (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Jesus lived and died under Old Testament law (Galatians 4:4-5). His New Testament did not go into effect until after His death. The writer of Hebrews summarized: ***“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives”*** (Hebrews 9:16-17). Thus, the thief on the cross was not amenable to the command, ***“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”*** (Acts 2:38).

Second, consider the thief. As mentioned earlier, the possibility exists that he could have been a disciple of John, thus receiving John’s baptism (Matthew 3:1-6). It is possible for God’s people to become criminals (1 Peter

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4:15). Whether or not he was a disciple of John, however, one truth is clear: he showed repentance, which has always been a condition of forgiveness (cf., Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:21; Jonah 3:4-10; Psalm 34:18; Luke 13:3, 5)!

Third, consider the complete impartiality of Jesus. People will often say concerning this incident, “Jesus can forgive anybody He wants,” as if to say that Jesus could arbitrarily forgive the thief because He was the Son of God. Such an idea is untrue and borders on Calvinism! Jesus cannot act independently of the Father’s will (John 5:19; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49; cf., Matthew 20:23) or deny His own Word (2 Timothy 2:13). For Jesus to arbitrarily forgive the thief would make Him partial (i.e., *“a respecter of persons,”* KJV), but He is not (Acts 10:34)!

Salvation

The thief on the cross is a tremendous example of the forgiveness of God. Even a criminal like him can be forgiven when God’s conditions of forgiveness are met (cf., Saul of Tarsus, 1 Timothy 12:15). However, the thief on the cross is not our pattern for salvation today. He lived and died under Old Testament law. One condition that is common between the thief’s salvation and ours is the necessity of repentance (Acts 17:30), which must be based on *“godly sorrow”* (2 Corinthians 7:10). Jesus gave the requirement of baptism after His death as part of New Testament law (Mark 16:15-16; cf., Acts 10:48). Thus, if a person outside of Christ is truly penitent, he will be baptized when he learns that God requires it (Matthew 28:19-20). Peter’s response to those penitent Jews on the Day of Pentecost who asked *“What shall we do?”* was *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38). A few verses later, Luke wrote, *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized”* (Acts 2:41). Could these people truly have repented if they did not ‘gladly receive’ God’s Word to be baptized? May we follow the thief’s example of repentance, and then do what Jesus requires. Have we been baptized for the remission of sins? If not, why not today? 

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BIBLE QUESTIONS

What Do They Need to Know before They Are Baptized?

Wes McAdams

I believe we often baptize people before they've been properly taught.



However, it's often hard to determine what a person should know before he or she is baptized. Since baptism is only the beginning point, it is only necessary that those who are baptized have a **basic** understanding of Christian theology, doctrine and practice.

Though, what exactly constitutes a “basic understanding”? What do people need to know before being baptized? I'm certain I can't give an exhaustive answer to that question, but perhaps the following will help you as you think through this question.

Anticipating the Objection

First, I know someone will ask, “What about the people on the day of Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch or Cornelius? It doesn't seem like they were taught much before their baptisms.” That's a very pertinent question. Therefore, in anticipation of it being asked, let me go ahead and address it.

The answer is quite simple. First century Jews, proselytes (Gentiles who had become Jews) and God-fearers (Gentiles who had not become

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Jews, but worshiped God) were knowledgeable about God, sin, atonement, the coming Messiah and His coming kingdom. In fact, the Jews gathered on Pentecost (Acts 2) were probably far more knowledgeable about the God of the Bible than most **mature** Christians are today.

When Peter explained that they were speaking in tongues because, ***“This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel,”*** the people understood what he meant. They understood that judgment was about to come upon them because they had ***“crucified and killed”*** the Lord Jesus Christ. They understood they needed to save themselves from that crooked generation (Acts 2:40), which is why they asked, ***“Brothers, what shall we do?”*** (Acts 2:37), and why 3,000 of them responded when Peter said, ***“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*** (Acts 2:38).

There is a vast difference between teaching an ordinary person in 21st century America and teaching a Jew (or someone who followed the Jewish religion) in the 1st century world. That doesn't mean it should take years of in-depth study to prepare someone for baptism, but it does mean they need to have a basic understanding of a few things before going down into the water:

They Need to Know about Jesus

First and foremost, baptism ought to be motivated by a love for Jesus. Baptism ought to be a response to what He did on the cross. If a person only understands she needs to be baptized to go to Heaven when she dies but doesn't have a basic understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done, then she doesn't have the knowledge she needs to be baptized.

The Ethiopian eunuch ***“had come to Jerusalem to worship”*** (Acts 8:27). He obviously understood about sacrifices, and he probably understood about the coming Messiah. So, Philip got in the chariot and, starting with the passage in Isaiah, ***“told him the good news about Jesus”*** (Acts 8:35). Philip told him the Messiah had come and He was the final sacrifice for sins.

People need to hear **the good news about Jesus**. They probably need to understand something of His **Abrahamic** and **Davidic** heritage, His **Deity**, His **incarnation**, His **sacrificial death**, His **resurrection**, His **reign**

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at the right hand of the Father and, most importantly, His **love**. They need to understand His **blood** brings about things like **redemption**, **reconciliation**, **forgiveness** and **sanctification**. Yes, I know those are deep subjects, but they are absolutely essential elements of the Gospel. Further, they aren't as complicated as you might think. Over time, I believe each of those points could be explained in such a way that even a child could comprehend them.

Yet, I'm afraid **we are often in such a hurry to get people in the water, their baptism is more of a response to our pleading than a response to Christ's death. People need to know about Jesus before they are baptized.**

They Need to Know about Their Lostness

Before someone is baptized, he needs to know he stands guilty before God. He needs to know, because he has chosen to join sinful humanity in rebellion against God, he is dead in his trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). He needs to know he has *“made God angry”* and is *“going to be punished like everyone else”* (Ephesians 2:3 CEV).

He needs to understand he cannot do anything himself to atone for his sins. He cannot make up for the evil he has done by doing a bunch of good deeds. His only hope is for God to have mercy on him and to show him grace. The **only** way that will happen is through Jesus.

