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Why did Jesus Die?

Is Apologetics Still
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The Response to the
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Biblical Biography:
Matthew

A Nameless
Servant Girl

The Quarterly

VOL. 3, NO. 2

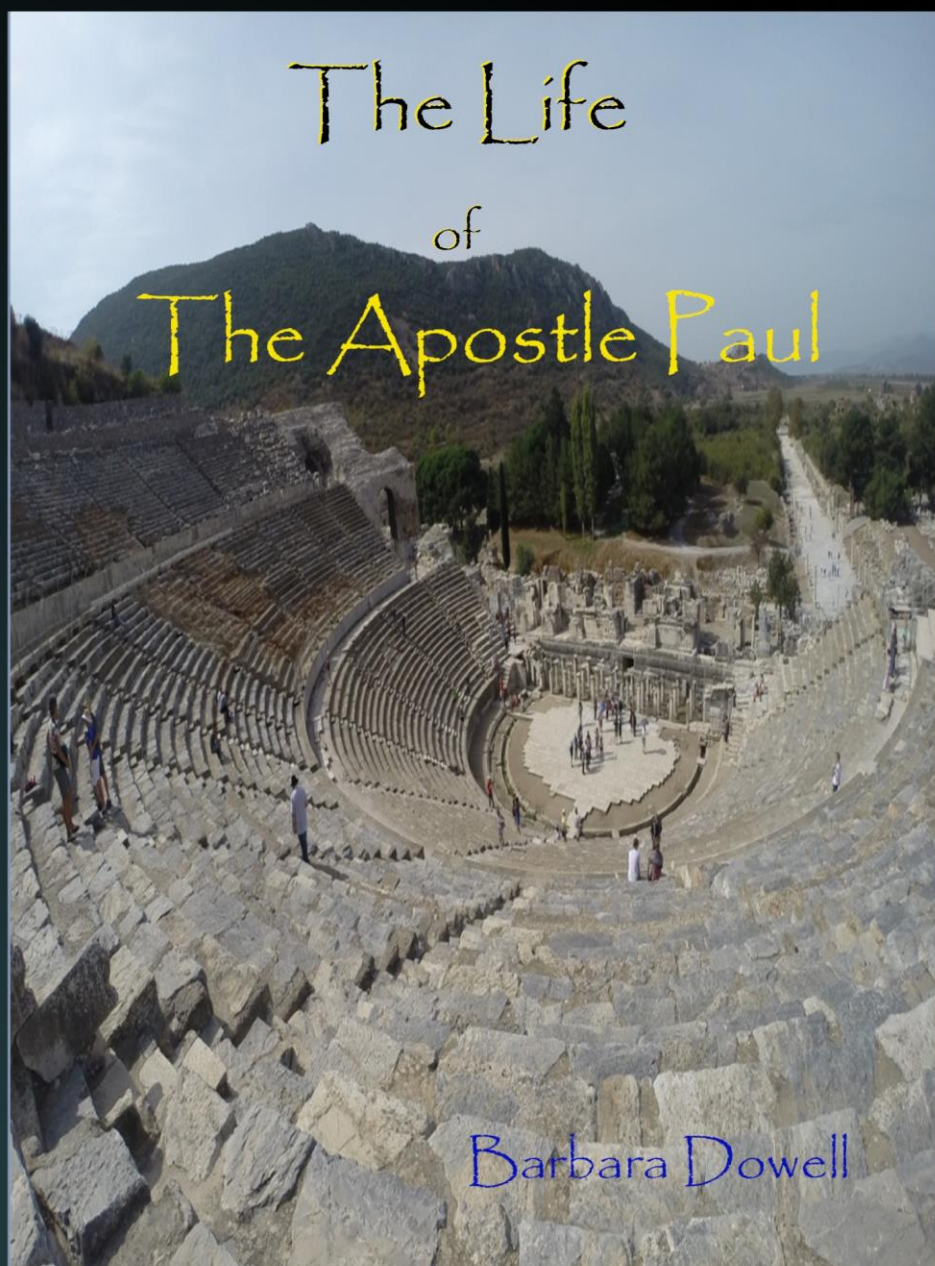


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VOL. 3 — NO. 2

April 2019

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Time Goes so Fast...

So, for the first time ever, we are officially late. I write this on the final day of April, and you won't read it until May. My apologies. I could list all the crazy things we've been through that I thought were more important than putting this together, but you might get bored and fall asleep. And we can't have that.

A few months ago, I sent out assignments to several writers on "The Passion of Jesus" but each from a different perspective. Some of those should appear in the next issue, but two of them (and a bonus third one) are in these pages right now. One looks at the Passion from the perspective of Judas, another from the perspective of John. The bonus one... Well, that one looks at it from the standpoint of a rooster (I kid you not).

We have a plethora of articles that will give you some extra historical background in your Bible studies—including articles on Felix, Josephus, the Maccabees, and Matthew. I think you will be benefitted by reading those.

Something new for this issue is an article by John T. Polk addressing some concerning things stated in a *Gospel Advocate* article from earlier this year, regarding the ability to translate the Bible into English. This article was sent to both the editor of that magazine and the author of the article in question two months ago. But this is the first time it will see print.

And if you're interested in reading something controversial... check out John Krivak's article on the "Gates of Hades." I don't know that I completely agree with his conclusions, but he does make some interesting points that ought to be considered (like the nature of gates—offensive or defensive).

And as always, our regular writers bring you interesting reading on a variety of topics. Gerald Cowan discusses the anger of Jesus. Kyle Frank looks at the history of apostasy in the post-biblical times. Dr. Dewayne Bryant asks 'Is Apologetics Still Necessary?' Jake Schotter examines the theory of annihilation of the wicked. And Michael Shank encourages offensive preaching.

The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor). But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven

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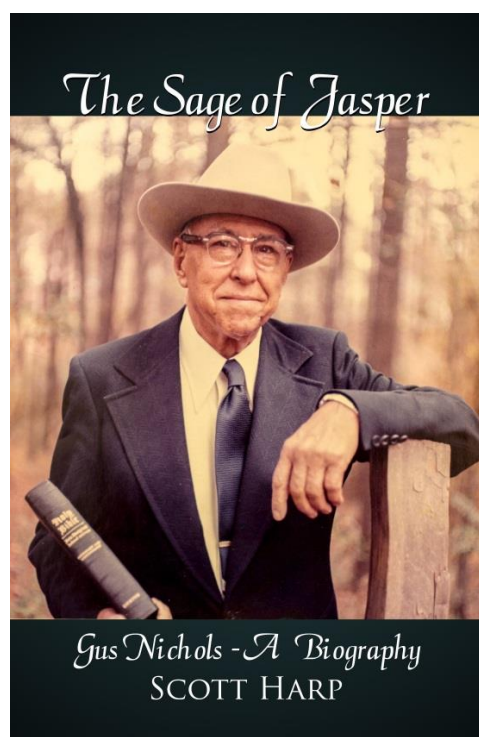
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FUNNY AS HELL?

An editorial by Bradley S. Cobb

Early each weekday morning, I get myself up and drive to work at a UPS facility. While loading some of the trucks, I occasionally get into conversations with one of my co-workers. And quite frequently I will hear him say, “That’s funny as hell.” I have more than once informed him that hell isn’t funny, but as of yet, it hasn’t stopped him from using the phrase.

Unfortunately, there are many people who have fallen prey to Satan’s move to de-emphasize the reality of hell. And the proliferation of phrases like “funny as hell” or “cold as hell” (I still have to wonder if anyone even bothers to think when they use that one) just show that they don’t really take hell seriously at all.

Hell Really Exists

Surprisingly, this doctrine that was almost universally believed is being rejected by many people in many religious groups. The Jehovah’s Witnesses all deny hell exists. Their doctrine is that all evil people simply cease to exist when they die. Thus, you can live your life as evil as you want, and when you die there is no punishment at all. There are even those within the church who deny the existence of hell.

The most important thing we need to remember when discussing any Bible topic is this: it doesn’t matter who believes it or how widespread that belief is; what matters is what the Bible says about it.

Acts 17:11-12a – These were more noble than they of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed...

It is also extremely important that if we believe something, we know why we believe it.

- “Because that’s what my preacher said” isn’t good enough.

- “Because that’s what mom and dad believed” isn’t good enough.

We need to be able to show from the Bible why we believe what we believe. So, you may believe there is a hell—but can you prove it from the Bible?

Words for Hell in the Bible

Hell is not always called ‘hell’ in the Bible. In fact, if you (like me) use the King James Version, you could get confused pretty quickly, because the word ‘hell’ in the KJV doesn’t always mean hell...

Acts 2:27 says that Jesus’ soul went to hell (in the King James Version). Revelation 20:14 tells us that hell was cast into the lake of fire...which generally speaking is believed to be hell—So, hell was destroyed in hell? That makes no sense.

So, we need to make some observations before we get too far into this discussion.

In the Old Testament, the word “hell” is always the Hebrew word Sheol. Some translations render it Sheol. It means “the abode of the dead” (Thayer). Sometimes it refers to a place of torment, other times not. Without considering the context of each section, we cannot gain much insight on the topic of “hell” from these passages.

In the New Testament, there are two words translated hell. One is Gehenna (see Matthew 5:22, 29-30) This word is a reference to a place of fire and torment, as is obvious from the passages mentioned. The other is Hades (see Matthew 11:23, 16:18). This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sheol. This word simply means the unseen realm, or the abode of the dead, and is used ten times in the New Testament. Though it can include the idea of a place of torment (Luke 16:23), it also describes where Jesus’ soul went after His crucifixion (Acts 2:27, 31). It is a general word that includes all the unseen realm—including a place of paradise and a place of torment.

Hell is a Place of Torment

Hell is a place of torment reserved for the wicked after their time on earth. Though the word hell isn’t

always used, the concept of a place of punishment after death is clearly taught in the New Testament. Luke 16:19-31 tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. They both died, and the rich man awoke in torment—conscious torment (16:23). While in torment, he was conscious, proven by the fact that he was able to hold a conversation. It was a place of flame (16:24).

But I can hear the objections already: “You can’t use that passage, Brad! It’s a parable, not a real story.” It doesn’t say it’s a parable, and even if it was, Jesus never gave a parable that described things that didn’t/couldn’t actually happen.

And here comes the next objection: “Well, you can’t use that passage because it’s speaking of Hades, not hell.” I will just say that the man has obviously been judged because he is now in torment.

But if you want to discard that passage, we’ll just have to go somewhere else.

Matthew 25:41-46 describes the judgment scene. Jesus calls the ones on his left “cursed” and sends them into “everlasting fire” (24:41). He doesn’t use the term “hell,” but this is a description of the same place.

Mark 9:43-48 describes hell as a place of punishment for those who sin. Jesus uses the word “hell” (Gehenna, the place of fiery torment) in verses 43, 45, and 47. He describes it as a place “where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” (verses 44, 46, 48).

Revelation 14:11 speaks of some who were condemned, and says of them “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night...” This, again, is a description of hell.

Jude 7 describes the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha as “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Literally, it means they have suffered and continue to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. So, the question now is this: does the Bible describe a place of torment for the wicked after their death?

Without a doubt, such a place is described in the Bible.

How Long does Hell Last?

Some people, when faced with the reality of hell, try to soften the impact of it by declaring that it is only temporary. Some people say that it’s a place of

torment until judgment day, and then all those who were in hell will simply be destroyed and cease to exist. Others say that hell is a place of torment after judgment day, but that each person will be punished for a specific period of time based on their sins, and then they will be put in heaven after they’ve learned their lesson. The problem with both of these theories is that neither one of them is found in the Bible.

As we’ve already seen from several passages, hell is a place of “everlasting” torment. It’s a place where torment lasts “for ever and ever.” It’s a place where the fire is never quenched (Mark 9:43-48). If hell ceases to exist at any point, then the Bible has just lied.

You hear me? If hell ceases to exist—ever—then the fires were quenched, and the Bible has lied. Think about that carefully, and understand what that means. If you say that hell is a temporary place, then you are calling God a liar.

It is a place that is every bit as eternal and everlasting as heaven itself. Matthew 25:46 says “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” The words “everlasting” and “eternal” in that verse are the EXACT SAME WORD in Greek. So, however long “life eternal” is, that’s the same length of time “everlasting punishment” is.

- So, if hell is temporary, then so is heaven.
- If hell will have an end, so will heaven.
- If heaven is eternal, so is hell.

Hell is a Place of Unending Torment Reserved for the Wicked.

But a loving God would not punish someone eternally for a short time of sinning! That’s the argument, and it’s a very emotional one. A 20-year old lives a life of fun and pleasure, never giving any thought to religion, and he’s hit and killed by a drunk driver. Is a loving God really going to torment him eternally for what amounts to only about 10-12 years of sin? (because when he’s a small child, he has no clue what sin is).

A preacher that I know, one that you know, called me one evening, struggling with this question. He said, “Brad, I know what we’ve always taught, and what the church believes, but someone hit me with this question, and I’m at a loss.” He expressed that he was having a very difficult time rec-

tifying the idea of a loving God and eternal punishment. And I'll tell you the same thing I told him.

If a loving God will not punish someone eternally for a short life of sin, then a just God will not reward someone eternally for a short life of obedience.

Did you get that? The logic works both ways. A just God will not reward someone eternally when they've only spent a few years in His service, right?

Do we call the justice system unfair because it punishes someone for the rest of their life for a one-time action? Someone intentionally shoots an innocent person—something that takes less than a second—yet we punish them for perhaps 60 years! The punishment is absolutely deserved.

If you go to hell, it's because you deserve to go there! Whoa! Isn't that a bit harsh? No, it's not. It's the Bible. All of us deserve to go to hell because of our sins. However, those who take advantage of the blood of Christ can avoid hell and all its terrible torment. If you don't take advantage of it, whose fault is it?

But let's dig a bit deeper into this idea of deserving to go to hell.

Deserving Hell?

Ecclesiastes 12:13 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." The whole duty of man. The whole purpose of man. This is the meaning of life. This is the entire reason man was put on this planet was to fear God and keep His commandments.

When you look at Job 1-2, you see God and Satan at war. The individual battles are waged in the lives of humans. In these chapters, Job is the battlefield. You are the battlefield between God and Satan. You determine who wins and who loses in your life. We were designed and put here as the instruments through whom God defeats Satan. The only person who fulfilled this role perfectly, and gave God a complete victory in his life was Jesus Christ. And look at all that happened when a perfect life was lived! Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

If you have a tool, designed for a specific purpose, and it won't do what it's supposed to do, you

get rid of it. Now, imagine that your tool can talk, and that it says to you, "I know what you want me to do, what I'm designed to do, but I don't want to, and I'm not going to do it." You beg and plead with it, and still it indignantly refuses, and tries to keep other tools from working for you. Eventually, you're going to destroy that tool; and it will deserve it.

As humans, whose entire purpose is serving God and keeping His commandments, what do we deserve if we refuse to obey Him? Yes, we deserve hell.

How is Hell Described in the Bible?

If we could just for 5 seconds peel back the lid on hell and experience it for just that short amount of time, I am convinced that we would serve God and never look back.

Hell is a place that God has created to torment Satan and his messengers forever (Matthew 25:41). You know what Satan deserves because of his opposition to God. Satan deserves the worst possible torment imaginable. And if you aren't a faithful Christian, you will be joining him forever.

Hell is a place of fire. Mark 9:43-48 describes it as the place where the fire is never quenched. Revelation 20:14-15 calls hell "the lake of fire."

Sixteen years ago, a man was clearing out trash that was on the edge of his back yard. He starts a small burn pile to get rid of the trash and leaves. And being the guy that he is, he adds more and more, trying to get it done quicker (that, and he likes seeing the fire). Then came an extremely loud pop! Something in the fire shoots out and lands on the man's hand, and he looks on in horror as he sees his skin literally start to melt. The searing pain rushes through his whole body, and he screams. He grabs something and as quick as he possibly can, he scrapes the burning material off his hand (causing even more pain in the process). He grabs his hand, trying to stop the pain, but nothing works—in fact, if anything, it gets worse. Slowly, he removes his grip and looks at his hand, and at the place that was tormenting his entire body. The spot of pain was less than half the size of an M&M. That was me.

But the fires of hell are not confined to one small part of you. If you go to hell, you are in the *lake* of fire. Imagine yourself in the middle of a lake of wa-

ter, and you're drowning, thrashing around trying to stay afloat. Now, as you have that image in your head, watch as the water turns to flames, and you are completely immersed in fire, thrashing about, trying in vain to escape the pain. Is it any wonder that John the Baptist promised that Jesus would baptize some people in unquenchable fire? (Matthew 3:10-12). You know the pain of fire when you get burned on one part of your body. Now imagine it continually burning every part of you.

Hell is a place of darkness. To the person trapped in an underground cave with no light, even a small speck of light is a sign of hope. But with no light, living in complete darkness, there is no way to see what might be around you—what could be trying to attack you. Paranoia can easily creep in when someone is in complete blackness. Mentally, being in complete darkness for an extended period of time can actually drive someone insane. You are thrown into a coffin, the lid shut, and then you are put in the ground and covered in earth...and you're still alive. It's completely black and you're freaking out, hyperventilating, sweating, and the heat inside the coffin is quickly rising. Then you find a flashlight and turn it on. Instantly, things have improved because there is some light—even though your condition hasn't improved, the light has a somewhat calming effect. But in hell, there is no light.

Hell is called the place of "outer darkness." Matthew 8:12 – the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 22:13, 25:30 both describe hell in the same way. 1 Peter 2:9 may have this idea in mind as well, God "hath called you out of darkness" [perhaps, freed you from the punishment of hell]. Jude 13 describes the fate of false teachers as "the blackness of darkness forever."

Hell is not just a place of pain, but of mental anguish as well. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). There will be anguish because each person in hell will understand that they brought it on themselves. There will be anguish over lost opportunities to obey the gospel. There will be anguish over each and every sin committed.

Hell is described as a place with a foul stench. Worms (literally, we're talking about maggots) thrive there ("where the worm dieth not"). It is a

place of fire and brimstone. If you've smelled sulphur, you know how nauseating the stench is. Some experts believe Gehenna (the Greek word for hell) was also the name of a continually burning garbage dump outside Jerusalem. It would have had dead animals, rancid meat, human waste, and many other foul odors constantly going through the air.

The smells of hell will attack your senses to the point where you can hardly breathe, causing you to hyperventilate, taking quick, shallow breaths in an attempt to keep from being as affected. And as the smells get through, your stomach is turned and you're not just fighting the smell, you're fighting not to throw up. All of this horrid stench is attacking you, and you can't see where it's coming from because it is completely black.

And there's no way to get away from it.

And the black flames burn over your entire body, and no matter how you move, you can't stop the pain even for a moment. And there's no getting out of it.

And to be honest, I don't really think that's funny.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

I haven't been through all of it yet but this edition of the Quarterly is well done. I particularly liked your editorial on growing up in the church.

-Bill Howard

Thanks for all the good sermons!

-Perry

I just finished Michael Shank's article in the Quarterly. Good stuff.

-Daniel

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WALKED NO MORE WITH HIM

Bill Howard

These words are taken from the Gospel of John chapter 6 at verse 66. It is an account of some of the disciples of Jesus who, sadly, had chosen to turn away from him, his teaching, his requirements, and as the account states, “went back.” So, what is meant by this statement? Went back to where, to what, and/or to whom?

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. Just previous to this time, He had fed the multitudes with five barley loaves and two small fish. Mark tells us that after he had fed the thousands, they gathered twelve baskets of leftovers. The number of men alone was five thousand; we do not know the exact number of those fed at that time.