Baptism is meaningless for someone who thinks, “I’m a pretty decent individual. I don’t think God sees me as being **wicked** or an **evildoer**.” It is only when *“godly grief produces a repentance”* (2 Corinthians 7:10) that an individual is ready to *“appeal to God for a good conscience”* (1 Peter 3:21) in baptism.

Baptism is asking God—in faith—to remove one’s sins through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6). **Until people know about their lostness, they’re not ready to be baptized.**

They Need to Know the Commitment They Are Making

Last, but certainly not least, people must know ‘what they’re getting into.’ Jesus said a person must first *“count the cost”* (Luke 14:25-33) before becoming His disciple. People need to be told what is going to be expected

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of them and what they are going to have to give up as disciples of Jesus.

Not only should those being baptized understand they are dying to sin (Romans 6:1-7), they also need to understand something about the church. Acts 8:12 says, ***“When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”*** We must teach people about the kingdom and the obligations that go along with being a citizen of that kingdom.

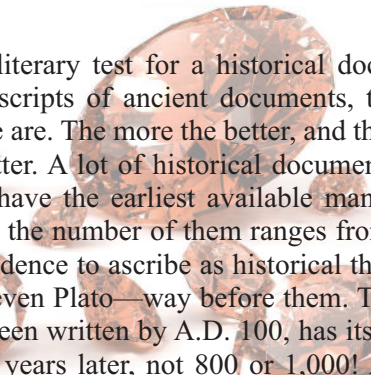
Among other things, being converted to Christ is being recruited to the cause of Christ. Until they know what that means, they’re not ready to commit to a Christian lifestyle.

Bottom Line

There is much more that could be said on this issue. Yet, at the same time, I don’t want to give the impression that someone needs to be a Bible scholar before being baptized. The fact of the matter is that the decision to be baptized should not be based on emotion or evangelistic pressure. The decision to be baptized should be based on having been taught what it means to be a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). 

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Robison's Rubies



Have you ever heard of the literary test for a historical document? Historians seek to find manuscripts of ancient documents, then see how early and how many there are. The more the better, and the closer to the time of writing, the better. A lot of historical documents from around 100 B.C. and before have the earliest available manuscripts at about 1,000 years later, and the number of them ranges from about 10 to 20. That is sufficient evidence to ascribe as historical the works of Caesar, Tacitus, Pliny and even Plato—way before them. The New Testament, claiming to have been written by A.D. 100, has its earliest manuscripts at only about 30 years later, not 800 or 1,000! And the number of manuscripts is not 10 or 20, but more than 5,000! The New Testament is an amazing, historical document!

Four F's of Christianity!

Mark N. Posey

Introduction:

1. I love being a Christian! It is the most wonderful thing in the world. What makes Christianity *so attractive and enjoyable*?
2. Answer: The four F's all Christians enjoy. Get excited about the following principles.

I. Forgiveness (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; John 1:29).

- A. Why do we need forgiveness?
 1. Answer: sin separates us from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Isaiah 59:1-2).
 2. Have you ever been separated from your family for a lengthy period of time? Sadness, loneliness and despair set in. Imagine being separated from God because of sin. It's frightening to consider.
- B. However, Jesus died to reconcile man to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) and to grant forgiveness of sins to those who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). Thank God for forgiveness.

II. Father.

- A. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"Our Father which art in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9).
 1. Our Heavenly Father cares, loves and blesses us (Ephesians 1:3).
 2. I have a friend whose father died. One day he said, "I wish I could just talk to him."
- B. Christians can talk to their Heavenly Father through Jesus any minute of every day. Thank God for being our Father.

III. Family.

- A. Christians are blessed with a spiritual family.

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1. Love, care and concern are rich blessings from those of *“like precious faith.”*
 2. The family of God is the greatest support system on earth. We have a common bond in Jesus Christ.
- B. One day we will enjoy the great family reunion in Heaven. Are you ready for the day to come?



IV. Future.

- A. Heaven is described as a reward and an inheritance.
 1. It's *“incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved...for you”* (1 Peter 1:4).
- B. Heaven can be your future if you will live faithfully to the Lord from here to eternity.
 1. Death brings finality because it seals our destiny.
 2. Is your future happy or sad?



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Struggling with Administration

Jeremy W. Barrier

The early church grew quickly from a small, insignificant group in the mountainous regions of Palestine to a thriving and growing group with deep and extensive human and financial resources extending to many places in the Mediterranean world. The early church overcame challenges that it encountered to grow and grow abundantly. The early church struggled with administration, and this restricted their growth in the early years.

They Struggled with Administration

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. (Acts 15:36-40)

In the fifteenth chapter of the book entitled *Acts of the Apostles*, we read about a “disagreement” that arose between two of the primary leaders for the early church—Barnabas and Paul. These two men had worked closely with one another for years, and apparently, they had been quite a dynamic and influential team. They had planted churches on the island of Cyprus as well as in a number of places scattered throughout the central parts of Turkey. They had spent so many days, nights, weeks and months together that they could probably anticipate what the other was thinking or going to say. To imagine that they would have such a sharp disagreement over personnel was unfathomable.

Notice a few details about this disagreement. First, they were both unified in agreement that the mission, goals and objectives that had been

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set were good and needed to happen; namely, they were convinced together that they needed to go back and strengthen the churches where they had proclaimed the Gospel. The disagreement was in the details of the plan. In this case, the details almost unraveled the entire plan. They disagreed on whether John Mark should accompany them or not.

In Acts 13:13, after Paul, Barnabas and John Mark had just completed the first major campaign in their trip—a very difficult experience, no less—John Mark apparently, for unspecified reasons, decided that the campaign work was simply too difficult, and he returned to Jerusalem. We see from Acts 15 that Paul took this as not only a betrayal of the work but also as a personal betrayal to him and Barnabas. Paul described John Mark as the one who had “abandoned” them. John Mark was portrayed as a traitor.