These disciples had witnessed and participated in this miraculous event. They had seen other of Jesus’ miracles, but, as He taught them of spiritual matters, they declared these things were too hard for them to follow. Jesus said to them: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled” (John 6:26). That which satisfied their physical needs, they accepted; that which was spiritual, they rejected. Is this a picture of anything we see in today’s world?

“From that time, many of his Disciples went back and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). So, we ask again, went back to where, to what or to whom? They went back to their old ways, returned to the world. They embraced again the teachings and guidance of the Scribes and Pharisees or were directed by their own beliefs. What was true at the time is equally true today and always has been. Those with lack of faith will depart from the true teachings of the Lord. Unfortunately, today like then, we see this happening all too often. To remain steadfast in the Lord, there must be a continual deepening of our faith and a renewed dedication day

by day to remain faithful and serve God. Living the Christian life is not a part-time endeavor. It is a full-time commitment. Our responsibilities as one of God’s children are not fulfilled in an hour or two each week, and we don’t walk away when things are not in agreement with our thinking.

As these disciples departed, Jesus turned to the Apostles and asked: “Will ye also go away?” We can almost visualize the astonished look on Peter’s face as he wondered why Jesus would ask such a question. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God” (John 6:68-69). Peter didn’t have to stammer

or stutter; the question may have been perplexing to him, but his answer was immediate and correct. Others may have been offended and turned away but not the Apostles. Peter said, “We believe and are sure.” There was no question about their teacher and leader being

who He claimed to be. They had heard the words: “Go thy way, thy son liveth,” when Jesus told the nobleman that his son would live (John 4:50). They had seen the man with an infirmity healed when Jesus said: “Rise, take up thy bed and walk” (John 5:8). They had witnessed the feeding of the thousands and had seen Jesus walking on water and calming the sea and truly believed what Jesus had stated: “verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). Peter’s answer was indicative of his faith in Jesus.

It is this unyielding, unbending faith that we must exhibit in our daily living as children of the Living God. Jesus taught the multitudes that which they must know and do in order to be pleasing to him. When the teaching was hard or not in agreement with their thinking, some turned away. We fast forward some two thousand years and see that little has changed. The multitudes are being taught

Living the Christian life is not a part-time endeavor. It is a full-time commitment.

those things they must know and do in order to please the Lord, but if it is too hard to follow or they don't wish to follow, then some will turn away and walk no more with Him.

If we choose to walk no more with him, to whom will we turn? There is only the one Christ. There is only the one sacrifice that was made for the sins of mankind. There is only one spiritual body of Christ. "For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father, who is overall all and in all and living through all" (Ephesians 4:4-6, NLT).

If we turn away from these, we need not ask, "To whom will we go?" for there is no safe alternative. If we walk no more with Him, we walk with the lost who wander through life without direction and without hope, and we walk in darkness. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). He also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me" (John 14:6).

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Christ's promise to those who will follow after Him is eternal life in that heavenly place that is prepared. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23b). Nothing in this life could have greater importance than achieving this end. We may be blessed in many ways in this life and accomplish great things in the world, but when it comes to the end of our time in this physical life, and we are looking to our eternal reward; there is only one outcome between two alternatives: eternal life in the presence of God or eternal condemnation. In view of this, let us hear the words of the Apostle Paul. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15). That means carefully, diligently, wisely walking as Christ has instruct-

ed. Walking in this manner precludes substituting our ideas and our wishes for what the Bible teaches. It precludes "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he cautioned him to be aware that there would be those who would not endure sound doctrine and would listen to false teachers; they would turn away from the truth to believing fables, that which is not in keeping with God's word (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

So, what do we learn from these considerations?

As children of God, we have embarked upon the road that will give us the assurance of living forever in the presence of our creator. Can anything in this life be of more importance?

We must know that as children of the living God, we have to be certain we are walking with Jesus, that we are doing his will and being followers and guardians of the truth, that we do not deviate from his will by substituting for truth our thinking or our wishes. We cannot introduce into our worship service anything that was not practiced by the early church, nor can we leave out anything that has been designated for us to follow. Unfortunately, we see this happening in some congregations today. When we fail to follow

Christ's instruction and drift off into practices that are not what our Lord desires, we are no longer walking with him.

We dare not be reckless when it comes to the most important endeavor of our lives. As children of God, we have embarked upon the road that will give us the assurance of living forever in the presence of our creator. Can anything in this life be of more importance? Will we gamble on anything that would deny us this end result? What we do now will determine where we will be later. We dare not be careless and indifferent; we must be certain that all we do is in keeping with what our Father desires for us. We must walk in that narrow way with our Savior as he leads us to glory. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10b).

Why Did Jesus Die?

Jamie Beller

Brother Dan Winkler profoundly states:

*Golgotha! A 'crown' of thorns. A 'cry' of mockery. A 'cross' of shame. A 'cry' of loneliness: 'My God, My God, why...?' But wait a minute. That is an excellent question. 'Why?'*¹

“Why?” In so many ways we are acquainted with this question. Not merely a philosophical acquaintance that seeks reason, but in many ways a personal acquaintance that seemingly impacts our entire being. Serving as a hospital chaplain, this writer has become all too familiar with families asking the question, “Why?” particularly as it relates to the death of loved one. Thus, the question is often a personal one that has a broad impact. Perhaps you have asked or been asked the question in similar contexts.

Because the question, “Why?” is not merely a philosophical one, but can be a personal one, let us provide some personal answers to the question, “Why did Jesus die?” Certainly, Scripture declares that the death of Christ was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Yet, *why* did Jesus die?

Because I Sinned

Sin! It is a small word that poses a severe problem. It is my problem. It is your problem. It is and has long been the problem for the whole world in that, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Scripture declares that sin “is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). One way to describe it is to state that sin is failing to meet the standard which God has set. Sin can be the result of *doing* something which God says *not* to do, also

known as sins of commission (1 John 3:4). Sin can be the result of *not doing* something God says *to* do, also known as sins of omission (James 4:17). Sin may be the result of one’s attitude, or disposition (1 John 1:8; Isa 1:12-17; Matt. 6:5-6). Sin can be the result of ignorance (Acts 17:23; 1 Peter 1:14). Sin can also be committed willfully (Heb. 10:26). Finally, sin can be due to indifference (Rom. 1:32). No matter the reason, the fact is that I sinned, and for that reason Christ would die. But why? What makes sin such a bad thing that one would die, much less Christ would die because I sinned? Of what consequence is sin and the one who sins?

Few truly consider the consequences of sin. A study of Scripture provides a sad portrait of what sin did in the past, what sin does in the present, and what sin does in perpetuity. What sin did, and continues to do, is separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). As Robert R. Taylor, Jr. noted, “It [sin] engulfs us in degeneracy, iniquity, and wickedness. Sin hurts us internally, externally, and eternally.”² Perhaps we can better understand and appreciate the consequences of sin when we consider that it is:

1. Deceptive—Genesis 3:1-3; 1 Kings 13:1-32.
2. Divisive—Isaiah 59:1-2.
3. Delusional—Isa. 5:20; Jeremiah 6:14-17.
4. Digressive—Romans 6:1-2; 16.
5. Deadly—Rom. 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20.

Man often attempts to diminish the seriousness of sin. But when I see sin as declared in Scripture, how could I honestly deny that because I sinned, Jesus had to die?

Because God Desired That I Be Saved

When sin and its consequences entered the world (Rom. 5:12ff), God began making His way to Calvary. Because of sin, I was lost; separated from

¹ Dan Winkler, “Why Did Christ Die?” in The Cross of Jesus Christ, edited by Paul Sain (Pulaski, TN.: Sain Publications, 1994), p. 120

² Robert R. Taylor, Jr. “Sin...Problem...Salvation....Need” in Sin and Salvation Vol. 1, edited by Bobby Liddell (Pulaski, TN.: Sain Publications, 2004), p. 27.

God. All who sinned were lost, and separated from God. Yet, God desired man be saved and reconciled unto Him. Peter declares, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Yet, it is one thing to desire that “all men be saved” (2 Tim. 2:4), and another to demonstrate that desire.

Scripture declares that God’s desire for all to be saved was the act of grace. Note the inspired words of the Hebrews writer, who declared, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). Though Calvinism suggests that “Christ died only for the sake of the elect,” Scripture declares otherwise. Not only does the Hebrews writer affirm that “Christ tasted death for every man,” John affirms that “he [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). That God desired all men to be saved was demonstrated by the greatest act of grace—the death of Christ.

Not only does Scripture declare that the death of Christ was the demonstration of God’s grace, Scripture also declares that the cross was the result of God’s love. John states, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Paul also affirms that the death of Christ is an act of God’s grace, rooted in God’s love, as he declares, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Further, Scripture reminds us that the death of Christ is also a demonstration of the love of Christ. Thus, not only does God the Father desire that I be saved, Christ also desires that I be saved. So much so that Christ, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of

men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself... became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). One cannot read about the cross and fail to recognize the existence of both God’s love and Christ’s love at the cross. One cannot read about the cross in prophecy (Isa. 53), and in fruition (John 19), and suggest that God desired anything less than for all men to be saved, including me. Thus, if I am lost, it will not be because of a lack of desire on the part of the Godhead. Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit each had a role in creation, they each have a role in man’s redemption. Such is in part due to their love and desire for me to be saved. When we contemplate the Godhead’s desire for us

to be saved, we can answer the question, Why did Jesus die? That answer is, *Because God desires me to be saved.*

Because I Need To Be Saved

When we personally contemplate that Jesus died on the cross because we needed to be

saved, we can relate to what Paul declared to the Galatians. Paul stated, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Notice that Paul, once an enemy of Christ, affirms the love that Christ had for him in that Christ “gave himself for me.” How often do we have this attitude toward Christ and the cross?

Paul not only affirms the love of Christ, he also affirms that in order for him to be saved, Christ *had* to die. Paul adds, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21). That Paul did “not frustrate the grace of God” means that he did not disregard or despise the grace of God by seeking righteousness in keeping the Old Law. Paul further argues that if righteousness came by the law (Old Law), Christ is dead in vain. In other words, if one could be saved by keeping the Old Law, then why did Christ die? If one could be saved by keeping the law, then the blood of Christ has no more

*Scripture declares
that the cross was
the result of God’s
love.*

power than the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:1-17). Sadly, there are many today who disregard or despise the grace of God by holding onto the Old Law in a quest to be saved. Frequently, there are those who disregard or despise the grace of God by seeking to be saved in the same way as some who were saved before the death of Christ (i.e. the thief on the cross). Yet, if righteousness came by the law, and not by the Gospel, it would mean that one could be saved without the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. However, just as Paul reminds us of the essentiality of Christ and the cross for salvation, he also reminds us of the essentiality of “obeying from the heart” the Gospel that has been delivered (Rom. 6:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Though Paul, when he was Saul, sincerely believed that keeping the Old Law to the point of persecuting those who preached the Gospel (Acts 22:1-5), there was a time he recognized that he needed to be saved (Acts 22:16). When presented with the opportunity, Saul did not tarry, but rather he did what the Lord commanded, when Ananias declared, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be bap-

tized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Just as Paul did many centuries ago, so too did I, needing to be saved.

Conclusion

When we consider, truly consider, the death of Christ, do we consider the question, “Why did Jesus die?” Do we consider the question personally? Do we consider, “Why did Jesus die for me?” Sadly, many do not. Sadly, some have gone so far as to arrogantly state, “I didn’t ask Jesus to die for me.” Friend, regardless of whether we asked Jesus to die for us, the reality is He did. Why? Because we sinned, because God desires that we be saved, and because we, being lost because of sin, needed to be saved. Though the question, “Why did Jesus die?” has been answered, the question that constantly lingers, and perhaps for you, dear reader, is, “If I am lost, what must I do to be saved?” Jesus died that we might be saved, what are we going to do in response?

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PAUL AND THE EVIL GOVERNOR FELIX

by Richard Mansel

Introduction

Nothing is more important than Scripture when ascertaining the truth of God (Romans 10:17). Yet, when we read the Bible, we must realize that the events happened to real people who were living their complex lives. When we know the history of the period, it deepens our understanding of the text in terms of people's actions and behavior.

Paul was led by God through a series of trials for the furtherance of the gospel and subsequently the church. In doing so, readers learn of certain individuals and events that are part of a historical context that isn't included in Scripture.

When Paul stands before Felix in trial, Scripture is focused on his spiritual message. Yet, when we study history we can see who Governor Felix was and how he was motivated to act.

Paul

Long before Paul became a warrior for truth, he was a persecutor of Christians who led countless brethren to their death (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1). After God appeared to Paul—who was then Saul—on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9), Ananias was sent to him.

Ananias questioned the order because of the savagery Saul had unleashed against the church (Acts 9:13-14). God tells him that Saul is chosen and that He will show Saul, “things he must suffer for My name's sake” (Acts 9:16).

The character and faith of Paul was so strong that it led him to accept his mission and purpose in the new kingdom. He suffered and served in a host of situations.

God used Paul in grand fashion to bring the gospel before kings (Acts 9:15). Along the way, Paul finds himself before Felix, the Governor of Judea.

The Office of Governor or Procurator

The Roman government ruled in Palestine and they set the rules and structures of leadership. Re-

sults were mixed as it so often is in history. Whoever ruled in Palestine had to maintain Roman law and order while attempting to keep peace with the Jews. However, that didn't always go well in terms of the procurators.

“It might be thought, from the record of the Roman procurators...that they all, as if by secret arrangement, systematically and deliberately set out to drive the people to revolt. Even the best of them had no idea that a nation like the Jews required, above all, consideration for their religious customs. Instead of showing moderation and indulgence, they severely clamped down on any manifestation of the people's national character. The end result of this severe policy was the full-scale rebellion which began at least as early as A.D. 66”¹

When we know the history of the period, it deepens our understanding of the text...

Felix became a procurator of the area with Ventidius Cumanus in Samaria in A.D. 48.² ‘The two procurators almost went to war with each other during the conflict that broke out between the Samaritans and the Galileans; but Cumanus was recalled.’³

Felix

We know a good bit about Felix, but we're uncertain of his first name. Josephus calls him Claudius and Tacitus says Antonius.⁴ But most go with

¹Ben Witherington III, Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1997), 643.

²Gareth Reese, New Testament History: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Acts (Moberly: Scripture Exposition Books, 1976), 820 footnote 20.

³<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6067-felix-antonius-felix>

⁴Craig Keener, Acts: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 3:3329-3330.

Josephus since he was a contemporary and was acquainted with Felix's father in law.⁵

Felix was a freedman but was able to attain positions far beyond his social status. His brother, Marcus Antonius Pallas, was very influential and Felix was able to advance in his career thanks to his brother. Pallas became wealthy as the financial secretary for Claudius.⁶

Later, Pallas lost his position but retained his favor and was able to use his influence and wealth to help Felix.

Felix married Drusilla in a scandalous way. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Drusilla was six when he died in horrific fashion after he killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-23). She was fiercely competitive with her sister Bernice.⁷

Drusilla was engaged at a young age to Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, king of Commagene but it was dissolved because he refused to convert to Judaism and be circumcised.⁸ At fifteen her brother Agrippa II married her to Azizus, king of Emesa in Syria, who agreed to be circumcised.⁹

Felix took the teen queen away from Emesa and took her as his bride. She was most likely twenty by the time of Paul's trial.¹⁰ She may have accepted Felix's attentions to gain more social prestige and to become more influential than Bernice.

Certainly, Felix's marital situation would have been well-known and frowned upon by the Jews.

Felix and the Jews

An examination of the historical context of the life of Felix takes on more importance when we realize how much it influenced Paul's trial and verdict. A flurry of forces were at work behind the scenes when Paul appears before him and the complex situation pushes Felix to act accordingly.

Paul's trial was in 56 A.D. Two years later, Felix would be recalled. His abuses increased hostilities between Rome and the Jews. Luke appears to be kinder to Felix than most other historical writers.¹¹

*"Felix exercised, as Tacitus says, 'the royal prerogative in a slavish sense, with all manner of cruelties and excesses'; it was he who excited the bitter feelings of the Jewish patriots to the highest pitch,"*¹²

His reign was fiercely contentious.

*"According to Josephus, Jewish affairs deteriorated during Felix's governorship. The country was filled with robbers and imposters who deluded the people. Felix captured some criminals, often using deception, which caused the Judean populace to mistrust him."*¹³

Felix also used extreme violence against his foes. He used the sicarri, the knife-wielding assassins, to take and kill Jonathan, the high priest because he was critical of Felix's methods.¹⁴

*"A fierce contest arose at that time between the Jewish and Syrian citizens of Caesarea, and Felix acted unjustly toward the Jews."*¹⁵

It's not difficult to imagine that Felix's reign was a contributing factor to the Jewish revolt that would begin a decade later.

Felix was under duress and needed to gain favor with the Jewish leaders. Paul's situation provided a perfect opportunity.

In the trial, Tertullus spoke for the opposition and used flattery to try to gain goodwill from Felix. Reese points out that such flattery was called an *ex-ordium*, instructions and rules for which can be found in Cicero [Cicero, Orations, II. 78.79.].¹⁶



⁵Ibid.

⁶<http://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-555#acrefore-9780199381135-e-555>

⁷Reese, 850.

⁸Keener, 4:3432

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Keener, 3:3328

¹²<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6067-felix-antonius-felix>

¹³<https://obscurecharacters.com/2015/02/07/felix-an-unscrupulous-governor/>

¹⁴Josephus, Antiq. 20.163, JW 2.256

¹⁵<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6067-felix-antonius-felix>

¹⁶Reese, 837.

Wisely, Tertullus calls Paul a “pestilence, a plague, an epidemic,”¹⁷ and therefore a threat to Felix and, by extension, Roman rule. Likewise, Tertullus says that Paul’s religion is “not licensed by the state.”¹⁸ Accordingly, Felix should fear Paul and silence him in any way possible.

Moreover, “it was politically indiscrete to offend the local elite ‘merely to do justice to a single person.’”¹⁹

Felix has his future to consider and this is an easy way to appease the Jewish leaders. Yet, he must follow rules of order to appear just before his superiors. Meanwhile, his innate curiosity and greed lie in the background.

His plan was politically savvy as he attempted to satisfy all his problems at once. Paul is left in jail

for two years and is therefore limited in his work and influence (Acts 24:27). Jewish leaders are appeased and Felix is able to talk to Paul and seek bribes from him (Acts 24:26).

Nevertheless, in the end, Felix is recalled before Paul’s imprisonment ends and poor Festus is left to try to pick up the pieces of a shattered reign.

Conclusion

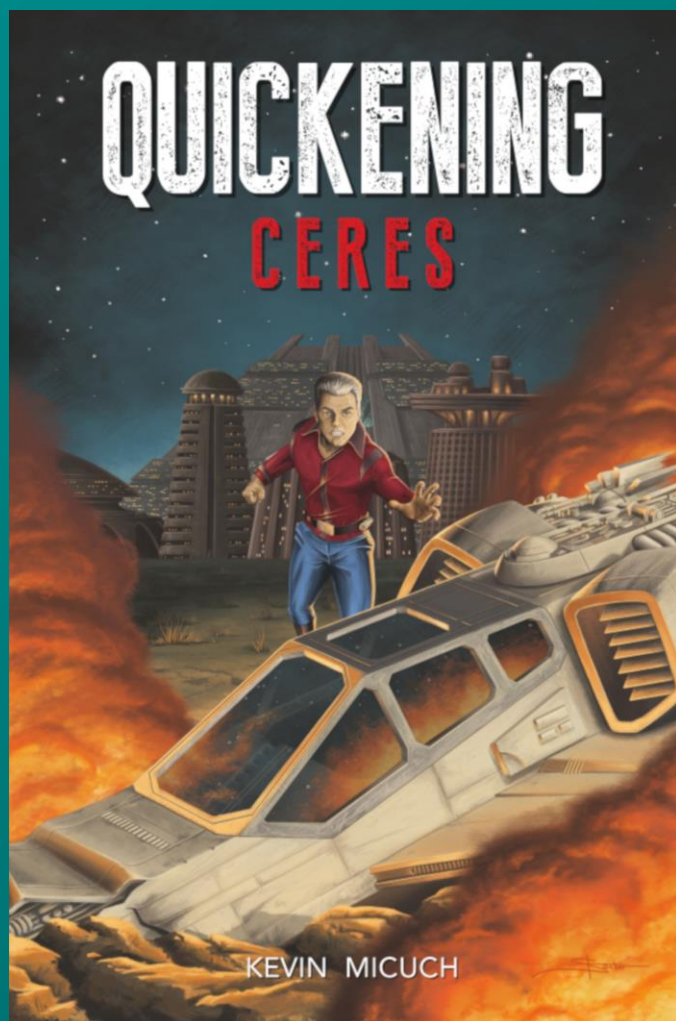
Felix was an amoral social climber who indeed behaved as if he was protected at the highest levels. Pallas’ influence and power brought out the worst in his younger brother and so many suffered, as a result.

Paul’s trial took place in a pressure cooker and it was just waiting for something to set it off. Paul’s mission ran into the maelstrom because the goal of spreading the gospel was too important not to.

¹⁷Ibid., 838.

¹⁸Ibid., 839.

¹⁹Ibid., 4:3423



THE PLAN OF SALVATION IN THE PAGES OF A SCI-FI NOVEL

The brisk evening air opened to a blanket of stars that gleamed across the heavens as Nevek stood outside the local tavern. He looked at the stars in wonder when he noticed that one of them was rapidly growing larger. It didn't take long before it breached the atmosphere and shot over his head like a missile. He turned and watched the projectile vanish into the darkness. An immense explosion rocked the ground beneath his feet.

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Apostasy.

Kyle D. Frank

There has been apostasy in one form or another since the beginning of recorded time. Were not the actions of Eve and her compliant husband a form of apostasy? This was at the very beginning of our race! It continues its relentless crawl down through the centuries even up until our present day where the fruits of this godless, world-embracing process can be seen in the divisions and oppositions among all those who claim to be followers of Jesus. He prayed for the unity of his followers in the 17th chapter of John. The call for unity and correct doctrine are found in many places, such as 1 Corinthians 1:10.

The New Testament pattern was, and is, very clear. In that pattern, each congregation was a separate entity, answerable to a plurality of elders, and ultimately to the Great Shepherd. The reason for this is very simple, and in the ultimate wisdom of God, provides for the greatest resistance against the scourge of apostasy, which stalked the followers of Christ. This would come through the three enemies of God's people: 1) The world 2) the flesh, and 3) the devil. If a congregation were to be overcome by false doctrine and to fall into apostasy, only that congregation would be affected and not the entire brotherhood.

Each congregation's Overseers, known also as Bishops, Pastors, Presbyters, Elders or Shepherds, were equal in rank, and had no preeminent individuals.

The first step in falling away from Christ's blood bought institution was the change in God's organization by having one man rule of a congregation,

rather than the plurality of elders over each autonomous congregation. The following is a relatively short list of such departures.

AD 100—Clement of Rome distinguished between Clergy (Elders/Deacons) and Laity (Members).

AD 110—Ignatius is the first to place Clergy between God and the Laity. (1 Timothy 2:5- "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

AD 115—Elevation of one Elder to preside over the other elders of the same congregation. He took the title of "bishop" with the others becoming "The Presbytry."

AD 120—The first use of "Holy Water."

AD 150—Bishops form board with several congregations all subject to them.

AD 160—Tertullian is the first to expressly assert the "priestly" office.

AD 190—First trace of synods (Greek) and councils (Latin) which became Legislative Bodies. The Bishops of different Provinces began to meet together and they elected a Bishop to preside who was called a Metropolitan. This Metropolitan was generally the Bishop of the capital city of the Province. They claimed power given by Christ to dictate authoritative laws, rules and manners, etc. They were independent of each other until 300 AD.

AD 200—Belief that the Lord's Supper was clothed with a "mystical power" began.

AD 251—First record of sprinkling for baptism is that of Novation (considered inferior). Prayers for the dead began to be offered (Seed of doctrine of

Purgatory), Conflict between Bishops & Presbytery. Bishops triumph, crush Presbytery. Application of the term ‘priests’ directly and exclusively to Ministers and especially to Bishops. Marrying of priests optional at this time.

AD 258—Cyprian applied all the privileges, duties and responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood for preachers.

AD 300—Introduction of Infant Baptism. Patriarchs came into power by being declared ecclesiastical heads of large Division of the Roman Empire. Provinces in the divisions and their Metropolitans became subject to them.

AD 315—Synods began to meet at set times and became permanent institutions.

AD 325—Nicene Council (Nicene Creed). First General or Ecumenical (World Wide) Council, called by Emperor Constantine—300 Clergymen took part. Christianity made National religion, thus combination of church and state. People were paid to be baptized. Nicene Creed drawn up.

AD 385—Priests forbidden to be married by Bishop Siricius.

AD 390—Siricius first to use term “Pope” as title. Special place for confession of sins built in Rome.

AD 397—Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, did not recognize jurisdiction of Rome over all churches.

AD 400—Bishop Augustine developed such doctrines as predestination, fore-ordination, election, preeminent grace, hereditary depravity and purgatory with distinction between mortal and venial sins.

AD 431—Council at Ephesus. Many irregularities, excommunicated each other. Appeals to Emperor Augustine denied that church was built upon Peter. Jerome contested for equal rights for all Bishops.

AD 451—Council at Chalcedon. Resolves that the Bishop of Constantinople was to be given Equal honor and rights as the Bishop of Rome. Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, vehemently opposed this decision. He is considered by some Historians as the first Pope in the present tense of the word.

AD 500—First appearance of a distinction between priestly and secular dress.

AD 553—Council of Constantinople. Only Eastern Bishops attended at first. Vigilius, Bishop of

Rome, refused to attend because the West did not have fair representation, according to him.

AD 588—John the Faster, Bishop of Constantinople, assumes title of “Universal Bishop.” Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, opposing this, wrote to John the Faster, reprimanding him in that he had no right to assume such title.

AD 590-593—Gregory the Great administered the Lord’s Supper with pompous ceremonies and formulated the doctrine of Purgatory in express terms.

AD 601—Phocas, a Centurion, murdered Maurice, Emperor of Rome, and then usurps his throne making himself Emperor.

AD 606—Boniface III prevailed upon Phocas to crown him the Pope (in the genuine term) making him the “Universal Bishop” in wresting this title from the Bishop of Constantinople, John the Faster. *This is the actual beginning of the Roman Catholic Church.*

AD 666—Introduction of Instrumental Music into worship by Pope Valitian.

AD 680—Council at Constantinople. Condemned Monothelite doctrine and defined the “orthodox” doctrine. The Emperor presided; it held 18 sessions. (AD 680-81)

AD 700—Masses for the Dead begin.

AD 787—The Seventh Ecumenical Council was held at Nicea. An image was brought before the council and adored by the council. All who opposed the adoration (worship) were condemned as heretics, that is, excommunicated.

AD 800—Charlemagne crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III. Another union between church and state.

AD 831—Radbortus, a French Abbott, contended that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper became the real (literal) body and blood of Christ. From the beginning of this doctrine came the seed which grew toward transubstantiation.

AD 839—Claudius of Turin denounced image worship, prayers for the dead, worship of saints, worship of Mary, crucifixes, and mediation of priests.

AD 869—Eighth Council. Declared image worship with same honor as “Holy Gospels.”

AD 1053—Greek Orthodox breaks away from Roman Catholic Church.

AD 1073—Pope Gregory VII demands absolute obedience of the Church & Emperor in spiritual and secular realms. (Modern Popes also want this)

AD 1100—Transubstantiation believed, but not as canon law. (Peter of Bruys contended that New Testament should be highest authority. He denied infant baptism, transubstantiation, the Mass and prayers for the dead.)

AD 1215—Transubstantiation made a doctrine by Pope Innocent III. The Papacy reached its acme of power under this Pope. It- maintained this power thru Boniface VIII (1294-1303).

AD 1311—Council of Vienna. Instituted a crusade and measure of reform and that sprinkling and pouring could be substituted for baptism.

AD 1200-1500—The Inquisition. The systematic pursuit of heresy and the punishment of heretics. In most cases, a Bishop or the Pope was judge. At first they were against capital punishment, but by 1200, the Popes condemned men to death and condoned all the other atrocities. No witnesses were allowed for the accused. Life, property, and money were taken from any who opposed Catholicism and the Hierarchy. During 1391 whole towns were destroyed by fire and sword. 1449, 1462, 1470 and 1473 marked the greatest bloodshed. “Heretics” could not hold public office. The unfortunate victims had to pay twice—to the Pope and the Inquisition. There were at least 11,000 forced baptisms in 1210, burnings at the stake, and countless other horrors forced during these periods of Roman Catholic power through the Pope and the Hierarchy.

The Beginning of the Reformation:

John Wycliff (1324-1384)—Called the “morning star of the Reformation.” He made the first translation of the entire Bible into English. 45 years after his death, Catholic authorities burned his books, had his body exhumed, burned, and the ashes thrown in the river Swift.

John Huss (1367-1415)—Contended that Christ was the sole head of the church, denied the authority of the Pope and crusaded against the moral corruption of the Catholic Church. He was imprisoned in 1414 for heresy and burned at the stake 1415.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)—A Catholic priest and a diligent student of the Scriptures, being sickened by the sale of Indulgences and other Catholic

errors, was driven to nail his famous ‘95 Theses’ on the Church door at Wittenberg. He denied the Papacy, and was declared a heretic. He had translated the Bible into German in 1518. He married a former nun in 1525. The Lutheran Church is a result of him, although he did not set out initially to found any church. He merely wanted to reform the Catholic Church. He pled with his followers to call themselves Christians, not Lutherans!

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)—The great leader of the Reformation in Switzerland. He was a Catholic priest and was outspoken against the Papacy and other Catholic errors. He discarded instrumental music, images, monasteries, and transubstantiation.

Erasmus (1465-1536)—One of the most profound scholars of all times, he was in great demand as a speaker and his writings helped pave the way for the Reformation.

Mellanchthon (1497-1560)—A beloved friend of Luther, he drafted the Augsburg Confession of Faith, the first and most famous of Protestant Creeds.

King Henry VIII founded the Church of England in 1535.

John Calvin (1509-1564)—He gave special emphasis to the doctrines of election, predestination and hereditary depravity. He was the founder of Presbyterianism.

Other Apostasies

AD 1545—Council of Trent (it consisted of 18 Sessions, 1545-1563). Pope Paul IV restored the Inquisition. Indisputable authority of Pope was used.

AD 1870—Vatican Council. Infallibility of Pope (ex-cathedra) made law by Pope Pius IX.

AD 1878—Pope Leo XIII declared Catholics owe Complete Submission and Obedience of will to the Church and the Roman Pontiff.

AD 1894—Pope Leo XIII claimed that Popes hold on this earth the place of God Almighty.

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IS APOLOGETICS STILL NECESSARY?

Dewayne Bryant



Attacks on religious faith have increased in both frequency and hostility in the 21st century. Although their influence has already peaked and is now in decline, militant atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris routinely describe Christianity as a vile and repugnant belief system fit only for simpletons and scientific illiterates. They point to the cross as an example of divine child abuse and label the Bible as the most repellent piece of fiction ever written. A century ago, such statements would have drawn nearly universal condemnation. Now, they find a ready home in books, articles, blogs, and podcasts.

No one likes to have their point of view attacked. Christians are no different than anyone else in this regard. Some might argue that believers are a different breed—did Jesus not say to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), and to pray for those who curse us (Luke 6:28) instead of arguing with them? In a society where it seems that every news network, interview, and television program features people sparring with one another, does the world not need more love than disagreement? Why should we not show non-Christians the love of Christ and let that serve as our best argument?

In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul gave a robust defense of the gospel in front of some of the most accomplished thinkers in Athens (Acts 17:17-34). Many Christians today ask whether it is fruitful or not to continue making such defenses. Is apologetics necessary? It does confirm the tenets of faith and give good supporting evidence for belief, but is there a need for it? Why not merely preach and teach the Bible and leave the rest up to God?

Christian Apologetics is Biblical

Although some Christians think of apologetics as the domain of scholars, theologians, and professional apologists, Scripture explicitly commands all followers of Christ to prepare themselves for engaging others in discussions about their faith. The apostle Peter gives us the golden text:

“in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

In this passage, Peter instructs all Christians to equip themselves so that they can explain their belief when questioned by others.

The very fact that someone would question why a Christian has chosen to follow Christ presupposes that believers should be living in such a way as to attract the attention of others. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that his followers should live so that others will see their good deeds and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). People from non-Christian backgrounds will wonder why Christians behave the way we do and may ask why. No doubt some will respond with apathy or hostility. Regardless, Peter tells us to prepare ourselves for such occasions.

It should go without saying that Christians must live in such a way as others may observe their faith. Jesus calls us to proclaim the Good News (Matthew 10:27) and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). However, Christians are to do more than evangelize and serve as visible examples of godly behavior. Jude instructs us to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Paul served as a model example of defending the gospel (Acts 17:15-34; 18:4) and instructed Timothy and Titus to do likewise (2 Timothy 2:23-26; 4:2-5; Titus 1:9-14). Setting a godly example is only one part of our duty as God’s people.

Christian Apologetics is Needed

Apologetics is needed as much now as ever. A glance at our culture should be enough to show that a variety of challenges to the Christian faith exist in the Western world. The competition for human hearts is fierce. Numerous religions and philosophies populate our culture, each one vying for our attention. Many voices cry out for commitment.

Adherents of other worldviews promote beliefs seeking to replace Christian teaching. For instance, we might observe how some scientists have sought to replace the Bible’s cosmology (*ex nihilo* creation) with a modern, scientific version in the Big Bang. Others have created ethical systems to challenge the Bible’s perspective on morality. Critics offer narratives that challenge the witness of history and besmirch the Christian faith by promoting myth as fact. Most Christians have heard old canards such

as “Christianity is responsible for most of the world’s wars,” “Crusaders were bloodthirsty barbarians while their Muslim victims were peaceful and enlightened,” and “Christianity created the Dark Ages.” Though false, critics repeat these assertions endlessly.

Not all critics actively oppose the Christian faith; some merely distort it. Pseudo-Christian groups and teachers will appear in every society regardless of time, place, or culture. Paul warned Timothy that there would be those who would not put up with sound doctrine, but who would instead turn from the truth (2 Timothy 4:2-4). False teachers have perverted the Christian faith for nearly two thousand years and will continue to do so until Christ returns. The defense of the faith also includes an understanding of good theology to counter the claims of other groups who “twist the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16).

We have to look no farther than the entertainment industry to see why apologetics is so vital in our day. Awards ceremonies will always include a few anti-Christian jokes. One particularly egregious example was Kathy Griffin’s acceptance speech at the Emmys. She said, “Now, look, a lot of people come up there and they thank Jesus for this award ... all I can

say is suck it Jesus, this award is my God now.” This reveals just how deeply and pervasively the anti-Christian sentiment can run.

Christian apologetics has a storied history rooted in the work of the apostles themselves. It is a defense of the faith. A person does not need advanced degrees or professional experience to do this. It does require a knowledge of Scripture, careful planning and forethought, and time spent thinking through what to tell our non-believing neighbors when the opportunity arises. Such opportunities will come. And according to Scripture, mounting a defense against other belief systems that seek to undermine, overthrow, or disparage Christianity is part of the work of every believer.

The very fact that someone would question why a Christian has chosen to follow Christ presupposes that believers should be living in such a way as to attract the attention of others.



THE ANGER OF JESUS ANGRY BUT NEVER MAD

Ephesians 4:26-32

Gerald Cowan

In the New Testament, **ORGE** is commonly translated *anger* or *wrath*. It is one of the human emotions felt by Jesus. Jesus experienced all human emotions and all human temptations (Hebrews 4:15). Some are inclined to shrug in disbelief when the anger or wrath of Jesus is mentioned. Those who have never bothered to read much of the scripture and have only heard about the mild, patient, kind, loving, and self-sacrificing Jesus may find it difficult to believe there is another side to his personality. They see him only as someone who let others push him around and finally crucify him – without any protest on his part (Isaiah 53:7, 1 Peter 2:23). And of course, the inference they draw is that he still allows it since he is *the same yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). So, you can step on him, spit on him, vilify his name – but he doesn't resist; he won't hold it against you.

Anger and the various words related to anger – wrath, indignation, displeasure, frustration, harsh-

ness, and condemnation – are thought to be out of place in trying to describe Jesus. The meek and mild Jesus would never get angry, some say. He loves you too much to give you up. The loving Jesus will come and get you and save you from your sins, no matter how far away from him you go. Comforting, if true. It may come as a shock to some, but there is not a shred of truth in this picture of Jesus. If we see only the self-sacrificing, suffering, and sympathetic Jesus weeping in the pain and loneliness of rejection and submitting without protest to the cross, we will have a badly distorted picture of him. Have you noticed that such people are often held in contempt by the world? Nobody has any respect for a “pushover.”

We may have presented lessons in which we looked at the humor of Jesus and something of the human fears and suffering of Jesus, with a hint as well about the joy and happiness of Jesus. In the present lesson we will discuss the anger and indig-

nation of Jesus, as presented in scripture. We will see Jesus as the antagonist and opponent of sinners. We will see Jesus as the righteous judge who will someday have neither time nor patience for those who resist him. We will also see a Jesus whose zeal for the righteousness and glory of God leads him to castigate and condemn both God's enemies and his own.

As in everything else, the anger of Jesus is to be a pattern for our own. We learn how to have righteous anger and indignation, how to avoid sinful and unjustifiable anger. We can be angry in the same way and for the same reasons that he was. He serves as the model for all our attitudes, motives, and actions (1 Peter 2:21-23). The application may be more difficult here than in some other attributes of Jesus. Love and kindness, sympathy and sorrow, etc. are much easier to imitate than righteous anger and indignation. Although we are told to *be angry without sinning* (Ephesians 4:26), we may find our reason is sometimes displaced by anger, so that we say and do things we should not. We let anger prompt us to sin, and we let pride keep us there. Perhaps that is why Paul goes on to say, *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger...be put away from you, along with all malice"* (Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8).

It is certainly difficult – bordering on impossible – to stay focused on the will of God and the good of the other person when one is angry. *"Be slow...to wrath, for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God."* (James 1:19b-20). In studying several examples from the words and activities of a sometimes angry Jesus, we will learn how to *be angry without sinning* (Ephesians 4:26).

The Qualities of the Anger of Jesus That Kept It from Being Sinful.

The anger of Jesus was always RIGHTEOUS, always JUSTIFIED. Jonah provides an effective contrast, an example of unjustified and unrighteous anger (Jonah 4:1-11). Jonah was sitting and pouting because God did not destroy Nineveh after they repented (4:1-4). He was asked by God, *"Is it right for you to be so angry?"* (4:4, 9a). Jonah's answer was, *"Yes, I am right. I am justified in being angry"* (4:9b). Of course Jonah was wrong. His anger was petty, self-righteous, and without concern for what

was right – certainly he had no appreciation for the mercy which God showed to penitent sinners. God made it clear to Jonah that his anger was unjustifiable and misplaced. He was not concerned for the image and glory of God, but only for his personal desires and preferences. Incidentally, notice that Jonah was angry at God, not at the Ninevites. **One is never right to be angry at God**, even when He asks something difficult and unpleasant of us, something contrary to our own desires.