However, Barnabas, who saw the potential in people, was more gracious than Paul. In the same way Saul (now called Paul) had been without friends and difficult to handle earlier in his ministry, but Barnabas was patient with him, groomed him and eventually developed Paul into a substantial minister. In this same way, Barnabas was working with John Mark, who was not a traitor, but someone who just needed more time to develop as a person and as a leader.

Nevertheless, the disagreement was substantial enough that it created such a strain for Paul and Barnabas’ relationship that they parted ways to carry out their own plans. Barnabas took John Mark, and they sailed directly back to the place where John Mark had failed before. I wonder if Barnabas was going to allow John Mark the opportunity to face his fears head on, see the good they had done in Cyprus and also face his fears so that he could realize that his problems were not insurmountable.

Paul, on the other hand, took a new path and set out to visit the churches that were located in Turkey. While the text doesn’t give us all of the details, what is clear is that **Paul and Barnabas continued to carry out the mission of the church despite differences of opinion regarding how it should be done.** In other words, they still carried out the work, and they did not let their differences in administration styles hinder the work.

As an afterthought, there are two details in this text that interest me.

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In verse 40, the first detail concerns the brethren who sent them out: the text says that they approved of Paul's efforts to go out with Silas. The text says that they "commended" him; in other words, they approved of the effort. However, they commended him specifically "to the grace of God." Why does this matter? At this point, we can assume that Paul was probably the primary cause for this dispute and separation. However, the brethren treated Paul "with grace" and approved of his good efforts, commending his work, his zeal, the mission of God and hoped to see that the work still moved forward. However, they did have to "grace" his actions and offer some level of forgiveness to him. They offered Paul, exactly what he was unwilling to offer John Mark!

If you read the rest of the Book of Acts, we never find out whether Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were ever able to work closely again as a team of three. In fact, most readers of the Bible today are under the impression that Barnabas and Paul never worked closely together again. However, a second small detail is worth noting. We do know that forgiveness and healing must have been exchanged amongst them. After all, Paul did eventually give John Mark another try, and he soon found that Barnabas had been correct about him. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul wrote to a younger coworker by the name of Timothy, stating ***"Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry."*** Paul, who so needed the grace of his brethren, finally figured out how to offer that grace to others.

In conclusion, while the church did grow exponentially in the first century, this does not mean that it did not have its share of problems. In particular, Paul and Barnabas disagreed on administration issues, personnel issues and many other things. However, by remaining faithful to God and his grace, they learned how to be gracious to each other, and as a result, the work continued to grow. **If followers of Jesus today can be as gracious to one another as we have seen in this example from the early believers, then maybe we will see more growth as well.** ✝

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Response to a Sermon “for” Instrumental Music

Cecil May Jr.

I listened carefully and made notes on a sermon by a man whom I consider a friend and brother stating that a cappella music is his preference, but arguing there is nothing in the Bible that forbids the use of instrumental music in worship to God. This is not new for him. He has stated this often before, and I have responded to him and publicly in writing before. This is the first time of which I am knowledgeable that he has stated reasons for believing as he does. Here are my reasons, scriptural, reasonable and historical, for differing with him.

I am sorry we have not had the opportunity, or have not taken the opportunity, to sit face to face and discuss this issue in mutual love of each other, of God and of the Scriptures. He professes “a rock-solid commitment to Scripture” and to a belief that the most important thing to ask in determining a course of action is “What does the Bible say?” I believe he is honest in that, but I also believe he is mistaken in his reading and application of Scripture on this issue.

- **A Salvation Issue?**

A first question being asked in these days is, “Is instrumental music a ‘salvation issue’?” What does the question mean? Is it a way of saying, “I do not believe God cares one way or another about musical instruments?” If so, I beg to differ, as I will show. Or does it mean, “Would God condemn a person to hell just for singing praises to Him with organ accompaniment?” In that sense, the question presupposes a person who is right and sinless in everything else, except that he worships with instrumental music. Would that keep him from being saved? There is, of course, no such person.

While it is our prerogative to judge whether a person’s teachings are true or false (Matthew 7:15-16) and whether a particular action is right or wrong (Galatians 5:21), it is not our prerogative to decide who is and who is not saved (Romans 14:4). The question, “Is it a salvation Issue?” may

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indicate a misunderstanding about the nature of salvation. Lost people are not lost because of one particular sin they commit or one particular duty they fail to do. Men and women are saved, first of all, because they are in Christ, and then because they are **“walking in the light”** (1 John 1:7), because **“they are walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit”** (Romans 8:1, 4), because they are **“faithful”** (Romans 4:12).

Walking in the light does not mean never sinning (1 John 1:7). God will judge Christians, not by one individual action, but by our overall faithfulness, our lifestyle, our mind set (Colossians 3:1-2). God alone can make that judgment. We cannot. I like the way G.C. Brewer expressed it:

We do not use instrumental music in worship because there is no authority for it in the New Testament. This is the position we take and this is the issue between us and those who use the instruments. Anything else that may be brought into the discussion is irrelevant and confusing. This is the issue. It is not a question of who will be damned or who will not be damned. It is not a question of how good and sincere some people are who use instrumental music in worship—good and sincere people by the millions sprinkle babies, confess to the priest and count beads in prayer, etc. It is not a question of how far wrong a man may be and still be saved, or of how many things that we may do that God has not authorized and still be Christians. It is a question of what the New Testament authorizes us to do in worship and what it does not authorize. When we obey God’s word we have God’s promises—including eternal salvation. When we refuse or fail or fall short of God’s will, God will judge us. We are told not to judge one another. (*A Medley on the Music Question or a Pot-pourri of Philology*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1948, 12-13)

Some say, “If God did not want instrumental music in the church’s worship, He certainly knew how to say so.” Rather, the Bible clearly shows that, when God wanted instrumental music used in worship, He

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knew how to ask for it, and He did. Instruments are a required act of Old Testament worship, like burning incense, offering animal sacrifices and dancing. They are not, therefore, just an aid to singing, and it is not a correct hermeneutical principle to pick one Old Testament means of worship to use and leave the others unused.