On occasions when Jesus displayed anger it was never directed at God, but was in defense of God and directed against His detractors.

The anger of Jesus was always TEMPERATE, RESTRAINED. It never degenerated to a loss of self-control; it never went beyond the bounds of propriety. One of the synonyms we often use for anger is "madness;" one who is angry is said to be "mad" at or about something. The Greek word **ANOIA** means irrational anger, senseless or foolish activity prompted by emotional overload; it is what we mean by "losing one's temper." Jesus was never accused or guilty of "being mad" or "losing his temper" – which would be a sinful anger.

There was one occasion when Jesus was angry and some of those present "got mad" – subject to irrational anger – at what he said and did. We will examine it in this lesson. Jesus was never angry at the innocent, but only at the guilty – especially at guilty hypocrites. We will say more about that too.

Examples of the Righteous Anger of Jesus, and Some Lessons We Can Learn and Apply from Them.

He showed anger at the healing of a man's withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11). Those present watched him, to see if they could accuse him of wrong doing, especially a violation of the Sabbath (Luke 6:7). He knew their thoughts, and asked them whether it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, even to save life (Luke 6:8-9). They refused to answer (Mark 3:4). He looked at every one there (Luke 6:10) with anger (**ORGE**), being grieved, disturbed, and distressed by the hardness of their hearts (Mark 3:5).

When he then healed the man, the scribes and Pharisees were *filled with anger/madness (ANOIA)*

and they talked among themselves and with others about what they could do to him, how they could destroy him (Luke 6:11, Mark 3:6). Was his anger justified, was it righteous? Did he go too far, or did he show admirable restraint? It was justified, restrained, and righteous. Was their anger justified, righteous, reasonable, restrained? No, it was sin, out of control.

The cleansing of the temple, driving out the moneychangers, sellers of animals, etc. showed anger in Jesus (John 2:13-17). This occasion was very early in the ministry of Jesus. There was a similar incident near the end of his ministry (Matthew 21:12-16, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-47). Because of the similarity in the accounts, some assume they are contradictory accounts of the same event, that at least one (perhaps three) of the writers are mistaken about when it happened. If that were true, it would destroy the claims of inspiration for all the gospel writers – and for the whole New Testament. They are separate events. Notice something interesting, a necessary inference from the two events: the cleansing did not last long; the improper activity commenced again, and so he had to repeat the action.

There is nothing said about anger, as such, in any of the accounts. But it may not be out of order to infer anger – certainly indignation and displeasure. Why was he angry, indignant, displeased? Because they were defiling the house of God, and by inference they were reproaching God as well. The whole thing brought to the mind of the disciples the scripture which speaks of consuming zeal for God and His house and His words, against His enemies (Psalm 69:9, Psalm 119:139). That being the case we can say that the anger of Jesus was certainly justified, and there could be no sin in defending the sanctity of the temple.

He showed displeasure because the disciples were preventing children from being brought to him (Mark 10:13-15). The disciples rebuked those who were bringing children for Christ to touch and bless. Perhaps they thought Jesus should not have to be bothered with children. They misunderstood his mission, and certainly misunderstood his concern for people – his love and appreciation for the innocent. He used the innocence of children to teach the disciples a lesson about the nature of the kingdom and those who were part of it.

He showed anger in his denunciation of the hypocrisy, the stubborn and willful blindness on the part of recognized or self-proclaimed religious leaders (Matthew 23:13-31). There is no indication that he was angry at those who were misled, especially when they were at the mercy of their teachers and leaders. No doubt there is sympathy for those who are led astray without knowing it, or without being able to correct the errors on their own. But this does not necessarily mean that their errors are not counted against them. One who accepts and follows a false teacher without question or with no effort to prove or disprove what is taught, may be classed as willingly ignorant – for this there is no excuse (2 Peter 3:7, Romans 1:18-22). Jesus reserved his harshest words of criticism and condemnation for those who know or could know the truth, but they not only refuse to do the truth and enter the kingdom of God themselves, they also prevent others from entering in (Matthew 23:13, Luke 11:52). “*You have taken away the key of knowledge...*”

Some charge Jesus with unreasonable anger and improper cursing of a fig tree that didn't happen to have fruit when he was hungry (Mark 11:12-14, 20-22). As Mark says, “*When (Jesus) came to the tree he found nothing but leaves, for it was not yet the time of figs.*” This deserves special attention because it does have something to say, indirectly, about the anger or wrath of the Lord, but not in any petty or selfish way. It was not petulant or petty anger; there is no curse pronounced because of frustrated desires. That would certainly be beneath the dignity of the one who was to teach us what we ought to be, and not just to mirror what we so often are. When the truth about this species of Palestinian figs is known, any charge of unreasonable anger will disappear. At about the same time that leaves start to appear a small bud also appears, and by the time the foliage is full, the buds, called **TAQSH** or pre-figs, are fully formed. The actual fruit develops about six weeks later. The pre-figs are edible. Peasants and hungry people eat them. A fig tree with leaves but no **TAQSH**, no pre-figs was a pretender, a hypocrite. What Jesus gave the disciples, and us, is an acted out parable that teaches two things. First, the power of prayer – (the tree withered at his implied prayer, 11:20-23). Second, and more important, an indication of the wrath of God

that will come upon people who claim or pretend to be fruitful for him, but are not (11:14-15).

There is a startling and seemingly incongruous statement about the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:16-17). You don't except a lamb to be angry, to demonstrate fierce wrath. Perhaps the trouble is that people forget that Jesus is also *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* (Revelation 5:5; compare Romans 11:22 *Behold the goodness and the severity of God*). Wrath is intolerance of sin; unwillingness and inability to accept, approve, or reward sin; the willingness, intent, and ability to actually punish sin (Hebrews 3:17, 4:3). The wrath of the Lamb is identical to the wrath of God, to be brought against all sinners in the judgment (Romans 2:6-11). Even there and then wrath will be righteous – it will be the just result of the person's own attitudes, actions, and choices.

Some Concluding Thoughts:

Ephesians 4:26 says, “*Be angry and do not sin.*” What does that mean, and how can we do it? It means that anger is not necessarily or always sinful, but it can easily become so. It is not interrogatory: “Can you be angry and not sin?” It is not suggestive: “If you get angry, try not to sin.” It is not pragmatic: “If you can't be angry without sinning, don't get angry.” It is imperative: “Be angry, but do not sin in or because of your anger. Be sinlessly angry.” It does not mean one should never be angry about anything. Anger can be righteous and justified. The anger that is hostile, vengeful, malicious, the product of ill-will or hatred or prejudice, seeking simply to hurt, embarrass, cause loss or destruction for another is always sinful.

How can anger be righteous? When is righteous anger justified? When it is in defense of the innocent or weak and defenseless – this may entail standing with and for the victims of the genocide of abortion and murder of unwanted unborn children. It is certainly right to direct anger at criminals who prey upon others by abusing them, threatening them, stealing from them, making merchandise of them, trafficking them. Those who exploit the fears, fantasies (such as gender dysphoria), and prejudices to control others, to control them or enlist them as aides against one's own enemies, lying to them to

incite them to violence or to gain their support (politicians are notoriously guilty, but unscrupulous preachers can also fit here), they deserve righteous anger too. It is right to be angry at such abusers and try to limit or prevent their success.

On a different note, it is right to be angry at those who distort the words of God for personal gain or to control the masses of people. The proliferating religious health and wealth scams that prey upon the selfish and greedy, those who promise things in the name of God that He will not and cannot give are deserving of contempt as well as anger. Those who threaten others with fear of punishment and claim to have power to prevent one from heaven and perhaps consign him or her to hell (*de rigeur* procedure in some religious groups or cults) also deserve anger and contempt. Fear-mongering in the name of God is as reprehensible as making false promises of reward in the name of God. All such things deserve to be exposed and put out of business, not only to protect the victims but to defend the name and honor of God and the religion of Christ.

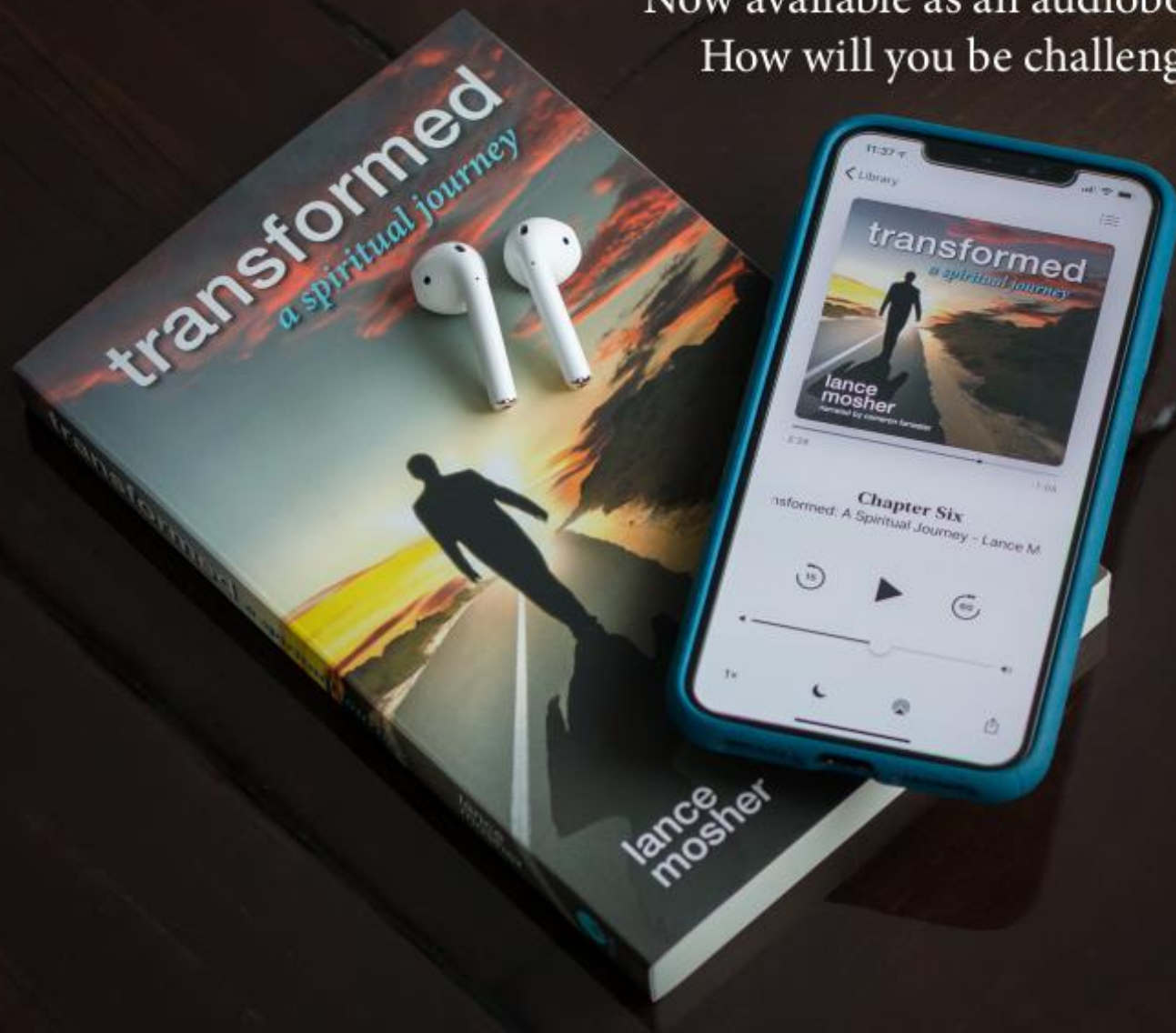
We should be slow to anger (James 1:19) – taking the Lord's example (Nahum 1:3). Jesus' anger at injustice, stubbornness, hypocrisy, and deliberate sin does not justify us in “flaring up” about anything that runs counter to our desires or wishes. Ordinary anger does not do the work of God (James 1:20). Never be angry without a just/righteous cause (Matthew 5:22). Improperly caused, unrighteous, or unjustified anger puts one in danger of the judgment and the hell of fire (Matthew 5:21-22). Incidentally, hell is mentioned about 24 times in the New Testament, 14 times in the words of Jesus! Nobody said more about hell than Jesus did.

As surely as there is a time for every purpose under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8), there is a time to be righteously angry in promoting the cause of God and to stand against His enemies. Jesus did. We can too, and must. *Be angry! But be righteous – do not let anger lead to sin.*

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THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF JUDAS

Samuel Stinson

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born"

(Matthew 26:24, KJV)

THE JUDAS KISS.

To be called Judas is never a compliment. This truth is culturally evident in that human memory remembers the sin of Judas Iscariot in handing over Jesus Christ to the Romans. Indeed, Jesus tells us it would be better if this Judas had never been born.

The surname of this Judas, Iscariot, meaning one who comes from the village of Kerioth, has taken an epithetical meaning as well: one who is iscariotic, the embracer of this woe.

A traitor, one who hands over another?

"Surely is it not I, rabbi?" he had asked our Lord.

But Jesus replied that he himself had said it. Indeed, the two men had dipped their bread in the same oil. Jesus had given the bread from the sop to this man. The oil-soaked fragment of bread still sat in Judas' stomach, the flavor of the thick bitter oil still on his tongue.

Judas could not deny the accusation, as he had personally made it against himself, just as Pontius Pilate had also declared that Jesus was the king of the Jews and the high priest had declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

Yet this Judas stands here in the act, in his sweat-stained ankle-length tunic with his hairy hand extended, firmly clutching his sweaty leather purse

whose innards swell with thirty corroded silver coins. Thirty silver pieces, thirty tetradrachmas, the price of a slave, wages for a third of a year, would bring some minor small degree of wealth to this Judas, providing him the benefit of having handed over this man's blood.

This Judas, born of a woman as the rabbi had been, believed his cause to be just and good, and was convinced in his heart that the action was sound. The revolution was at hand, the people ready—all they needed was a leader to lead the fight against Roman occupation. All of Israel who are woman-born ought to take up arms and resist the occupation, this Judas had believed firmly. It would only be a mark of cowardice to not take up the mantle, to take up blades in defense of the nation for the cause politic. That weak flesh must war in carnal and political matters—why would the spirit not follow suit?

This Judas bears the namesake of the patriarch, as well as the great priest Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias, who led the successful revolt with his family during the time of Seleucids—this one was a revolutionary in a time fit for revolutions.

Yet this Judas has misread the revolution in front of him.

The wind moves, and revolves as it will.

This Judas was counted as one of the twelve, an apostle of those sent out by Jesus in his first commission.

This same Judas had courted the troops, becoming guide to the officers and men, that swaying mass with lantern, sword, and club, along the path, and had located Jesus along with the other disciples and signified his identity with a kiss.

"Rabbi!" he had announced with his graveled voice, before his thin dry lips brushed against the holy face.

Judas recalls the moment when the disciple in a rush came forward then with the sword and sliced the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus. In his heart, Judas perhaps had hoped that this would be the inciting moment in which the rabbi would shout, "To arms! Israel, to arms! Fight for your Messiah! Rout the Roman occupation!" and that the disciples

would leave the revolt and the revolution would begin.

Maybe it would take such a betrayal to recruit the Messiah to carry the banner for the righteous cause, and to restore the kingdom to Israel?

Perhaps Judas, too, had come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

But instead, Jesus had told the disciple Simon Peter to put away the sword, as all who take the weapon up to fight for their living will also die upon such weapons. Jesus also had reached out his hand and in an instant restored the ear of Malchus.

Whatever hopes Judas bore of this being the moment faded, as Jesus allowed himself to be taken by the Romans instead of resisting them.

Judas now clutches the purse tightly, recalling back to that nagging presence with him during the supper. It was no small demon or devil or evil spirit that had filled Judas as he supped. That warmth was with him and courted him, carrying out his actions that his heart had already disposed him to execute.

It was Satan himself, the adversary, the enemy of God, whose works the Son of Man appeared to destroy, who resided in this Judas.

“What you are about to do, do quickly,” the rabbi had said.

The other disciples had thought Jesus told Judas to do something for the poor perhaps, as Judas, the one who pilfered the money box, would also be the one to dispense the funds for the party.

But Jesus knew who it was who had come into that disciple’s heart, and he knew that he must bear the cup that was given to him.

Judas wonders to himself, feeling the curve of each coin protruding from the purse, if he had any control over what it was he had done. Was Judas simply another vessel, as Pharaoh had been, for carrying out the will of God? Could he have resisted this pull?

Judas may have known then that this act, handing over the Messiah, would lead to Jesus’s sorrowful death on the cross of Calvary. He, too, may have suspected that his own death would be imminent, in that moment of sadness.

Viewing the crucifixion, Judas would know that this slave’s price would not fill the hollowness within him that knowledge of his betrayal of the Lord had left. This Judas who had had his share in the

ministry of Christ, his office would be desolate and taken by another, his bones would come to rest in the field, his body hung, his insides spilt. Judas may have known this was coming.

This Judas feels guilt. He now knows that what was done cannot be undone, that Jesus’s betrayal was a fact and at hand, that he could not escape despair, weeping, and gnashing. Judas sees that Jesus had been condemned, and that there would be no chance to reverse this.

Then this Judas feels remorse.

To his credit, whatever that might add up to.

It was that thought, Jesus hanging cruelly, being mocked, spat upon, and harassed by his tormentors that drives remorse for this Judas.

That revolution that Judas desired in his heart most dearly would not come to pass; this Messiah would not lead the armed rebellion, and would not sit upon David’s physical throne as King over the defeated Romans.

In that moment, Judas knows that he has betrayed innocent blood. He faces down the chief priest and elders, thrusting the purse of corroded coins in their faces. That emotion in the pit of Judas’ stomach fits the bill as he contemplates what the Romans are doing to Jesus at this moment: This Judas wishes he had not been born.

Judas begins, hoping for atonement in the presence of Israel’s holy men.

“I have sinned—”

“What is that to us? See—”

The men already had their hands up and extended, and at saying this they spin around and walk quickly together from the revolutionary.

The men do not immediately see this Judas open the purse and pick out each coin with sweaty abandon.

But they with backs turned hear the tingling of the coins as each one does, thirty in all, bounce outward into the open temple sanctuary, under the day’s quickly fading light.

THE PASSION

from

JOHN'S PERSPECTIVE

Roderick L. Ross

Passion is not a term used in most Bibles,¹ so we go to non-biblical sources to define our terms.

*The Passion of Christ, from the Latin *pator* meaning “suffer,” refers to those sufferings our Lord endured for our redemption from the agony in the garden until His death on Calvary. The Passion Narratives of the Gospels provide the details of our Lord’s passion, and at least to some extent, they are corroborated by contemporary Roman historians — Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny the Younger. Archeological discoveries combined with modern medical examination provide an accurate picture of what our Lord endured.*²

Some sources limit the Passion to the time which followed the Last Supper, as above; others speak of the Passion as the last week of Jesus’ life. If that is the case, then a large portion of the Gospel of John (chapters 12-19, and 20-21 if you include the Resurrection and Appearances) records what has been called The Passion Week.

¹ The KJV uses the word “passion” in Acts 1 to describe the suffering of Jesus.

² Saunders, Fr. William. *The Passion of Jesus Christ*. <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-passion-of-jesus-christ.html>

The apostle John was the son of Zebedee and Salome. His brother, James, was also a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. From John 19:25 and Mark 15:40-41 some have surmised John to be the cousin of Jesus and John the Baptist (his mother, Salome, being the sister of Mary); but this is uncertain.³

Although noted in later life as “the apostle of love,” John – along with his brother James – are surnamed by Jesus “Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder” (Mark 3:16). This undoubtedly referring to their love of the pre-eminence and quick temper (Luke 9:51-56; Mark 10:35-40).

The fourth Gospel humbly refers to John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was a part of what some have referred to as the “inner council” in being present at the chamber of death (Mark 5:35-43), at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9), at the conversation foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:1-31), and at the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 25:36-46). He also is the first to the empty grave following the resurrection (John 20:1-10).

He is spoken in connection with Peter in the book of Acts, being present in Jerusalem and in Samaria.

Later, in the book of Revelation, we find John exiled on the isle of Patmos for preaching Christ.

³ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: “John the Apostle”

For what else is told concerning the life of John, the uncertainty of tradition becomes the source. It is said that prior to the destruction of Jerusalem he went to Ephesus, and from there to Rome. At Rome, John is said to have been placed in boiling oil from which he is miraculously preserved unhurt. Other legends have John drinking poison and being unhurt. He then returned to Ephesus where he wrote I, II, & III John to meet the rising heresies in the church. He is said to die somewhere between 89 and 120 AD.

John was an apostle of Jesus Christ, a disciple of Jesus, a friend (the disciple whom Jesus loved), and a relative (as we suppose). He exhibits the concern of a relative, the love of a friend, the meticulousness of a disciple, and the boldness of an apostle.

Especially in Jesus' last hours, as a relative he remains close enough to Jesus to be an eye-witness of His trials and sufferings. He remains close to Jesus' mother, Mary, and the other women.

As a friend his tenderness is seen not only in the description of the physical suffering of the Savior, but in the recognition of the internal strife that He experiences with His disciples and His coming crucifixion.

As a disciple (student) it is as though John is taking notes as Jesus speaks to the disciples, preparing them for what they are about to face. He is learning the lessons, but he is observing the manner Jesus is conducting Himself – being more concerned with His disciples as He approaches death than He is worried about what is going to happen to Him.

The apostle sees the big picture. With boldness He declares Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life;” no man comes to the Father except by Jesus. What transpires is the fulfillment of prophecy. It is all the plan of God that men might have eternal life. Belief in the crucified Savior is paramount. Jesus is “Lord and God.”

A relative

John as (we suppose) a relative of Jesus, shows a relative's concern for his Master. Nothing illustrates this better than his proximity to Mary during the crucifixion.

(John 19:25-27) Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of

Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. (KJV)

This group consists of the mother of Jesus, Jesus' aunt (presumably John's mother), the other Mary, and Mary Magdalene. Dutifully accompanying and consoling his mother and aunt, John is to be found close to Jesus at the crucifixion. This allows Jesus to entrust the care of His mother, Mary, to John. A responsibility that John takes seriously. Immediately, from that time on, John cares for Mary (his aunt) as he would his own mother.

(Ephesians 6:2-3) Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

A friend

John is that “disciple whom Jesus loved.” As a relative he had a duty, as a friend he was immersed in the person emotionally. He speaks of personal moments before He faced the difficulties, like the dinner at the house of Lazarus (12:1-11), and intimate details like his personal relationship with the house of the high priest that allowed Peter to enter where Jesus was being questioned. (18:12-24). His personal relationship with Jesus called for Him to explain why His friend would do what He did. (12:20-36). It was a selfless act. This is illustrated by His washing the disciples' feet and the lesson it conveyed. (13:1-20) He did not do it for Himself but for the world. His prayer in the garden first for Himself (17:1-5), then for His disciples (17:6-19), and then for future believers (17:20-26) emphasizes His concern for others.

Only a friend, a true friend, would continue to be close to Jesus after He is arrested (18:1-11). How it must have torn at his heart as he hears another friend deny Jesus so vehemently. (18:15-28, 25-27) How it must have broken his heart as he hears Annas and Caiaphas (whom he knows) attempt to find

justification to kill Jesus. (18:12-14. 19-24). How he felt the internal struggle of Pilate as he tried to find a way to release Jesus (17:28-40).

The pain which John must have experienced at Jesus is scourged with the cat-of-nine-tails in preparation for His crucifixion, knowing that it would increase the pain and affliction (19:1-15).

Added to this is the mocking of the soldiers as they place a make-shift crown of thorns, and a “royal” robe on Jesus, slapping Him and laughing at Him.

The turmoil he must have suffered as he heard the crowd become a mob and cry, “CRUCIFY HIM!” The tears that must have formed in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks as they chose a criminal rather than his innocent Friend to be released.

Only a friend would and could accompany Him as He traveled the last steps of His journey here on earth. (19:16-30). Golgatha, the place of the skull, is where Jesus is nailed to the cross, with common thieves. Standing there with his own mother, the mother of Jesus, the other Mary, and Mary Magdalene, he can read the words placed above his head: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. These words written in Hebrew (the language of the Jews), in Greek (the language of the people), and in Latin (the language of the government) are telling and painful for those who have delivered Him to be crucified.

John must have been bewildered when Mary Magdalene reports that Jesus’ body is not in the sepulcher. (20:1-10) He outruns Peter to the spot but stops short of entering. Looking in and seeing the burial clothes laying there, John joyfully believes that Jesus is resurrected.

A disciple

A disciple is a student. He learns from his teacher. And more importantly, he mimics his role model.

John, the disciple, takes careful note of what is happening to Jesus. He is like a student taking notes in class.

He notes that the events that led to His death were instigated by the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead (11:45-47). As Jesus explains why He must die, John pays close attention (12:20-36). Jesus explains that most do not believe in Him, but

their unbelief does not change either the facts or His determination to provide the opportunity for salvation for mankind (12:37-43).

Carefully John notes the demeanor of Jesus as He washes the disciples feet (13:1-20).

Jesus’ selflessness is not lost on John. In the parting words given to the disciples and in the prayer in the garden, Jesus wants His disciples to be prepared for what is to come – not only in His crucifixion, but in what they will experience after He is gone and they fulfill their responsibilities to carry forth the message.

They need to have faith and confidence in Jesus as they do the Father (14:1-4). They will not be left without the comfort and the ability to accomplish their duties with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (14:15-31; 16:5-16). It is in Jesus they will find everything that they need, as He expressed in The Vine and the Branches (15:1-16). The Father will answer whatever they ask by Jesus’ authority and in His name (16:17-33).

Jesus then prays. First for Himself (17:1-5), then for His disciples (17:6-19), and then for those whom the disciples would teach (17:20-26) [which would include not only those who heard them speak, but also those who would read their writings].

The meticulousness of the details of Jesus’ arrest, trials, and crucifixion (18-19) show that even though he was emotionally involved in the scenes around him, John never quit being the observant disciple.

John becomes “the apostle of love,” because that is what he saw in Jesus.

(John 15:12-14) This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

An apostle

An apostle is “one sent out.” He is an emissary, a missionary, an ambassador. The apostles of Christ were witnesses of His resurrection, that event which more than any other declared Jesus to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4).

John's purpose in writing his Gospel is clearly stated:

(John 20:30-31) And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

From the preparation of Jesus' body for His death by Mary (12:1-11), John shows that these events are not instigated by man but orchestrated by God. As He rides into Jerusalem upon a donkey, this triumphal entry is a matter of the fulfillment of prophecy (12:12-19). The reason He must die is a matter of prophecy (12:20-26). The reason most do not believe is a matter of prophecy (12:37-43). His silence at His trial is a matter of prophecy (18:26-19:16). Even the events on the cross are a matter of prophecy – seemingly minor details like the soldiers

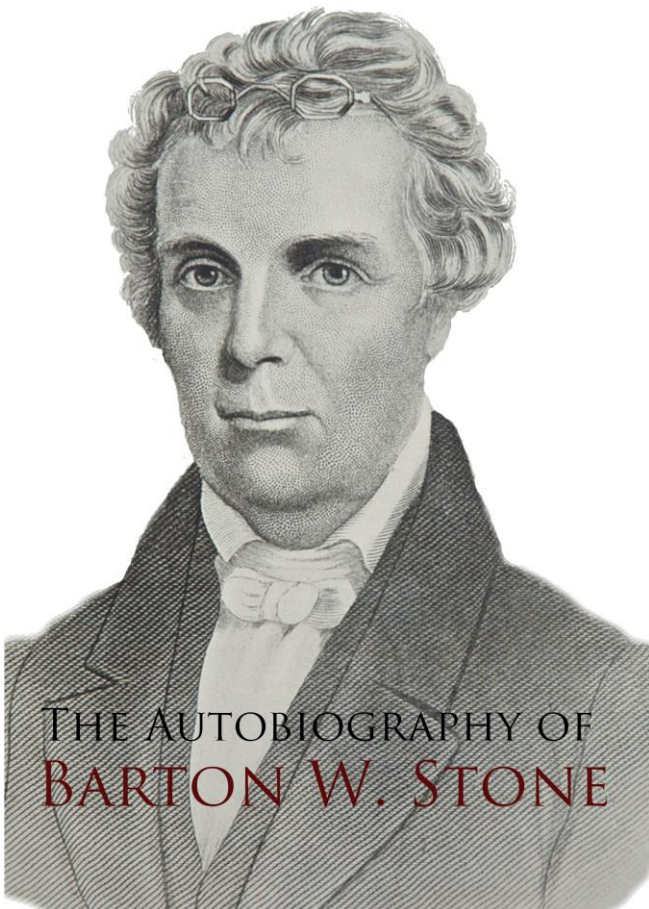
gambling for His clothing and Him saying "I thirst" (19:17-37).

The story does not end with the suffering of Jesus and His death. On the first day of the week He arises. (20:1-21:14).

Jesus is proclaimed to be, in the words of Thomas, "My Lord and My God." Everything that John says is calculated to bring the reader to this conclusion. Everything is said to bring them to faith.

John carefully selects what he says to present Jesus as the Messiah (Hebrew for 'Christ'), as the Son of God (the only-begotten Son of God). There is no claim to speak of everything – only those things which were necessary.

(John 21:25) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.



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Matthew

Bradley S. Cobb

Scripturally speaking, there are not a lot of things that we know about Matthew, but the few things we *do* know are interesting for certain.

Matthew the Tax Collector

The name “Matthew,” which means “Gift of God,” appears five times in Scripture—all but one of those is the listing of the names of the apostles.¹ If not for Matthew himself writing his gospel account, we would not know anything about him except for the fact that he was one of the apostles.² Matthew 9:9 is the key to everything else we know about this disciple of Jesus Christ:

As Jesus passed forth from there [the house], he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office: and He

says to him, “Follow me.” And he arose and followed Him.

This tax office, or tax booth³ was located on the outskirts of Capernaum,⁴ next to the Sea of Galilee in order to charge taxes on the merchandise that came into Galilee from the ships on the sea, as well as the merchants who came from the north. This port was quite busy, necessitating the employment of several “publicans” or “tax collectors” for the job. Matthew was one of these men.

Apparently, Matthew did quite well as a tax collector, for he had a “great feast in his own house” immediately after being called by Jesus, and there “was a great company of tax collectors and of others that sat down with them.”⁵ Jesus’ disciples⁶ were also present,



¹ Matthew 10:1-3; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16; and Acts 1:13.

² Of course, the fact that he was one of the apostles tells us that he was also (1) a Jew, (2) a Galilean, (3) religiously-minded, (4) one who forsook Jesus, (5) one who preached on Pentecost, and (6) all the other things that involved all of the apostles. But as far as any *personal* information about him, we have only what we know because of Matthew’s own writing.

³ This was not a walled building, but more of an open stand where all incoming and outgoing merchandise was taxed by Herod.

⁴ Compare Mark 2:1, 13-14.

⁵ Luke 5:27-29. Here, Matthew is called “Levi.” We will see in a later section that they Levi and Matthew are one and the same person.

along with some of the Pharisees and disciples of John.⁷ This shows that Matthew didn't live in a small house.

This feast, according to several commentators, was a farewell feast to his friends and family.⁸ It may indicate that Matthew sold his ancestral property, or turned it over to the nearest male relative. However, it may have also simply been a great feat in honor of Jesus, the miracle-working Man of God who had been teaching in that area for some time.

The tax collectors were hated by the Jews at large, but especially by the Pharisees and Zealots, because ultimately they were collecting taxes for the Roman government—the government that was ruling over the Jews (plus, no one really likes the IRS today, either). Being a tax collector was, to the Pharisees, the same as renouncing Judaism and removing yourself from the family of God. It is because of how the Pharisees treated the tax collectors that Jesus gave the parable of the Lost Son (usually called “the Prodigal Son”), showing that the tax collectors were still God's children, and still loved by Him.⁹

The zealots were revolutionaries who would even stoop to assassinating government officials (like tax collectors) in their quest to overthrow Roman rule. One of the other apostles, Simon the Canaanite, was a Zealot.¹⁰ But in Christ, these two political enemies were united in love, peace, and mission for their Master.

Matthew, Whose Name was also Levi

Mark and Luke both record the call of Matthew, but they don't call him “Matthew” in that account. Instead, they call him “Levi.” Some have surmised that they did this so as to not embarrass him;¹¹ but that argument seems weak, since Matthew's gospel was written and distributed before either of the others began theirs.¹² Others have suggested that “Le-

vi” was his Hebrew name, and that “Matthew” was the name he used as a tax collector,¹³ though Matthew is a Hebrew name as well. The suggestion that seems most likely is that upon being called to follow Jesus, he changed his name (or perhaps Jesus did, as He did with Simon Peter) to reflect his new life.¹⁴ From the time he was selected by Jesus to be an apostle, he was called “Matthew,”¹⁵ which is another version of the name “Matthias.”

Given that his original name was “Levi,” it seems safe to conclude that he was most likely from the tribe of Levi. If this assumption is correct, then it also gives us some knowledge of one of the other apostles, James the son of Alphaeus.¹⁶

Matthew, the Son of Alphaeus

Mark is the only writer who informs us that Matthew's father was named “Alphaeus,” but that presents us with another piece of the apostolic puzzle; because there is another apostle who is also known as “son of Alphaeus,” James. Thus, contrary to the opinion of several learned writers, Matthew and James were brothers.¹⁷

the ancient writers that Matthew wrote his gospel first. Additionally, though space forbids a more detailed explanation, Matthew's gospel was clearly written to the Jews, the ones to whom the gospel was first taken. There are some traditions that place the death of Bartholomew in AD 44, and those same traditions also say that he took a copy of Matthew's gospel account with him as he preached. Mark was a man whose influence was almost non-existent until the late 50s/early 60s; and Luke's gospel was written around AD 60 as well. See H. Leo Boles *Commentary on Matthew*, pages x-xi (introduction), as well as J.W. McGarvey's *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, pages 9-10. “Some of the ancients give the eighth year after the ascension as the date, others the fifteenth” (Edwin W. Rice, *People's Dictionary of the Bible*, “Matthew”).

¹³ *American Tract Society Bible Dictionary*, “Matthew.”

¹⁴ James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, “Matthew.” See also *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, “Matthew.”

¹⁵ Lest anyone decide to argue that Matthew the tax collector is different from Matthew the apostle, the man himself makes it clear: the apostle was “Matthew, the tax collector” (Matthew 10:3).

¹⁶ For more on this apostle, see the next chapter.

¹⁷ Mark calls both men “son of Alphaeus,” and there is no reason for doing so if there was no connection. Fausset, James Hastings, and the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* disagree, but the only argument they give is that Matthew and James aren't together in the lists of the apostles. Apparently when Matthew himself lists James right after himself, that doesn't count (Matthew 10:3).

⁶ At this point, it certainly included Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew (Nathanael), if not more.

⁷ These groups both approached Jesus and His disciples at this feast in Mark 2.

⁸ See *Eastman's Bible Dictionary*, “Matthew.”

⁹ Read Luke 15.

¹⁰ See Chapter Eleven. Compare Matthew 10:4 with Luke 6:15.

¹¹ *Bridgeway Bible Dictionary*, “Matthew.”

¹² I realize there is debate among some liberal scholars about the “Primacy of Mark,” but it was the universal belief of

“Alphaeus” is a Greek name which means “Chief.”¹⁸ Many writers identify him as Cleopas.¹⁹ Other writers, specifically among the Catholics and Anglicans, try to make him the brother-in-law of Jesus’ mother, Mary, which is absurd.²⁰ If indeed Alphaeus and Cleopas are the same person, then Matthew’s father was also a disciple, one of the two on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. It would also mean that Matthew’s mother was a disciple, one of the women who were at the cross,²¹ as well as one of the women who were in the upper room prior to Pentecost.²²

Matthew the Author

The Gospel which bears the name *Matthew* was written early.²³ Though some have attempted to dispute the authorship, there exists no copy of the first gospel which has any other name attached to it as author. The early church writers quoted from it as authoritative, and identified the tax collector as the one who wrote it.

Papias says “Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language.”²⁴ To this, Irenaeus (AD 120-202) agrees, saying that “Matthew issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect.”²⁵ Tradition is pretty consistent in saying that Bartholomew took with him a copy of it in Hebrew when he went on his missionary journeys. And the *Acts of Barnabas* repeatedly related the tra-

dition that Matthew gave Barnabas a copy of his gospel in order to help him teach the Jews.²⁶

Matthew, According to Tradition

With Matthew, perhaps more than any of the other apostles, there is confusion about some of the traditions surrounding him. This is due, for the most part, to confusion among some ancient writers between him and Matthias (whose name is almost identical in Greek). So there is uncertainty as to which of the two apostles is spoken of.

It is said by Clement of Alexandria (AD 153-217) that “the apostle Matthew partook of seeds and nuts [hard-shelled fruits], and vegetables, without flesh [meat].”²⁷ The same author asserts that Matthew was one of the apostles who did not die a martyr’s death.²⁸

The Gnostics had a tradition that, “Matthew the apostle constantly said, that ‘if the neighbor of an elect man sins, the elect man [also] has sinned. For had he conducted himself as the Word prescribes, his neighbor also would have been filled with such reverence for the life he led as not to sin.’”²⁹

A man claiming to be Clement of Rome (who lived in the first century)³⁰ recorded that Matthew engaged the high priest at the temple in Jerusalem in a public debate. The priest began:

...exalting with many praises the rite or sacrifice which had been bestowed by God upon the human race for the remission of sins, he found fault with the baptism of our Jesus, as having been recently brought in in opposition to the sacrifices. But Matthew, meeting his propositions, showed clearly, that whoever will not obtain the baptism of Jesus shall not

¹⁸ *Hitchcock’s Bible Names*, though Thayer gives the meaning as “changing.”

¹⁹ It is said that the Greek name *Alphaeus* is the same as the Aramaic name *Cleopas*. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (see article “Alphaeus”) gives the arguments for this identification, but concludes that each of the points are nothing more than suppositions which cannot be proven.

²⁰ The reasoning behind this will be detailed in the next article in this series, and will be proven false.

²¹ John 19:25

²² Acts 1:13-14.

²³ As mentioned in a previous footnote, the ancients universally agreed that Matthew was the first gospel written. Some of them even said it was written within eight years of the ascension, AD 38.

²⁴ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, page 155.

²⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 3, chapter 1. *Ante Nicene-Fathers*, Vol. 1, page 414. The same author (*Against Heresies*, Book 1, ch. 26, par. 2) said that the Ebionites (A group of militant Christian Jews who rejected Paul’s writings and the possibility of Gentile salvation) only used Matthew’s gospel. This points to its continued existence in Hebrew form.

²⁶ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 494-495

²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, Book 2, chapter 1. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, page 241.

²⁸ However, Clement gives “Matthew” and “Levi” as different men in the list. *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, Book 4, chapter 9. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, page 422.

²⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, Book 7, chapter 13. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, page 547.

³⁰ There is debate as to whether this is truly written by Clement, one of his hearers, or someone over 200 years later. See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 73-74 for more details.