The frequent call to sing combined with the absolute silence of the New Testament on instrumental praise indicate God intentionally omitted instrumental music from the authorized praise and worship in the New Testament. The apostles often contrast the carnal aspects of Old Testament worship with the spiritual worship of the New. ***“For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh”*** (Philippians 3:3). Fleshly circumcision is contrasted with spiritual circumcision, which is the cutting off of the practice of sin (Colossians 2:18). The writer of Hebrews contrasted the assault on the fleshly senses that struck one entering the Temple with the simplicity of spiritual worship. ***“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God”*** (Hebrews 13:15-16). We are to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. I can do that with my voice. I cannot do that with a piano, a guitar or a drum set.

- **“Instruments Are Commanded and Approved in the Old Testament”**

Our preacher’s first appeal was to what the Old Testament says about instrumental music. Use of instruments of music was clearly commanded as part of Temple worship. God told the Levites to use them, what instruments to use and where to use them (2 Chronicles 5:11-14; 7:6; 29:25-28). Note that they were used in the Temple in close connection to burnt offerings and sin offerings. Psalm 150 calls for praise with a full orchestra.

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambou-

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rine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”

The Psalm calls for the instruments to be played in the Temple (sanctuary, v. 1), as the references in Chronicles also do, and it includes praising the Lord with dance, another Old Testament act of praise and worship.

There is a strong emphasis throughout the New Testament on the change of covenants. The change of covenants resulted particularly in changes related to worship. Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and every Christian is a priest (Revelation 1:6). We have no need for a Levitical or Aaronic priesthood as a go-between; we ourselves approach God boldly and with confidence through Jesus Christ (Hebrews. 4:16). He is our sacrifice; we have no need to sacrifice clean animals. Jesus ***“has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace”*** (Ephesians 2:14-15). Christ wiped out the requirements of the Law, took it away and nailed it to His cross. As a result, we are not to be judged by a festival, a new moon or a Sabbath (Colossians 2:14-17).

Old Testament worship is often called fleshly or carnal, while New Testament worship is spiritual (Philippians 3:2-6). Temple worship was a performance designed to stimulate the senses. There were the smells of incense, burning flesh and flowing blood. The glitter of gold, silver and brass and the striking beauty of ornate tapestry met the eyes. Sounds of sheep bleating and cattle lowing were heard. Dancers danced before the Lord, and a white-robed choir of Levites sang to the accompaniment of the trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, stringed instruments, flutes and loud clashing cymbals—a magnificent performance assailing every avenue of sensory perception!

By sharp contrast, the New Testament church is to worship in spirit and have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3). In Hebrews, the Old Testament fleshly sacrificial worship is contrasted with the sacrifice of Jesus who died outside the camp. The priests of the New Testament (every Christian) are exhorted to ***“continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name”*** (Hebrews 13:10-13).

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The elements of Jewish worship which were also to be included in Christian worship are specified. Singing was. Instrumental music was not. Instruments of music were prominent in Temple worship, were generally used in pagan worship and in theatrical performances as well. They were known and were available to be used in Christian worship, but they were not used. Their omission in New Testament worship is no more “just incidental” than the omission of incense, of dancing before the Lord or the use of the bitter herbs of the Passover meal in the Lord’s Supper.

There is an abundance of New Testament evidence for vocal music but none for instrumental music. Jesus and the eleven apostles (without Judas Iscariot) sang a hymn as they left the upper room where the Lord had instituted the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). James encouraged singing as a means of expressing joy, and prayer as an appropriate reaction to suffering (James 5:13). Paul exhorted Christians to sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16) and to sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). Christians are to teach and admonish one another by singing (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19).

Some references to singing place it specifically in the Christian assembly. A prophecy in Psalm 22:22, cited in Hebrews 2:12, pictures Christ in the assembly of His people singing praises to God with them. The Corinthians sang in the assembly, and Paul reminded them that the assembly is for the edification of the saints and urged them therefore to sing with intelligible words (1 Corinthians 14:15).

The purposes of singing are noted in the New Testament: praise God (Hebrews 2:12), give thanks to God (Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:16-17), teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16) and confess faith in Christ (Hebrews 13:15, literal translation). Musical instruments do none of these things.

- **Instruments in Heaven?**

It is said that musical instruments in Old Testament worship and musical instruments in Heaven clearly show that God does not hate musical instruments. Of course, no one maintains that God **hates** musical instruments. He commanded their use in Old Testament Temple worship along with many oth-

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er things not commanded in the New Testament. What about harps in heaven? “Harps” are mentioned three times in Revelation. *“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints”* (5:8). *“And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps”* (14:2). *“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands”* (15:2).

Of the three occurrences, one does not speak of actual harps but of *“a voice like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.”* Revelation is “apocalyptic,” written in signs and symbols, explaining spiritual things by speaking of more familiar material things. In Heaven, we will no longer be clothed in our fleshly bodies but in spiritual bodies, immortal, incorruptible and glorious (1 Corinthians 15:42-43). I do not know what “a spiritual body” is, beyond its description in Scripture. I do not expect, however, to literally walk on a golden street, in a city adorned with every kind of precious stone (Revelation 21:19-21). I do not expect to see literal golden bowls full of incense, or a sea of glass mingled with fire or literal harps.

• Psallo?

It is said that psallo, one of the Greek words translated “sing” or “sing praises” in the New Testament, actually means “sing with instrumental accompaniment.” Its etymology comes from “to pluck,” and it is used in the Septuagint to mean “sing with instrumental accompaniment.” Meaning, though, is not determined by etymology; it is determined by current usage. By New Testament times, it had come to mean “sing.” Every recognized version so translates it. (It is not argued that the word specifically means “sing without instruments” by definition. It just means “sing.” It does not say, “no instruments;” it does not include them. It does not authorize them.)