*only be deprived of the kingdom of heaven, but shall not be without peril at the resurrection of the dead, even though he be for-titled by the prerogative of a good life and an upright disposition. Having made these and such statements, Matthew stopped.*³¹

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew

This writing, whose date is unknown, was written to try to advance the importance of Mary. It details the miraculous birth of Mary to Anna (probably meant to be the same one who prophesied in Luke 1), and how Joseph got her as a wife. It is a Catholic Church production through and through, which claims to have been written in Hebrew and translated into Latin by Jerome, though most scholars doubt both parts of that claim.³²

The Acts of Andrew and Matthew

There are discrepancies in the Greek manuscripts of this apocryphal work. Most have “Matthew,” though one manuscript reads “Matthias.”³³ Most of the Latin writers who referenced this work believed it was talking about Matthew. In the story, the apostles got together to decide who was going to which place to preach the gospel. Matthew’s lot was to go to the country of cannibals. Instead of eating meat and drinking wine, they ate human flesh and drank blood. Matthew, upon arriving, was captured and his eyes were thrust out, and he was given a drug to make him deranged, but it didn’t affect him. Instead, he kept praying, and then a light shone around him and he heard a voice say “receive your sight,” and Matthew could see again. He was instructed, then, to stay in that city and preach for 27 days. At the end of 27 days, the Lord sent Andrew to go rescue him.

After Andrew was captured as well, they both prayed and began to heal the blind men in the prison

whose eyes had also been thrust out. They then freed the prisoners and sent them out to safety, and Andrew “commanded a cloud, and the cloud took up Matthew and the disciples of Andrew; and the cloud set them down on the mountain where Peter was teaching.”

The sequel to this story, *The Acts of Peter and Andrew*, finds Matthew on the mountain with Peter, but doesn’t give any other details about him.³⁴

The Acts and Martyrdom of Matthew

In this tale, Jesus sends Matthew back to deal with more cannibals. He casts out a demon named Asmodaeus from the king’s wife, son, and daughter-in-law, and for a time the king was happy until they started following Matthew. He sent soldiers to capture the apostle, but Jesus appeared in the form of a little boy with a torch, and burned out the eyes of the men. The king pretended repentance, using it as a ruse to capture him. Matthew, rebuking the king, was afterwards sentenced to a painful death.

[Telling the soldiers], “Having laid him, therefore, on the ground on his back, and stretched him out, pierce his hands and feet with iron nails, and cover him over with paper, having smeared it with dolphins’ oil, and cover him up with brimstone and asphalt and pitch, and put ... brushwood above. Thus apply the fire to him; and if any of the same tribe with him rise up against you, he shall get the same punishment.”

But when the fire was lit, it simply turned to dew.

Then he ordered a multitude to carry coals of fire from the furnace of the bath in the palace, and the twelve gods of gold and silver; and “place them,” says he, “in a circle round the sorcerer, lest he may even somehow bewitch the fire from the furnace of the palace.” And there being

³¹ “Pseudo-Clement,” *Recognitions*, Book 1, chapter 55. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, page 92.

³² See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 351-352, 368 for more details.

³³ The editors of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, following Tischendorf, chose to go with “Matthias,” though all the Latin writers use “Matthew.” (See the introduction to the apocryphal Gospels and Acts in volume 8 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. The spelling in the original is very similar: Matthaïos or Mattheias

³⁴ This work only exists in fragment form, there being no known complete manuscript. The name “Matthias” shows up halfway into the extant portion, and it may be that it should read “Matthew” as well, but there aren’t multiple manuscripts to compare. What there is of this story appears in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8.

many executioners and soldiers, some carried the coals; and others, bearing the gods, brought them. And the king accompanied them, watching lest any of the Christians should steal one of his gods, or bewitch the fire. And when they came near the place where the apostle was nailed down, his face was looking towards heaven, and all his body was covered over with the paper, and much brushwood over his body to the height of ten cubits. And [the king] ordered the soldiers to set the gods in a circle round Matthew, five cubits off, securely fastened that they might not fall, again he ordered the coal to be thrown on, and to kindle the fire at all points.

Matthew prayed, and the fire did not consume him, but instead burned up the idols and chased the king as a dragon, destroying everything in its path until the king in fear truly repented. It was soon thereafter that Matthew gave up the ghost. But he

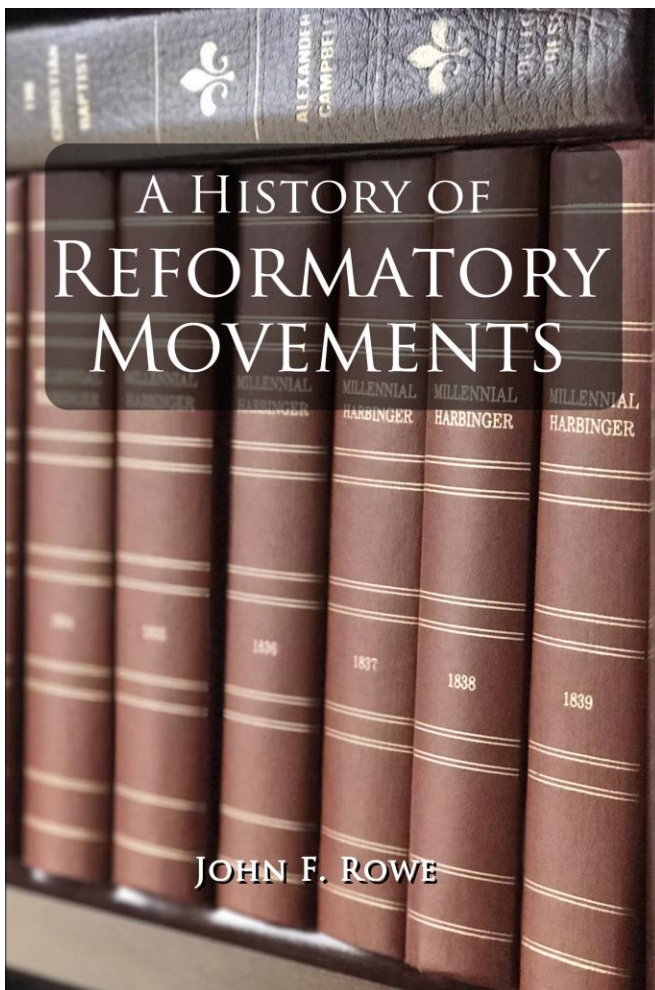
appeared in a vision that Jesus gave the king, and when the king awoke, he came to the elders of the church and begged for baptism, and changed his name to King Matthew, and changed his son's name to Matthew as well.³⁵

Other Traditions

[Another] tradition states that he preached for 15 years in Palestine and that after this he went to foreign nations, the Ethiopians, Macedonians, Syrians, Persians, Parthians and Medea being mentioned. He is said to have died a natural death either in Ethiopia or in Macedonia.³⁶

³⁵ See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8.

³⁶ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Matthew."



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QUOTES

A Christian church, therefore, according to the New Testament idea, is a company of persons divinely called and separated from the world, baptized on a profession of their faith in Christ, united in covenant for worship and Christian service, under the supreme authority of Christ, whose word is their only law and rule of life in all matters of religious faith and practice.

-Edward Hiscox,

The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches (1890).

My colleague, J. Anderson, having preached through the settlements of West Tennessee, determined to visit Kentucky. We had our last appointment in father Thomas Craighead's congregation, in which neighborhood we had often preached. As we expected a large and intelligent audience, we endeavored to prepare discourses suitable to the occasion. My companion, Anderson, first rose to preach from these words: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." I shall never forget his exordium [introduction], which, in fact, was also his peroration [conclusion]. "Holiness," said he, "is a moral quality"—he paused, having forgotten all his studied discourse. Confused, he turned with staring eyes to address the other side of his audience, and repeated with emphasis—"Holiness is a moral quality"—and after a few incoherent words, he paused again, and sat down. Astonished at the failure of my brother, I arose and preached. He declared to me afterwards, that every idea had forsaken him; that he viewed it as from God, to humble his pride; as he had expected to make a brilliant display of talent to that assembly. I never remembered a sermon better, and to me it has been very profitable; for from the hint given, I was led to more correct views of the doctrines of original sin, and of regeneration.

-Barton W. Stone

Autobiography of Elder Barton W. Stone

He was grave and dignified in his demeanor everywhere, but especially in the pulpit. He was too deeply impressed by a sense of the worth of souls, and the responsibility of his position as a Christian minister, to indulge in levity in the pulpit. He filled that sacred place with the grave, the judgment, and the eternal destinies of a world full in his view. Any effort at wit, or exhibition of lightness, therefore, in the sacred desk, always met his decided disapprobation. The writer never saw him smile in the pulpit.

-John I. Rogers, on Barton W. Stone

[T]he grandeur, sublimity and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that the belief of one fact, *and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this one fact, and submission to one institution, expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.* A Christian, not as defined by Dr. Johnson, nor any Creed maker, but by one taught of Heaven, is 'one who believes this *one fact*, and has submitted to *one institution*, and whose deportment accords with the morality and virtue taught by the great Prophet.' The one fact is, *that Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah.* The evidence upon which it is to be believed is the testimony of *twelve men*, confirmed by prophecy, miracles and spiritual gifts. The *one institution* is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Every such person is a Christian in the fullest sense of the word the moment he has believed this one fact upon the above evidence and has submitted to the above-mentioned institution. And, whether he believes the five points condemned, or the five points approved by the Synod of Dort, is not so much as to be asked of him. Whether he holds any of the views of the Calvinists or Armenians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, or Quakers, is never once to be asked of such a person, in order to admission into the Christian community called the church.

-Alexander Campbell

Christian Baptist, Vol. 1, No. 9.

IS ANNIHILATION OF THE WICKED A BIBLICAL TEACHING?

Jake Schotter

Annihilationism (a.k.a. total destruction, terminal punishment, and conditionalism) is the belief that a person destined to hell does not endure pain and suffering for eternity (as that implies¹ God delights in tormenting people); rather, some² teach the wicked will cease to exist after the Judgment.³ This article will focus on being a review of a lecture given by Edward Fudge, a prominent proponent of this doctrine, and the fundamental pillars of its support.⁴

The Appeal to Scripture and an Analysis of their Study

It was a relief to see that Fudge constantly appealed to the Scriptures to build his case. In the hour long lecture he gave, he mentioned 100 passages. He did not appeal to emotion but from the Bible and church history. Certainly, this doctrine would have emotional ramifications: some minds would be at ease with knowing their loved ones are not suffering anymore (even if they are not in heaven). Additionally, many avoid this conversation because hell is an unsettling topic (as it certainly should be to God-fearing people). This is a cause of concern and is discussed later.

The first appeal was to the Old Testament. Fudge's method became clear when he cited Psalm 37:1-2 and asked, "What if we do not see [God's actions against the wicked] here [physically, in our

lifetime, on earth]? Is God's justice then thwarted?"⁵ From this statement we see a fatal flaw: what happens to the wicked is the assumption that the poetic authors are giving principles that apply to a person as if they are in hell. Perhaps, these 70 metaphors and similes found throughout the O.T. are references to how God views wicked people, not how they will be obliterated.

He also appealed to two major events in the O.T.: the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. The problem with using these events as arguments is found in the purpose the Biblical writers had in using them as examples (2 Pet. 2:6; 3:5-7; Jude 7). Peter and Jude used the cities to teach that this fire will be similar but will be in a different place (hell) and for a longer period of time (eternity).⁶ Thus, the time span simply does not support their position. Plus, Jude described the people of Sodom and Gomorrah as PRESENTLY (some 2000-plus years after the cities were destroyed) suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. If they ceased to exist, as Fudge and others claim, then Jude was wrong, and they aren't suffering, for they don't exist.

Annihilationists try to force the same definition for every occurrence of a word. A student of the Bible knows that this cannot be true, as a word's meaning is determined by its context. In his defense of this view, John Stackhouse, Jr. spent the entire chapter defining the words "eternal," "destroy," and "death" to make his case. If words only have literal meanings, their case is solid – however, words can be used in multiple ways and may be used to paint a

¹ This phrase ought to remind us all of those who say there is no hell. A person would say, "God is a loving God... He would never be judgmental and send people there. We are all His children whom He loves." Dan Shepard reminds us, "We [humans] are not happy with our condition; we are not happy with the solution; we are not happy with the end game. So, we forget who we are dealing with. This is not a negotiation."

² Some who affirm this include: Edward Fudge, F.F. Bruce, John R.W. Stott, Thomas Olbricht, John Stackhouse, Homer Hailey, Clark Pinnock, and N.T. Wright.

³ One author suggests "...the view that hell is the situation in which those who do not avail themselves of the atonement made by Jesus in his suffering and death must make their own atonement by suffering and then death, separated from the sustaining life of God and thus disappearing from the cosmos." (Stackhouse, Jr., John G. **Four Views on Hell**, 61-62.)

⁴ "Lecture - Edward Fudge - The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Hell." YouTube, YouTube, 24 Oct. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHUPpmbTOV4.

⁵ Fudge elaborates in his book, "[The wicked] often prosper in life - and the righteous die. Is that all there is to God's justice? Do the wicked escape so easily? Because of this apparent injustice, such passages as these may fairly be said to suggest a final reckoning and judgment of the wicked beyond temporal death." (Fudge, Edward William, **The Fire That Consumes**, 91).

⁶ "The word 'eternal' used to describe 'life' in verse 21 is the same one used to describe 'fire' in verse 7. That suggests that the fire of judgment is of the same duration as life in the age to come. Just as life in the age to come is everlasting, so also is the fiery punishment in the age to come. Sodom and Gomorrah are a temporal example of a fire that will not abate in the age to come." (Burk, Denny. **Four Views on Hell**, 37).

broader point than the word itself. A great example of this is seen in the way they [mis]use Rom. 6:23. One of its proponents wrote,

we must let Scripture decide the matter, and Scripture speaks decidedly on one side: 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23) and death means, if nothing else, termination. The one thing death does not mean is 'not dying.'"⁷

They seem to miss the teaching that in Christ, you have eternal life. However, that does not parallel to those without Christ, in hell, and separated from God because of sin (a spiritual death). Instead, they literally cease to exist.

There were several passages that were not handled in the lecture and are lightly referenced in other writings. Some of those passages are: Matt. 18:9; 23:33; Luke 12:5; 16:19-31; 23:43; 1 Cor. 15:42, 53-56; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 20:4-6. We see in these passages an imperishable body created for eternity and where consciousness is seen after a person physically dies.

From the glimpses we have in Scripture regarding those who have died, we see they have knowledge, able to speak, hear, and do things (even weeping and gnashing of teeth). When the Biblical writers wrote that those in hell are "weeping and gnashing," the action is strongly implied and to be active—you have to still exist! Someone may object and say that teeth will be worn out because of this but with a body suited for eternity, these teeth are not going to be affected (1 Cor. 15:42).

An Awareness for the Saved and An Awakening for Every Soul

This teaching on eternity and eternal life is vitally important. As sweet a deal as this doctrine sounds, it is not reality. This teaching is very advantageous as it limits the amount of pain and provides peace for those knowing their loved ones are not saved as there seems to be no suffering.⁸ However, that is not the case. Robert Morey wrote:

*[s]ome annihilationists present the idea that while they see eternal punishment as emotionally unacceptable, they do not evidently feel any problem with the extinction of sinners.*⁹

Let every soul without Christ be awakened! God's law, justice, righteousness, holiness, and hatred of sin – will be carried out against those who refuse to obey His will. We are warned of God's view towards the wicked in the vivid imagery He records in Scripture. Hell is not a pleasant end... it is eternal unrest for sinners not redeemed by Christ.

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⁷ Stackhouse, Jr., **Four Views on Hell**, 79. It is important to note that Edward Fudge ended his lecture in the same way.

⁸ C.f. footnote 2. This idea cannot be found in Scripture and is an attempt to try to make hell seem like there is punishment (as there is) but not as long. Their timeline is skewed

because this is eternal punishment for being dead in sin. Additionally, the Scriptures do not teach that you can reconcile your 'sin deficit' and then not have to suffer.

⁹ Morey, Robert A. **Death and the Afterlife**. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984: 101.

THE RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

Gerald Cowan

If all teaching were to stop today, in one generation all that we have learned would be lost. Teaching and learning transmits knowledge and understanding and skill. Learning is not transmitted by biology. It is not in the genes. Without teachers there would be no teaching. Without learners there would be no learning; the teaching of teachers would be a futile waste. Without proper probing and proving of any teaching there would probably be more error taught than truth – ignorant and errant teachers replicate themselves then measure themselves and their success by the number of their disciples and replicators. Those who do not know the truth but are seeking to be taught are vulnerable to unscrupulous but persuasive purveyors of falsehood – not only in general information but also in what is called science, philosophy, theology, and religion.

We find life and salvation in the *words* of Christ, not in his *miracles* and wonders. Nobody was ever saved by a miracle.

The message of Jesus – the teaching itself – has probably had greater and more lasting impact on the world than the words of all other religious and moral teachers combined. At the end of his lengthy sermon recorded in Matthew, chapters 5-7, the people were astonished at what he had taught them and the manner in which he taught – *as one having authority*, as one who knew what he was talking about

and had authority from God to say it (7:28-29), not as the then-current scribes and disciples of the rabbis. Apostle John reminds us that what Jesus did is recorded, along with his message, to convince us that he is the Son of God, so that we can find salvation and life through him (John 20:31). We find life and salvation in the *words* of Christ, not in his *miracles* and wonders (John 6:63, 12:48). Nobody was ever saved by a miracle.

In reading the accounts of his life and ministry we note that not everyone believed him. Many believe now but have improper reasons and inadequate justification for their faith and acts. One thing is always true: one who is properly introduced to Christ and made aware of his true identity, mission, and message can never be the same. One would have to ignore the truth and override his own mind and conscience in order to reject Christ and his claims on all persons.

As we study the various responses made to Christ during his ministry we will surely find much to help us in our own relationship with him.

An Overview of the Message of Christ.

A major part of the doctrine of Christ about proper godly living by covenant people is contained in what is called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), which we referenced above. It is not “the sum and substance of Jesus’ teaching,” but it does

summarize many of his doctrines. Though it looks forward to the new covenant God would make through him, Jesus addressed it to the Jews under the Old Testament. It says little about the plan of salvation or the coming New Covenant, the coming church/kingdom, but does emphasize the proper understanding, attitude, and application of the law of God, the authority, rule, and kingship of God – principles that apply to the New Testament as well as to the Old.

Traditional interpretations of the law by the Jews were wrong, and Jesus corrected them on several points. It is not enough to keep the *letter* of the law; one must keep the attitude and *spirit* of it too. A few examples: (1) Avoid murder and mistreatment of people, but also avoid anger, selfishness, and malice which produce murder and mistreatment (5:21-26). (2) Avoid adultery and other sexual sins, but also avoid the roving eyes and lustful thoughts which lead to such things (5:27-30). (3) Marriage is intended by God to be permanent, and can only be dissolved honorably for both parties by death. Divorce is permitted when one recognizes infidelity in the partner and discredits that person by calling attention to it (5:31-32); he noted later (Matthew 19:1-6) that God's design for marriage was one man with one woman, perhaps predicting the widespread travesty of same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, and homosexuality. (4) It is not the words of an oath nor the object or person sworn upon that makes it valid. If a simple yes or no is not guarantee enough, the person is evil and not to be trusted no matter what oath he swears (5:33-37). (5) Retaliation can bring justice, but it leaves everyone wounded. It is better to forego retaliation, even to do good to those who hurt you than to hurt them in return (5:38-42, 7:12). (6) Such goodness, which is the essence of love and good will even toward one's enemies, makes one like God. This is the perfect outlook and action of God which His people are to demonstrate as evidence that they are His (5:43-48). He has much to say about hypocrisy in religion, finding ways to make non-binding or meaningless oaths, how to glorify oneself while claiming to glorify God, and more.