Psallo is used five times in the New Testament, including twice in the same verse. *“And in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing*

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[psallo] *to your name*” (Romans 15:9). *“What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise (psallo) with my spirit, but I will sing [psallo] with my mind also”* (1 Corinthians 14:15). *“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody [psallo] to the Lord with all your heart”* (Ephesians 5:19). *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise [psallo]”* (James 5:13). The one time it might have connotations of “play” or “pluck,” the instrument to be “plucked” is specified: *“making melody [psallo] to the Lord with all your heart.”*

- **“The Law of Silence?”**

Our speaker correctly notes that silence alone does not prohibit. We do many things not mentioned in Scripture without objection. We build and meet in church buildings, we use song books and PowerPoint, and we sit on padded pews, none of which are mentioned in Scripture or were known by the early church. It is only when a specific command is given that silence concerning parallel things prohibits their use.

If in preaching it has been said that silence prohibits, mark that up to speaking shorthand. Silence only prohibits when there is specific direction, plus silence about parallel kinds of things. It is not so much the silence as the specific command that prohibits. The classic example is Noah’s ark. God said, *“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood”* (Genesis 6:14). No one seems to know now what kind of wood “gopher” is, but God knew, and Noah knew. *“Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him”* (Genesis 6:22).

Obviously, if God had just said, “Make yourself an ark,” any material would do. Because He specified *“gopher wood,”* using any other kind of wood would have been disobedience. The New Testament uses specific commands and silence in precisely this way: priests from Judah are prohibited because Levites are specified.

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that

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tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (Hebrews 7:12-14).

Note, *“in connection with that tribe [Judah] Moses said nothing about priests.”*

Throughout the New Testament, “singing” is given apostolic approval, and consequently God’s approval. Sometimes reference is to individual Christians singing praises, as Paul and Silas in a Philippian prison (Acts 16:25). Sometimes it is speaking of Christians edifying one another in the corporate assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15). Every reference to Christians worshipping and praising God musically specifies they were singing. In no instance were musical instruments mentioned as being present or used.

• What Else Comes in through the Same Door?

The early nineteenth century restoration leaders, contrary to what is said, were aware that their adopted principle, “Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent,” would cause some common practices to be prohibited. Thomas Campbell, in his influential “Declaration and Address,” pointed out, “If one adopts the view that anything religious is acceptable to God as long as it is offered sincerely and is not specifically prohibited, the door is opened for many other practices that the one urging that position to justify instrumental music may not want at all.” When he urged “that nothing be enjoined as a condition of communion that is not expressly stated in Scripture,” Alexander Campbell objected. “If that principle be followed, infant baptism will have to be given up.” Thomas did not think so at that point, but said, “Of course, if infant baptism be not found in Scripture, we can have nothing to do with it” (*Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 1, 236-238). After further study, both of the Campbells, as well as others, began to teach that biblical baptism was immersion in water of believing adults, and they were immersed, though they had been sprinkled as infants.

Infant sprinkling for baptism, like instrumental music, is not expressly forbidden in Scripture and is widely practiced by many denominations. What basis of objection to infant sprinkling is left to one who accepts instrumental music on the grounds that it is not specifically forbidden?

The Bible is silent about any hierarchical church governing arrangement

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with an elder overseeing more than one church. Since the Bible specifies overseers within each congregation and is silent concerning any other arrangement, we conclude that is God's intended arrangement for local church government. Others, who believe silence is permissive, have overseers (bishops, KJV) over more than one congregation, and one group has a universal bishop (Pope) over the whole church. Popes and territorial bishops come in under the same reasoning as instrumental music: the Bible does not expressly forbid it.

Besides the episcopal model of church government, with its authoritative hierarchical bishopric, ***"dancing before the Lord,"*** burning of incense and prayers to departed saints are among other practices that not only can come in under that same rubric, but have done so and are presently practiced on the basis of that rationale.

Of Old Testament recorded events, the Bible says, ***"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come"*** (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire ["strange fire" KJV] before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord has said, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified ["must be regarded as holy" KJV], and before all the people I will be glorified"' (Leviticus 10:1-3).

Nadab and Abihu learned that a holy God wants to be worshipped with holy things. ***"Strange"*** things (KJV) or ***"unauthorized"*** things (ESV, NIV) are not holy. God is not just ***"holy"***; God is ***"holy, holy, holy."*** How we worship Him in prayer, in the Lord's Supper and in singing, is "a big deal." We are to be ***"true worshippers"*** (John 4:23). ***"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"*** (John 4:24).

- **Are the Singing Passages in Ephesians and Colossians Congregational or Individual?**

The Ephesian Church was commanded to ***"address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the***

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Lord with all your heart” (5:19). The Colossians were to ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God”*** (3:16). The speaker we are reviewing and others are saying that these passages refer to individual action and have no application to congregational activity. If that were true, it would still be true that every reference to musical praise and worship in the New Testament is to singing.

There is strong evidence, however, that the individual versus congregational distinction does not apply to these passages. The epistles of Paul, except for the ones addressed to individuals like Timothy, Titus and Philemon, were written to churches and were intended to be read to and heeded by the churches. The five earliest epistles mention the church or churches in the salutation. Galatians is written ***“To the churches of Galatia”*** (Galatians 1:1), which are the congregations in Antioch of Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra and Iconium that Paul and Barnabas established on their first missionary journey. Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians are addressed ***“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), and both 1 and 2 Corinthians are written to ***“The church of God that is at Corinth”*** (1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

The next three of Paul’s epistles, Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians, were written from Rome during the imprisonment that Luke describes at the close of Acts (28:31-32). Philippians is addressed ***“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons”*** (Philippians 1:1). Including the congregational officers in the address clearly implies Paul has the congregation at Philippi in view.

The letter to Colossae is addressed ***“To the saints and faithful brothers at Colossae”*** (Colossians 1:2), and the Ephesian epistle is addressed ***“To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful”*** (Ephesians 1:1). Colossians makes it clear that Paul expects these epistles, when they are received, to be read aloud to the churches. ***“And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea”*** (Colossians 4:16).