The teaching of Jesus about himself is emphasized in John's gospel. In chapter 3, in the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus: the expressions *born*

again and *born of water and Spirit* appear only here in the gospel accounts. Jesus does not object or deny being *sent from God*. In chapter 4, in conversation with a woman at the well in Samaria: Jesus calls himself the source of water of life and identifies himself as the Messiah/Christ. The **I AM**'s of Jesus recorded by John show us that Jesus knew who and what he was. Bread of life (6:35), light of the world (8:12), door of the sheep (10:7), good Shepherd (10:11), resurrection and life (11:26), way, truth, and life (14:6), and true vine (15:1). It is not that he himself, the man, was actually God. Rather that God (eternal Son of God, Second Person of the deity or Godhead) was incarnate in him (14:10-11). Of his relationship as God the Son with God the Father, God who was in him said, "*I am from above*" (8:23), "*the Father and I are one*" (10:30), and "*before Abraham was I AM*" (8:58). His message and methods should have convinced all, but not all accepted what he said. He came to his own and his own received him not. But to all who do receive him he gives power to become children of God (John 1:11-12). True, the multitudes heard him gladly on occasion, but when they learned the cost of discipleship most of them deserted him (John 6:66). When asked if they too would like to go away, the twelve apostles said they had no place to go – only Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6:67-68). The Jews generally responded as Isaiah had predicted (Isaiah 65:2, Romans 10:21).

The Lord still says today, "*The words I speak are Spirit and life*" (John 6:63). "*No one can come to me unless the Father draws him, and I will lift him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'They shall all be taught of God.' And everyone therefore who has heard and learned of the Father comes to me*" (John 6:44-45). We will say much more in this lesson about the response that has been made and is still being made – and needs to be made – to the preaching of the words of Christ.

Reaction and Response of the Multitudes – the Common People.

They were amazed at his teaching, his authoritative presentation (Matthew 7:29). "*You have heard it said, but I say to you...*" (Matthew 5-7, Luke 4:31-32). He was not formally taught, not a product of the rabbinical schools. How could an unlettered

man presume to teach, and to do so effectively and convincingly? (John 7:15). The “signs” which attended his ministry were convincing (John 7:31). The common people – not the authorities or the usual teachers – heard him gladly (Mark 12:37).

Many came to him, not for teaching – not for his words – but for his works, especially his miracles of healing. The sick, diseased, tormented, possessed by demons, epileptic and palsied came to him – he healed them all (Matthew 4:24). He healed the multitudes (Matthew 12:15 and 14:14). He fed 5,000 miraculously (Matthew 14:15-21). Jesus accused some of coming to him only for physical blessings (John 6:26).

The crowds were fickle, changeable, not dependable. At times they would have accepted him as their Messiah, based upon the miracles and hoped-for miracles, not his teaching (John 7:31, 40-44). At times they would have forced a crown on him, made him their king (John 6:14-15).

At his entry into Jerusalem in the last week of his life multitudes gave him the treatment ordinarily reserved for royalty: they laid branches and laid down their own clothing for him to walk on. They cried out, “*Hosanna, to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! This is that prophet, Jesus*” (Matthew 21:6-11). A few days later, stirred up by the lawyers and priests, they shouted, “*Crucify him.*” (Matthew 27:22-25). When he was crucified the crowd mocked him. “*Let him save himself and come down from the cross if he is God’s Son.*” (Matthew 27:39-43).

Reaction and Response of Authorities and Established Rulers.

The response of kings and governors: King Herod perceived him as a threat when he was born, and tried to kill him (Matthew 2:16-18). Successors of Herod maintained enmity against Christ, and later against his church. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, was curious about Jesus (Luke 9:9). The Roman governor, Pilate, sent Jesus to him for trial, because Jesus was from Galilee. But Jesus refused to satisfy Herod’s curiosity. So Herod sent him back to Pilate (Luke 23:6-12) Pilate was forced to judge Jesus, but he believed he was innocent of any crime deserving death, such as insurrection. Jesus was not a threat to

Roman rule (John 18:28-19:16). Pilate yielded to pressure from Jewish authorities and crowds, and delivered Jesus to be scourged and then to be crucified (Luke 23:1-24).

The response of priests, Pharisees, scribes – official teachers of the Law and the traditions of the Rabbis: In Luke 2:40-50, twelve year old Jesus’ questions and answers were a novelty. Though he impressed the doctors of the Law, they did not seem to feel threatened at the time.

But they did feel threatened by Jesus when he started his own public ministry. Because he contradicted many of their cherished concepts (Matthew 15:1-9). Because he spoke of fulfilling the old Law and replacing it with his own gospel. They saw it as an effort to destroy Moses, the Law, and the prophets (Matthew 5:17-20). Because they feared they would lose their hold on the people (John 11:47-50). They cast Jesus out of the synagogue, out of the city when they could (Luke 4:16-30). They questioned and rejected his authority, and tried in every way they could to discredit him (Matthew 12:24, 21:23-27). They plotted against him, to kill him. The murder of one man was thought to be a justifiable expedient if it meant retaining control of the people and maintaining an equitable relationship with Rome (John 7:1, 11:49-53). They tried to trap him in some blasphemy or any error for which they could be justified in killing him (Matthew 16:1-4 and 22:15ff, John 7:19-26 and 8:11).

The council (Sanhedrin) gave in to the will of the priests and teachers of the Law. This was a violation of their own trust and position – they yielded leadership to the priests. Chief priests and Pharisees gathered the council together and persuaded them to seek the death of Jesus (John 11:47-57). When Jesus had been arrested and tried by an illegal court at the house of Caiaphas the council convened and pronounced the judgment of death against him, then forced Pilate to dispose of him for them (Mark 14:53-15:1).

Reaction and Response of His Own Family.

His mother and his stepfather Joseph knew he was a divinely conceived son who was to occupy David’s throne (Luke 1:26ff), but seemed not to appreciate the Messianic aspect of his mission. Other children of Mary (and Joseph) did not accept Jesus

as a divine messenger, the Messiah/Christ. They thought he was demented, beside himself – out of his mind (Mark 3:21).

Some downplay “children of Mary.” Catholics and their cousins deny that Mary had other children after Jesus, or even that she and Joseph consummated their marriage sexually, so that she remained perpetually a virgin. Some translations make the relationship appear ambiguous. KJV has “friends,” NIV has “family.” Phillips and Berkeley have “relatives.” The Greek actually is *HOI PAR AUTO*, “those pertaining to him.” But Matthew 13:55-56 requires that the translation be *his family – his mother, brothers, and sisters*. There is no ambiguity here, since Mary and Joseph are named as the parents. His family members tried to draw him away from his ministry, but they were rejected as “family” by Jesus for their lack of spiritual understanding (Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35).

We do not know what happened to Joseph, Mary’s husband, and legal father (stepfather) of Jesus. He is not mentioned nor is his presence noted at the end of Jesus’ life. There is conjecture that he had died by this time. Jesus entrusted care of his mother to the apostle John (John 19:26-27), rather than to his then unbelieving brothers. This lends credence to the view that Joseph was dead. James, the Lord’s brother, became “a pillar of the church” in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19, 1 Corinthians 9:5). His brother Jude also became a willing servant of the one he acknowledged as Jesus Christ (Jude 1).

Reaction and Response of John the Baptist, the Forerunner.

He recognized Jesus by divinely given signs, and pointed him out to others (John 1:19-36). When John sent his disciples to inquire of Jesus (Matthew 11:1-6) it was not because he himself had lost his faith in Jesus or his understanding of who he was. It was to reaffirm their faith and encourage them to become disciples of Christ. *Disciple* is a generic word meaning one who has been taught, one who has accepted and applied the teaching of another. The word itself does not identify the teacher, but there is no disciple without a teacher. One must be identified as a disciple of a particular teacher – disciple of Moses, disciple of John, disciple of Christ, disciple of ... whoever.

Reaction and Response of the Disciples and Apostles.

Twelve of the disciples became known as apostles and received a special commission and were sent by Jesus to do certain things with certain powers not given to others (Matthew 10:1-4).

Apostle simply means one appointed, commissioned, set in position, or sent to do a particular work, etc. The one who sends him must be named. Apostle of God, apostle of Christ, apostle of the church, apostle of whoever. The apostles of Christ were those commissioned and sent directly by him (Matthew 10:1-7). Paul and Barnabas were also apostles of the church in Antioch (Acts 14:14). Jesus is the apostle of God (John 17:1-3 and 8, Hebrews 3:1).

The specific “call” of each apostle is not recorded (see Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:1-11). What we do have indicates that they were sufficiently impressed with Jesus, his miracles, and his words that they were willing to leave jobs and special relationships, etc. in order to follow him – traveling with him as he “discipled” them with the doctrine of God (Matthew 19:27). They sometimes expressed their faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-20, John 6:66-69, John 13:13-17). But they sometimes struggled for high positions in the service of the Lord and in his coming kingdom, showing that they misunderstood much of his teaching and the nature of the kingdom (Mark 10:35-43, Luke 22:24-30).

Before the death and resurrection of Jesus, even his apostles seemed unable to maintain faith and fellowship with him when they were under personal attack or threat of danger. They ran away, separated themselves from him and his circumstances, and were unwilling to be identified with him (Mark 14:50, Matthew 26:58, 69-75). They did not understand the nature of the kingdom and the true identity and mission of Jesus. Thankfully all of that changed after his resurrection and ascension to heaven, and after their baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Matthew 28:16-17, Mark 16:14, John 20:24-31, Acts 1:1-11 and 2:1-47; 1 Peter 1:3).

Reaction and Response of the Devil and his Demons.

They recognized Jesus as the Son of God and apparently knew they themselves would ultimately be defeated (Mark 5:7, Luke 8:29, Matthew 8:29). They tried to discredit him, to tempt him to sin, and somehow deter him from his true mission (Matthew 4:1-10). They tried to defeat him through his own disciples. Peter's rash advice was inspired by Satan (Matthew 16:21-23). Betrayal by Judas came when Satan had entered into him (Luke 22:3-6, John 13:27). They try even now to discredit Christ in any way they can. See 2 Corinthians 2:11: "*we are not (to be) ignorant of Satan's devices.*" They do it by corrupting the message and messengers of the gospel. They do it by persecuting the church and Christians. They do it in the civil courts by making legal charges against those who try to convert others to Christ. Unfortunately, their efforts are highly successful – at least they provide a barrier to those who would otherwise be evangelistic.

He was not elected to be president or head of the church with a temporary term in office. He was anointed and appointed to that position by God

All we have said up to this point is worthwhile, but the crux of the lesson is in the next point – what it should mean to us and what effect it has on our response to the Lord.

What Response is Made Today by Those Who Hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Jesus wants everyone, calls everyone, and makes it possible for everyone to be his disciple (Matthew 11:28-30, 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:47). Being called does not mean discipleship is automatic or certain. Not everyone answers the call, accepts the call and becomes a disciple. Discipleship is not an appointment. It is being called then seeking to be accepted as learners, followers. One cannot be accepted unless he accepts and submits to the rules and requirements for discipleship. So, "*many are called but few are chosen.*" (Matthew 20:16, 22:14).

Discipleship is difficult (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23). Not because one may be called upon to die for Christ. Not because of persecution or abuse of

Christians – there isn't a great deal of that in our part of the world today. Of course more of it is coming, especially in countries or places where non-Christians or anti-Christians are in the majority or in control. It is rather because of the general selfishness of pleasure-seeking people who want to have everything their own way, and are not willing to submit to any authority outside themselves, not even God. We are called to live for Christ, live in Christ according to his will and not according to our own desires. Selfishness and egotism make that very difficult and unlikely.

A point to remember: Jesus is not an elected official chosen and placed in position by the will of people. He was not elected to be president or head of the church with a temporary term in office. Therefore, he is not obligated to or controlled by a constituency of voting members of the church. He was anointed and appointed to that position by God (Acts 2:36, *God has made him to be both lord and Christ*). All authority belongs to him, given to him by God (Matthew 28:18). His

followers are *followers*. They do not lead him. They are under him, not over him. Those who reject him and his words during life will still be judged

by him and his words after their own death and resurrection (John 12:48, John 5:28-29). The desired response: submit to him as Lord, Savior, and King.

The authority of Jesus is usurped and a corrupted version of his message is preached by many today. By religious leaders, both denominational and congregational, who set policy and rules for their church or churches. By preachers who make promises to their listeners that neither Christ nor God will keep, and which the preachers certainly cannot keep. But listeners will believe it because they want to believe it. They want to believe either that the preacher knows what he is talking about, or that he has enough influence with God that He will do whatever the preacher promises. By individuals who tailor their religion and their concept of God and Christ to suit themselves. Example: a woman who was distressed, angry, and unhappy about the way things were being done told a friend, "I don't believe God wants me to feel this way – so I've decided not to listen to it or pay any attention to it. I

feel better when I just ignore it.” What is the lesson and response there? Pay no attention to the Word of God if it upsets you?

The Power of the Word in the Gospel Message of Christ.

The gospel of Christ is called “*the (DUNAMIS) power of God for salvation*” of the believer (Romans 1:16-17). The word of the Lord God which lives and abides forever is preached in the gospel of Christ (1 Peter 1:25). Nobody is or can be saved without hearing it and coming to faith by believing, accepting, obeying, and applying it. The word of God is “*the sword of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 6:17). This is the soldier’s sword, a part of his equipment for service as a soldier. The sword of the word of God can be a defensive weapon, but is also the only offensive weapon the Christian has (Compare 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual; with them we are mighty, able to pull down the strongholds of God’s enemies and bringing everyone captive and obedient to Christ*).

The writer of Hebrews also mentions the double-edged sword of the word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13). This is not the soldier’s sword, as in Ephesians 6:17, but more likely the probing instrument of the surgeon. It searches, reveals, distinguishes, and separates. It cuts and removes. The surgeon must be able to heal and put back together what he has cut and separated. If he cannot do so he will simply kill. Sometimes the “patient” will not cooperate and the surgeon “loses” him. The surgeon’s knife can also be an instrument of death. God wounds and heals, kills and makes alive (Deuteronomy 32:39, 41 “*when I whet my glittering sword*”). The Lord will slay with the sword (the word) that proceeds from his mouth (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 2:8, Rev. 1:16, 19:15 and 21).

Personal Response to the Teaching of God is Imperative if Christianity is to Continue.

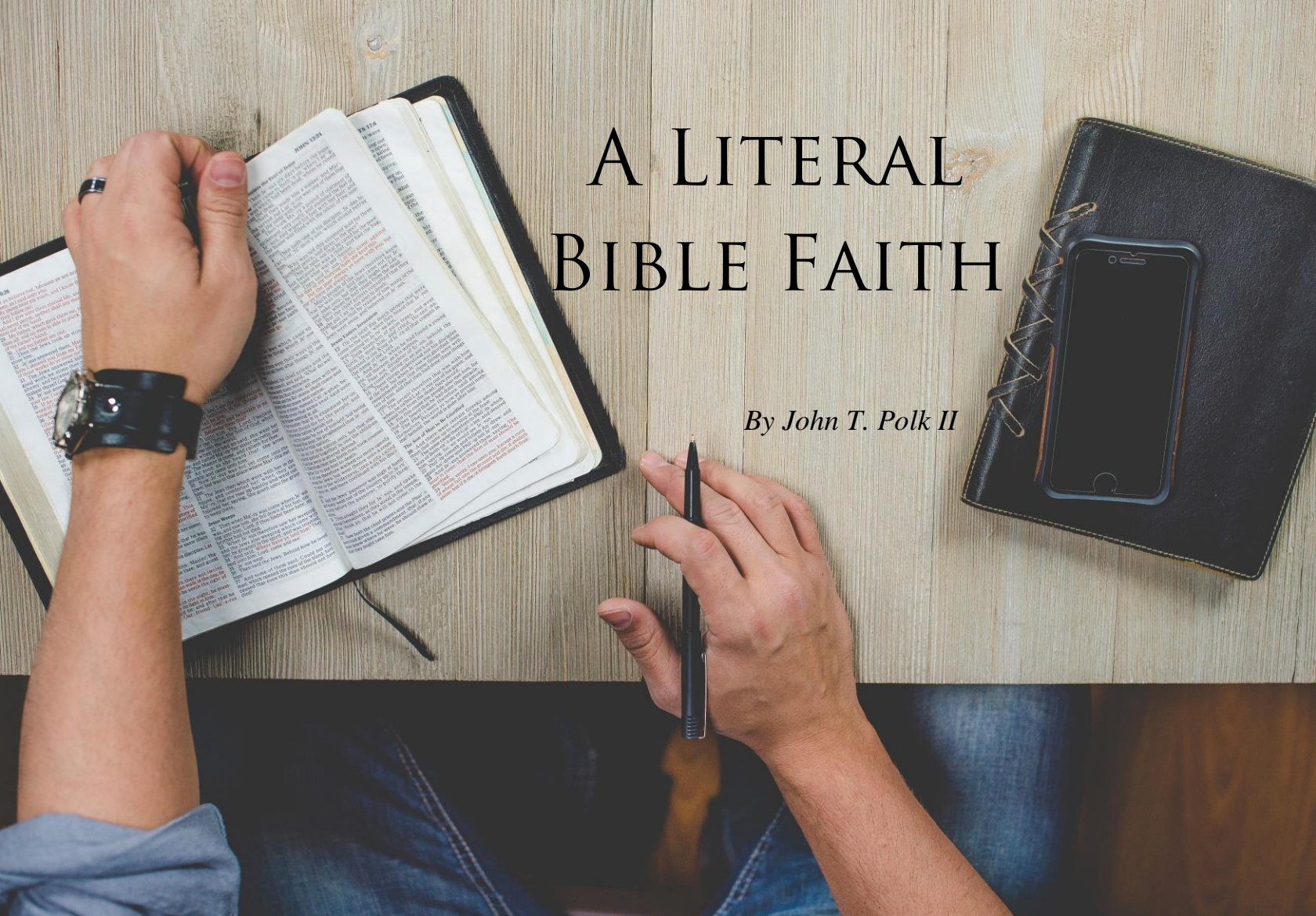
If no one teaches, by any method (writing, speaking, or other proclamation) and all learning re-

sources (books and other writings and recordings) are removed or become unavailable, and no one learns by any method or from anyone (listening, reading, or observing actions) – meaning there are no teachers, no disciples, no preservation and no application of anything from the past — in one generation everything we have learned will be lost and we will be in darkness with no indication of any way out or forward. The most important and destructive area of ignorance will be, as it always is, in the area of relationship with God and the preservation of our own souls. We are always only one generation away from ignorance of God’s word and consequent apostasy. See again the opening statement of this essay.

Christ’s person and ministry are not validated or proved by human faith and response. He is the Son of God, the Christ, the King, the Savior and Judge whether anybody accepts it or not. Christ’s person and ministry are not validated or proved by human faith. He is the Son of God, the Christ, the King, the Savior, and the Judge, whether anybody in the world believes and accepts it or not.

One cannot be neutral about Christ. One must be for him or be counted against him (Matthew 12:30). One who is not willingly with him is condemned to be without him, forever. One who will not teach – actively, or supportively through others – will be assumed to be opposed to the word or to the Christ of the word, not willing to stand with Him on His word and share it with others. One who is without Christ is without help or hope in the present world, unable to help or save himself, and nobody else will be able to help or save him either (Ephesians 2:12).

Improper response from those we try to teach must not cause us to stop teaching. Improper example and happiness or woe of others must not stop us from seeking, understanding, obeying, and applying the truth of God in our own lives. It must also not be allowed to stop us from exemplifying the way of God and encouraging others to take His path along with us.



A LITERAL BIBLE FAITH

By John T. Polk II

[Editor's Note: This article is written in response to an article by Justin Rogers which appeared in the pages of the Gospel Advocate, February 2019.]