Obviously no single person alone in a congregation can ***“teach and***

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admonish one another.” Some plurality of persons is assumed. Primary reference is to the congregation gathered for edification and worship, where it is expected they would hear these epistles read.

- **“Is There Is No Pattern for Worship?”**

Even those who eschew patterns and denounce patternism acknowledge there are patterns to be followed in Scripture. It is almost universally understood that Christ is to be our pattern in conduct and attitudes. There are three prevailing mistakes regarding patterns: (1) attempts to bind patterns that Scripture does not require; (2) a virtually exclusive emphasis on a pattern for congregational assemblies and (3) denial that there is a pattern for what takes place in assembly.

- **Inventing Patterns**

Some see patterns where none are intended. The point here is that it is not necessary to deny that there are patterns in Scripture regarding acceptable work and worship in order to recognize that some claimed patterns are not binding. In the final analysis, a pattern is not binding because I think it is, and something else in Scripture is not incidental and nonbinding because someone else thinks that way. What Scripture says is true whether we understand or believe it or not.

A well-known quote from the early days of the Restoration Movement reads, “Although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet they are not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God” (Thomas Campbell. *Declaration and Address*).

That is necessarily so, unless one is willing to turn authority over his or her faith to a preacher, editor or other human being. We ought to persuade, warn and admonish those we perceive to be mistaken, but we have no power to force anyone to believe or to enforce conformity to our viewpoints.

- **A Pattern for Life**

When an appeal to biblical patterns is almost exclusively related to patterns for assemblies and to such things as congregational organization

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and activity, it can cause hearers to mistakenly conclude that those are the only, or at least the primary, things about which the Lord is concerned.

Jesus' judgment scenes focus on how His disciples are to minister to the needy. The Sermon on the Mount gives primary emphasis to character, motivation and recognition of our dependence on the Lord more than on ourselves. His parables remind us that we are to be neighbors to anyone in need and to be glad and to rejoice when sinners respond and repent.

When the New Testament writers come to the "How Shall We Then Live" part of their epistles (see for example, Romans 12-14; Ephesians 4-6; Colossians 3-4), they do not focus primarily on assemblies and congregational programs. Their focus is on everyday life. They emphasize morality, integrity and a caring spirit. The setting of the patterns for our lives in Christ is home (husband/wife, parents/children) and workplace (master/servant or employer/employee). The pattern includes fidelity to one's spouse and fair treatment and honesty in the workplace, working as if one were working for the Lord.

In congregational life, the biblical pattern emphasizes acceptance of the weak because Christ accepted us when we were weak. It regulates our speech, forbidding lies, slander, obscene or corrupting talk and unsuitable jesting, calling instead for grace-filled conversation, words seasoned with salt that encourage and edify the hearers. It centers on attitudes, on putting away strife, bitterness and malice, and putting on kindness, tenderheartedness and a forgiving spirit. To neglect this aspect of the biblical pattern is to give ammunition to those who think patternism is irrelevant to life and ignores what the Bible primarily emphasizes.

Some brethren in a tight-knit circle of fellowship, including only those who agree completely with them on a particular set of issues, seem to overlook continued blatant dishonesty and immorality within their number as long as the perpetrators are "sound" on the issues. Surely no one actually teaches that it does not matter how people behave as long as their doctrine is correct, but hearers can get that idea when the lifestyle aspect of the biblical pattern is not emphasized as well as other aspects deemed "doctrinal."

- **A Pattern for Assembly**

Those who reject what they call patternism are usually rejecting spe-

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cific aspects of a pattern for congregational assemblies that have been taught and practiced by churches of Christ through the years. The one whose sermon I am reviewing denies that the biblical pattern specifies singing and thereby rules out playing of instruments.

Is there a New Testament pattern for our assemblies? Is there anything in the Bible that indicates with what God will be pleased as we gather to worship Him and edify one another, or is anything we choose to do that excites us and makes us feel good acceptable as an assembly activity? Is it ever important to ask concerning what we do as worship in our assemblies, “Is this biblical?” Our speaker says it is. Should we ever wonder whether what we are about to do can be demonstrated from Scripture to be acceptable to God? He says, “The most important thing to ask in determining a course of action is ‘What does the Bible say?’”

Again, a quotation from a pioneer in the early days of the attempt in America to restore apostolic practices:

Those, then, who contend that there is no divinely authorized order of Christian worship in Christian assemblies, do at the same time, and must inevitably maintain, that there is no disorder, no error, no innovation, no transgression in the worship of the Christian church—no, nor ever can be. (Alexander Campbell, “A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things — V,” *Christian Baptist*, Vol. 2, 240-241)

Nothing can be wrong unless something right is specified against which to evaluate it.

• The Biblical Doctrine of Assembly

There is a New Testament doctrine of assembly. We are commanded not to neglect the assemblies because we need the stirring up and encouragement given and received in those assemblies (Hebrews 10:24-25). The fullest apostolic direction for the conduct of these assemblies is found in the first epistle to the Corinthians. “Assembly language” begins at 1 Corinthians 11:17 where Paul began to correct the Corinthians’ behavior regarding the Lord’s Supper. Note how often **“when you come together”** is mentioned:

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because

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when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. (1 Corinthians 11:17-20)

This tells us the Lord's Supper belongs in the assembly. The Corinthians had so desecrated the Supper that they no longer could be said to come together for that purpose. The obvious implication, however, is that they were supposed to be coming together to eat the Lord's Supper. That agrees with the practice of the church at Troas who, also acting under apostolic direction, ***"on the first day of the week...gathered together to break bread"*** (Acts 20:7).

In the remainder of the Eleventh Chapter, Paul quoted Jesus' words in instituting the Supper just as Matthew, Mark and Luke recorded them, reminding us that the purpose of the Supper was to be a memorial of the body and blood of the Lord. Meals to satisfy our hunger are to be eaten, he said, ***"at home"*** (1 Corinthians 11:24, compare verse 22). Since they often met in their homes, the direction does not seem to be in what facility they are to eat, but rather ***"not in the assembly."*** Contrary to what some are maintaining in current popular books about the Lord's Supper, it seems to me that taking the Lord's Supper as part of a fellowship meal is what Paul is here rejecting.

Meals for fellowship are good, and authorized, but are not to be part of the assembly or the Lord's Supper. The topic following the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians is the use and abuse of spiritual gifts. First Corinthians 14 returns to the topic of the assembly, when ***"the whole church comes together"*** (verse 23) and ***"when you come together"*** (verse 26). First Corinthians 14 contains instruction dealing with miraculous spiritual gifts, especially tongues and prophecy. These are no longer part of the experience of the present day church, and some have suggested that the instructions in this chapter are for a special assembly called for the exercise of those gifts and are therefore not applicable to our assemblies. However, it is more likely that those gifts would be exercised whenever and wherever those who possessed them gathered, and that 1 Corinthians 14 addresses conduct in a regular assembly of the church.

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- **Again, It Is a “Come Together” (Assembly) Chapter**

Teaching, preaching, prophesying (inspired teaching) took place in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:3, 19), as it did when Paul preached to the church in Troas when they had assembled for the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7). Prayer also took place in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15). Prayers are to be offered in intelligible language so all who are present can say “Amen” to what the leader says, thus making it their own prayer (1 Corinthians 14:16). That reflects what we call one person leading the prayer, but all praying as each makes the prayer their own.

They sang in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15). ***“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up”*** (14:26). It is suggested that ***“each one has a hymn”*** refers to a solo; it is more likely, looking back to one person praying aloud and the rest of the congregation making the prayer their own, that it refers to one person choosing and leading a song and the rest following. It is widely believed that antiphonal singing, the leader singing a phrase and the congregation echoing the phrase, was common in the early church.

Throughout the whole section, a point is made that some things perfectly all right within themselves are not appropriate in the assembly. The regular meal for the satisfaction of hunger does not belong in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:3). Tongues, though at that time a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit, were not to be spoken in the assembly unless there was an interpreter, and then no more than two or three were to speak (1 Corinthians 14:28). Women, who are certainly permitted to speak in most places and under most circumstances, were not permitted to speak in the assemblies (1 Corinthians 14:34).

The apostle is at pains to remind us that his instructions are not just the venting of his opinions. He said, ***“If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord”*** (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Following the discussion of the assembly in 1 Corinthians 14, the next topic in the epistle is the resurrection (Chapter 15). That is immediately followed by a commandment about a collection. ***“Now concerning the collec-***

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tion for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This was a specific collection for a particular purpose. Paul wanted the Gentile churches to help the Jewish churches in Judea, to assist them in their time of want and hunger, but also to help solidify the bond between the Gentile and Jewish churches.

Some think this is telling Christians to lay up something at home, but that does not fit the context. If all laid aside their gift at home, there would still have to be a collection when Paul got to Corinth, the very thing he was saying he wanted to avoid.

"The word 'collection' (Greek, *logeia*) seems to refer only to public collections, not to a private activity" (Everett Ferguson. *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 240). This is strengthened by the fact that Paul urged them to "complete" the collection they had started (2 Corinthians 8:6). This implies there was an already collected and known amount that fell short. It also makes little sense to specify a particular day for adding to a fund at each home. The obvious reason for specifying a day, particularly for specifying the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, the day on which Christ rose from the dead, is because they were assembling on that day. That was, therefore, the logical occasion on which to contribute to a fund, which, in this case, would ultimately be delivered by Paul and others to the Jewish saints.

That indicates that the occasion when the whole Corinthian church came together to partake of the Lord's Supper was on the first day of the week, just like in Troas. This was not just a command for the Corinthian church. The churches of Galatia and Macedonia had received the same charge. Since it was commanded, and a particular day chosen, when a congregation identifies its needs, an apostolically approved way to meet those needs is by a first day of the week contribution. At Corinth, Galatia and Macedonia the contribution was in the assembly.

In the assembly, then, under apostolic direction, there was the Lord's Supper, preaching, prayer, singing and a collection to meet identified

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needs. Some things, not wrong in themselves, were nevertheless not to be a part of the assembly. These included a meal for the satisfaction of hunger, tongue speakers and women speaking.

What if a congregation should come together on Sunday morning and all dance until evening to express their joy, and when they had exhausted themselves in dance they went home? What if another assembles to listen to a symphony orchestra? What if another burns scented candles? What if a native American congregation smokes a peace pipe as an act of spiritual worship to the Creator? Are any or all of these acceptable activities for the assembly? Will any of these be a ***“fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God”*** (Philippians 4:18)?

Is there any kind of direction or pattern for the assembly of which these things are not a part? May anyone, indeed, do whatever is right in his or her own eyes and God be expected to be pleased with it, whether or not He has given even the slightest indication that He desires these things?

Does Uzziah's being struck with leprosy for offering incense which only priests were authorized to offer it (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) have anything at all to say about these things? Is Nadab and Abihu's destruction by fire because they ***“offered unauthorized fire which the Lord had not commanded them”*** (Leviticus 10:1-2) completely irrelevant to these issues, because we have heard it so many times it has become old hat?

Old Testament Temple worship was sense-oriented, from the burning of incense to the searing of flesh, fat and skin on the altar, to the music of orchestra and choirs. It, symbolized by circumcision, was called worship according to the flesh, while the New Testament worship is to be in spirit (Philippians 3:3). The Old Testament ordinances of worship were types and shadows; the True, the Reality, was still to come. New Testament worship is in truth. The Book of Hebrews draws the contrast:

Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high

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priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:9-12, 15-16)

In contrast with the incense and the orchestra, we offer the fruit of our lips as our sacrifice of praise. In contrast with the burnt offerings of animals, we lay our own bodies on the altar as living sacrifices as we do good and share with others. We worship in spirit and in truth and not in flesh and in shadow.

- **Patternism and Legalism**

The patterns identified here are not authoritative on the basis that **I am the one** who has identified and spelled them out. **The New Testament is the only full and authoritative statement of our pattern.** What God has bound is bound on each of us, whether we are aware of it or not. I do not have the authority to bind anything on anyone. I have pointed to some of what I believe Scripture tells us is the will of God. Each person has to look at the evidence of Scripture and decide for himself or for herself what is true and what he or she will do with it.

The existence of a divinely authorized pattern for worship, or for other matters on which we have not touched, does not deny the Gospel of grace. None of us is perfect, either in our actions or in our understandings.

Some are further along in the maturing process than others. Some have had more opportunities to learn than others. We are not saved because we perfectly follow the patterns of Scripture. We are saved by the sacrifice of Christ, through our faith in Him. However, such patterns for life and conduct, in the assembly and outside of it, tell us how our Lord would have us to live. When we recognize that He has saved us by His death, when we believe that Scripture is His own revelation of Himself and His will, and when in gratitude we search the Scripture for His will for us, all because we want to please the One who died for us, that is not legalism. It is faith working through love.

- **History Speaks**

One purpose of singing as worship is to express the unity of God's

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redeemed people in the church. We are to be like-minded ***“that with one mind and one mouth”*** we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5-6).

Although it seems now that instrumental worship is commonplace, that was not always true, and is not now in the Eastern part of the world. For centuries, congregations all over the world with one voice offered the fruit of their lips as praise to God. Today, those who oppose instrumental music are accused of being divisive, but that is only in the Western world and in recent centuries. Singing was the only music in the churches for a thousand years, and when the organ first began to be used in the churches associated with Rome, it was played only before and after the “liturgy” (what we would call “the worship service”). It was many years after that before instrumental accompanied singing became part of the service.

That history is strong evidence that the omission of playing instruments in the New Testament was intentional, not accidental or incidental. The Eastern churches, called Orthodox churches, continue to use vocal music only, and they predominate in Eastern Europe and in many parts of Asia. Instrumental music did not become common in most Protestant churches until the nineteenth century and then only over strenuous objection. Writings expressing opposition to instruments in worship in much stronger tones and phrases than you will find in this treatise are still extant and often quoted from such men as John Calvin, founder of Presbyterianism (1500’s), John Wesley, Anglican and founder of Methodism (1700’s), Methodist commentator Adam Clarke (early 1800’s) and Baptist Charles H. Spurgeon (late 1800’s).

The churches that grew out of the Restoration Movement were united on music in the assembly until the instrument was introduced. A cappella music is still acknowledged by all to be scriptural and acceptable. A unity movement should not abandon a position that is known to be right in favor of one for which a biblical case has not been made.

Indeed, “a cappella,” now defined as “without instrumental accompaniment,” literally means “as in church.” From the beginning, music in the church was without instrumental accompaniment.

• **Closing Thoughts about Christ’s Church**

The Lord’s church began on the Day of Pentecost, following Jesus’ res-

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urrection and ascension into Heaven. Peter preached the Gospel of forgiveness of sins through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. People were convicted of sin, *“cut to the heart,”* and asked, *“What shall we do?”* Peter said to them, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:37-38). Three thousand responded favorably, were baptized, forgiven and added by the Lord to His church.

The essence of the Restoration Plea is, “If we hear what they heard, believe what they believed, do from the heart what they did, we will receive what they received—forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit—and become what they became—Christians, added to Christ’s church.” People today can respond in the same way and receive the same blessings. When several do this and band together to “do Bible things in Bible ways,” they are a church, a congregation, of Christ.

Some of them may be indulging in secret sins, some may reveal sectarian ideas by their speech and may harbor a sectarian spirit, but, as David Lipscomb famously said, “Someone else’s sectarianism does not make me sectarian.” Everyone who has been redeemed is transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). All who are saved are added to His church (Acts 2:47; 5:11). All who are baptized into Christ become children in God’s family. Others obviously use it differently, but I try to use biblical expressions biblically.

When I say, “The Lord’s church,” “the kingdom” or “the church of Christ,” that is who I include and what I mean. The church of Christ began on Pentecost in the first century. **The nineteenth century restorers did not begin the church of Christ.** We are grateful to them because they reminded people that they should come back to just the Bible, laying aside human creeds, sectarian names and anything nonbiblical that divides. We should continue that today. It is not our task, however, to restore the nineteenth century Restoration Movement or the church of the 1950’s. It is our task, as fully as possible, in every age, **to restore the church of the New Testament** as the apostles attempted to shape it by their preaching and corrections. **Back to the Bible!** 

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

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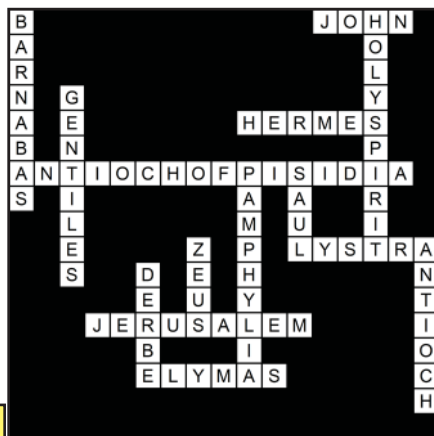
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (Page 34)

1. Passed through the sea, baptized into Moses, ate the same spiritual food, drank the same spiritual drink.
2. Christ.
3. Scattered in the wilderness because they displeased God.
4. Examples, lust.
5. Idolaters.
6. Sexual immorality.
7. 23,000.
8. Tempted, destroyer.
9. For our admonition.
10. Take heed lest he fall.
11. No.
12. Trustworthy or reliable.
13. Provide a way of escape.

Bible Find (page 41)



Scavenger Hunt (page 71)

Answers:

1. Nineveh (1:2)
2. Tarshish (1:3)
3. prayed (2:1)
4. the Lord spoke to it (2:10)
5. "exceeding great city" (3:3)
6. 40 (3:4)
7. very angry (4:1)
8. his life (4:3)
9. fish, gourd, vehement east wind (1:17; 4:6; 4:8)
10. sixscore thousand (120,000) (4:11)

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HE IS RISEN!

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.