The English word “literal” commonly connotes translating from one language into another according to the letter-groupings commonly called “words.” If accurately translated, then the words may be recognizable. In biblical research, no one has exceeded Robert Dick Wilson (Ph.D., D.D., Professor of Semitic Philology in Princeton Theological Seminary) who concluded:

An examination of the Hebrew manuscripts now in existence shows that in the whole Old Testament there are scarcely any variants supported by more than one manuscript out of 200 to 400, in which each book is found, except in the use of the full and defective writing of the vowels. This full, or defective, writing of the vowels has no effect either on the sound or the sense of the words. (p. 69, A

Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament, The Sunday School Times Company, Philadelphia, 1926).

The proof that the copies of the original documents have been handed down with substantial correctness for more than 2000 years cannot be denied. (ibid, p. 99)

In view of the exactness with which the proper names of persons and places have been transmitted for 4,000 years and their general agreement in the parallel passages, the presumption is, that the names for God, also, have been rightly transmitted. (ibid, p. 101)

Justin Rogers leads off his article, “THINKING BIBLICALLY: ‘What a “Literal Translation” means,” with:

Since it is impossible to translate letter-for-letter, we generally substitute

word-for-word. By 'literal,' then, people mean a translation that comes as close as possible to translating every word of the original. But this is impossible. (p. 13 The Gospel Advocate, February, 2019).

If it is impossible to translate “letter-for-letter,” or also “every word of the original” text, then has Jesus failed to keep His promise: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35)? Does “by no means” include copying and translating? And, were His “words” written with letters to be translated?

If translating is an impossible task, then what do these Scriptures mean?

Jesus answered each temptation from the Devil with “It is written.” He even quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 when He said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). Since none of Moses’ original writings existed in Jesus’ day, why would Jesus set the example of quoting Scripture from copies of the original when facing the Devil’s temptation? If it is impossible to translate “every word of the original,” did Jesus mis-translate Moses?

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18). Though none of Moses’ original writings existed in Jesus’ day, but only copies, then Jesus was teaching that the very lettering of the copies was to be observed. If not, why not?

Rogers has made King Ahasuerus more able to translate his letter in foreign languages accurately than God Himself! “Then he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people” (Esther 1:22). Ahasuerus expected “his letter” when written “to each province in its own script” to be accurately translated and convey his original message. Surely one must re-evaluate any understanding of Scripture that would make a Persian king more able to communicate in different languages than God, Himself!

Paul taught Christians to completely rely upon the Scriptures in establishing “traditions.”

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come... Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 15).

According to Rogers’ article, how precisely can anyone distinguish between “spirit or by word or by letter” to know what “traditions” were taught by the Apostles?

Rogers’ claim that: “*The more accurate interpreter is the one who represents the thoughts of the speaker rather than his words,*” (*ibid*) shows ignorance of the Scriptures, themselves!

Have you not read Ephesians 3:1-6?

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel (Ephesians 3:1-6)

The very argument being made by the Holy Spirit through Paul depends entirely upon gaining understanding by reading the inspired words written in our New Testament! But if it is “impossible” to accurately translate these revelations given through the Apostles, then:

(1) why did the Holy Spirit inspire it to mainly be written in Greek?

(2) does the Holy Spirit need to keep translating His words into each person's ears?

(3) if what was "revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" in the First Century cannot be accurately translated, I ask, who, in our day, has ever "heard of the dispensation of the grace of God?"

What "thoughts" did Paul have that were more accurate than the words he wrote? Have you not read 1 Corinthians 2:12-13?

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"The Spirit who is from God" "freely" gave that which "we" (the Apostles) had "received" so they could "speak." But their expressions were not in words of their own choosing, but words "which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." If the Holy Spirit selected the very wording of the things Apostles received from Him, was He trusting in man's ability to translate these into the languages of men from then on?

Rogers concluded with: "*Fourth, a literal translation assumes the original text is always perfectly intelligible. But this is not the case...Consequently, most English translations are more literal than the Hebrew text itself!*" (*loc. cit.*) The birth of Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53:4 as quoted by Matthew: "So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23). The following questions should help clarify Rogers' position:

(1) Was the original prophecy "perfectly intelligible?"

(2) Was the original prophecy quoted accurately?

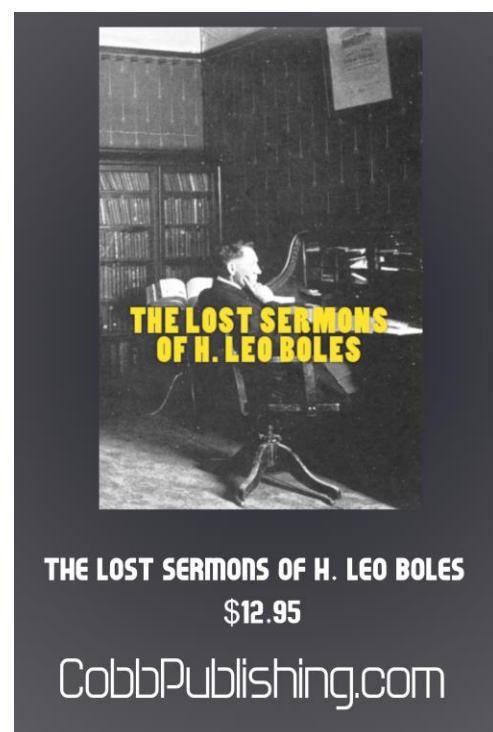
(3) Was Jesus "God with us?"

(4) Is this English translation (NKJV) "more literal than the Hebrew text itself?"

Since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), and if it is impossible to correctly translate that Word into one's own language, how may faith be certain? "Have I not written to you excellent things, of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth To those who send to you?" (Proverbs 22:20-21) This is the same certainty with which the Gospel has been recorded (Luke 1:1-4). It is to preserve that certainty that this is written, as Jesus said: "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

Justin Rogers, and the *Gospel Advocate*, have erred by advocating a position toward the Word of God that means, "Scripture was not accurately given, preserved, nor translated, and, consequently, cannot be properly interpreted." Please re-read Peter's declaration that:

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).



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**OVERSEEN BY THE
OOLOGAH CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Josephus:

WHO WAS HE AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Tom Baxley

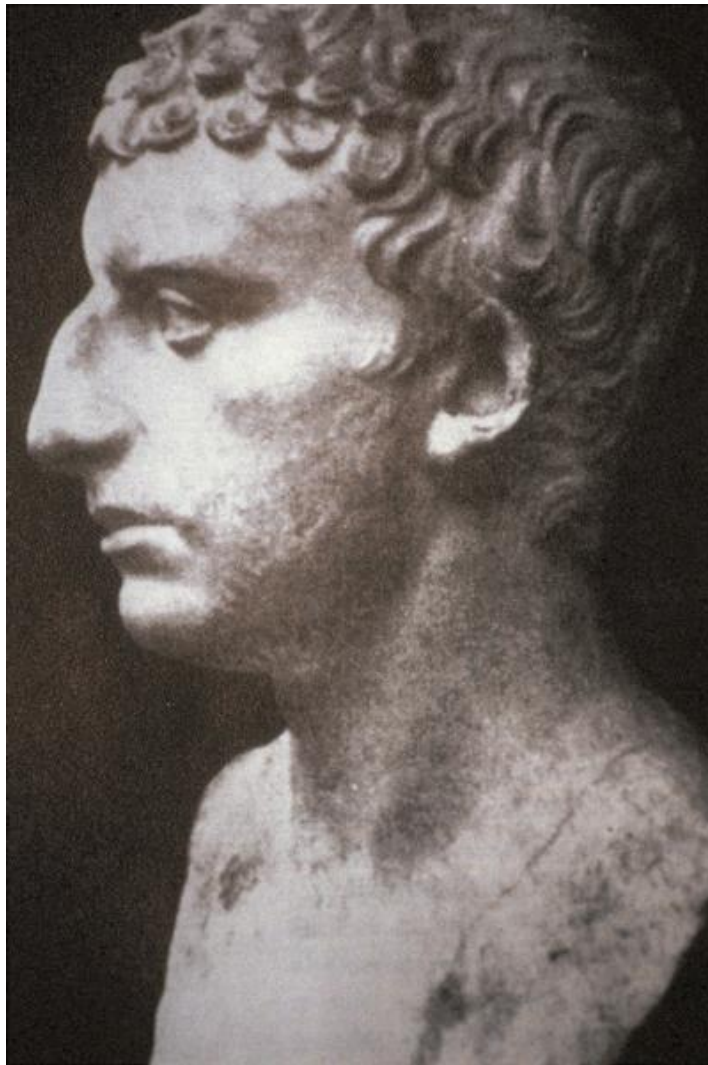
Josephus is a name that comes up from time to time from preachers and commentators, but unless you're a preacher or commentator you are not likely to either know who he was or care much about what he wrote. Even I, myself, a full-time minister of 9 years with a Master's degree in Biblical studies with emphasis in the New Testament, had only a vague understanding of who he was before I was asked to write on this topic. I knew he was a significant figure from the latter part of the 1st century A.D. who wrote a lot and was an eye-witness to much of the first Jewish war with the Romans, but I couldn't tell you much more than that. Since I began working on this article I have learned more of his background, which alone adds a great significance to what he wrote, at least in my mind. In the space remaining I want to share who Josephus was and why we should care about what he wrote.

According to his own words, Josephus was from a noble family descended from priests, including

several high priests. He grew up in Jerusalem, and in his teenage years he began to test the three sects of the Jews (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes) to see which of them he would join. During these tests he even spent three years with an ascetic in the de-

sert, but eventually he came back to Jerusalem and became a Pharisee. When he was 26 he began to notice from his countrymen that there were many hopes for a revolution against Rome, which he then began to speak against and discourage as much as possible without turning his own people against him. Over the next 20 years or so Josephus would travel around Galilee, trying to keep order and trying to suppress the ideas of rebellion, but ultimately it would not last. The Jews revolted and the Romans invaded, and Josephus found himself defending the city of Jotapata, but was eventually conquered and

captured. Upon being captured he announced that both Vespasian and his son Titus would be Caesar and both were eventually persuaded to believe him,



so he spent the next few years of the war with the Romans and was treated in a kindly manner. After the war he went to Rome and received citizenship from Vespasian, but later moved back to Judea to property given to him by Vespasian, living there tax free. It is also after the war that Josephus began his writings, including his autobiography *The Life of Flavius Josephus* from which most of this information is taken, and also his two most prominent works: *The Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews*.

Understanding who he was demonstrates why he is important and why we should consider his writings from time to time. First of all, he serves as a primary source when it comes to Jewish thought of the first century. It is one thing to read what others have said about the time period and its peoples and beliefs, but it is another thing altogether when we can read it straight from the horse's mouth, as they say. As an example, it is popularly taught today that Augustus, not Julius, was the first emperor of Rome and that Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were not real emperors but mere pretenders, but Roman and Jewish Testimony speak otherwise. We know that Suetonius (Roman historian contemporary with Josephus) begins *The Twelve Caesars* with Julius Caesar and that he includes all three of the "pretenders," something which Josephus corroborates when he numbers the emperors: Augustus second and Tiberius third (*Antiquities* 18.2.2), Caius the fourth (18.6.10), Galba, Otho, Vitellius named emperor (*Wars* 4.9.2, 9; 4.10.2).

Second, he provides a history of the Jews from the beginning of creation up to the end of the First Jewish War. Much of what he writes will be found in the Bible, but he does provide some extra details that Scripture does not provide us with. This is especially true when it comes to the Intertestamental Period, some of which was foretold by Daniel in Daniel 8 and 11. The histories of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Seleucids, Ptolemies, and Romans are discussed as they relate to the Jewish people in Judea. He also tells us of the three main sects of the Jews: Pharisees (of which was a member), Sadducees, and Essenes, and he provides insights into some of their philosophies (*Antiquities* 13.5.9; *Wars* 2.8.2-14).

Finally, Josephus can be used as a powerful apologetic. We expect his history to line up well with the Old Testament since he was a Jew, a Pharisee. However, when what he writes lines up well with the New Testament, that is more interesting. A note must be made here: the power of Josephus as an apologetic tool must not be abused. For instance: *Antiquities* 18.3.2 records of Jesus, "He was [the] Christ" (brackets in original). It is highly unlikely that Josephus wrote that, or intended that meaning. This is most likely an interpolation, something added by a believer. Thus to use Josephus to prove that Jesus was Messiah would be wrong, since he was a Jew who fought in the Jewish war, 40 years after the death of Jesus, and the gospel had gone out into all the world, including that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that believers needed to flee (Mt 24:14-22). How this section should be used is this: it is a corroboration that Jesus lived, that He did many wonderful works, He was perceived to be the Christ by some, he was condemned to death by Pilate but later reported alive by His followers, and that those followers believed it and preached it to the present day, all of which reinforces what the NT states. Other things that Josephus writes that align with the NT include that Jesus had a brother named James (*Antiquities* 20.9.1), the death of Herod Agrippa (*Antiquities* 19.8.2), and perhaps the biggest is the destruction of Jerusalem, prophesied by Jesus; reading the *Antiquities* and the *Wars* with the Olivet Discourse and the Apocalypse (Revelation) in mind will help connect dots and clear up many mysteries.

To conclude, Josephus is one of the more important authors a serious Bible student will want to have in their library. His importance comes not as a commentator expounding on difficult passages, but as a first century Jew who can open many doors to us and show us how many thought during that time period, the time period in which the New Testament was written and taking place, and also as a witness that verifies many people and events from the New Testament.

Gates of Hades

John Krivak

*“I also say to you that you are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build My church;
and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”*
Matthew 16:18, NASB

Let it be suggested that when He used the expression “gates of Hades” in Matt. 16:18, Jesus was referring metaphorically to Jerusalem. The passage is often understood more literally to refer to the gated realm of the dead (Satan’s realm), as a power that will come against the church offensively but is ultimately unable to prevail against it.

D.A. Carson notes that this expression, found only here in the Gospels, is used in this literal sense in Job 17:16; 38:17; Ps. 9:13, 107:18; Is. 38:10 and in non-canonical sources, Wis. Sol. 16:13; 3 Macc. 5:51; Pss. Sol. 16:2 and is also found in pagan literature such as Homer, Aeschylus, and Euripedes.¹ Hades is the realm of the dead. In this sense, as Carson notes, “gates of Hades” seems to connote meanings of death and dying. Jesus will build His church of mortal people, yet [their] deaths and dying will not prevail against the church so as to destroy it. Again, “gates of Hades” is often taken as an offensive force that comes against the church, bent on destruction. However, one could also understand the “gates” as a *defensive* barricade that “will not prevail” against the invasively-militant evangelistic mission of the church. And it does seem much more natural to see “gates” with a defensive function, rather than with an offensive one. When have gates ever attacked anyone or anything?

The interpretation adopted here favors a defensive understanding of the “gates” and understands

Jesus to mean that He will build His church, and the formidable (spiritual) defenses of Jerusalem will be unable to withstand its advance. The offensive of the church begins, ironically, with the victory achieved by Jesus when He enters the gates of Jerusalem to be crucified.

Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel

The identification of Jesus as Messiah, by Peter, is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Curiously, to answer the question, “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*” only Matthew mentions Jeremiah as a possible answer. And, in the NT, the prophet Jeremiah is mentioned only four times. Significantly, three of these are by Matthew (the other is in Hebrews). Matthew places the Jeremiah quotations at the beginning (2:17) and end (27:9) of his Gospel, and the reference in 16:14 between them.

In 2:17, Matthew evokes Jeremiah’s sad description of “*Rachel, weeping for her children*” in the story of the “slaughter of the innocents.” The reference is drawn from Jeremiah’s “Book of Consolation” (chs. 30-31). In 1 Sam. 10:2f, Ramah is said to be the site of Rachel’s tomb. John Bright² writes,

*Jeremiah imagines the spirit of the
mother of Joseph’s tribes (Ephraim)
haunting her tomb, weeping for her
children who had been deported by
the Assyrians one hundred years ear-
lier (721).*

¹ D. A. Carson, *Matthew: Chapters 12 through 28, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 370.

² John Bright, *Jeremiah in The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), p. 282.

Frederick Bruner³ understands Matthew's reference from Jeremiah, not so much as predicting Herod's attempt to kill infant Jesus, but rather as yet another episode, so sadly oft-repeated in history, that prompts the mourning of the community of God's people. These too are Rachel's children, however distant in the future, precious but fragile human treasure callously destroyed by satanically-driven political forces. Herod (Jewish only as a political expedient) gets the intelligence data from both pagan and Jewish practitioners to determine which babies to kill to eliminate a rival king, and Rachel weeps. The encounter occurs, in Jerusalem, between Herod and the pagan Magi and the Jewish religious intelligentsia.

In 27:9, Judas repays 30 pieces of silver as the blood-money to condemn Jesus. Matthew adds, "*Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET BY THE SONS OF ISRAEL; AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME.'*" The villain in the slaughter of the innocents had been Herod; the villain in the slaughter of the Innocent is now Judas. Like the babies of Bethlehem, Jesus becomes the victim of ruthless political forces that stand obstinately and formidably against the purposes of God. As with the earlier Jeremiah reference, political forces co-opt religious forces in an attempt to kill Jesus. The treachery of Judas succeeds where that of Herod had failed. This act of treachery also occurs in Jerusalem.

Let it be suggested that Matthew's middle-mention of Jeremiah (in 16:14) also features the same conceptual battle between God and anti-God political forces. In the climactic moment of the disclosure of Jesus' truest identity, the prophet Jeremiah is set forth as one possible option which some have suggested as this identity (again, no other Gospel includes this possibility besides Matthew). Peter gives the better answer regarding Jesus' identity as "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt.

16:16) and Jesus validates this as a revelation from Heaven. After the famous commendation of Peter, and mention of "this Rock" (upon which the church would be built), Jesus then insists that "*the gates of Hades shall not overcome it.*"⁴ A political/governmental meaning is subtly suggested not only contextually—by the outer mentions of Jeremiah in the First Gospel, but is also suggested intertextually, by meanings lodged within the book of Jeremiah.

The "gates of Jerusalem" in Jeremiah

Jeremiah prophesies through the waning days of the Davidic dynasty, the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, and into the Exile—and these calamities eventuate as the wrathful judgment of God falls against and upon His chosen people, who have broken and forsaken the covenant. He is presented, through his self-effacing lack of self-esteem that prohibits any willing acceptance of God's commission, to be a prophet like Moses. In his inaugural vision in 1:15, Jeremiah sees a boiling cauldron facing from the North. Evil is to be poured upon Israel from all of the northern enemies, who will set their thrones "*at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah.*" Jeremiah is to stand strong in this message against them, as God brings judgment for the way they have forsaken Him and engaged false worship. If they honor Yahweh in Sabbath, they will have a Davidic king (22:4). Jeremiah is warned surely, "*They shall fight against you, but they will not overcome* (Heb. "yakōl"; LXX "δύνωνται")⁵ you, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD" (1:19).

⁴ Jesus made these pronouncements at Caesarea Philippi, which was a complex of paganism. Interestingly, the topographical features of this location are said to include a cave known as the "Gates of Hades" and a mountain called "the Rock."

⁵ This would be a lock if Matthew had used the same Greek word for "overcome" as is found in the Greek translation (LXX) of Jeremiah 1:19. However, Jeremiah in the Septuagint has "δύνωνται" (PresActSubj 3Sng) and Matthew has "κατισχύουσιν" (FutActInd 3Plur). Since Matthew usually worked from the LXX, it is hard to account for the difference. Perhaps Matthew is here working from either Hebrew or Aramaic. Although different lemmas are used between Matthew and the LXX version of Jeremiah, both forms are translated as "prevail" or "overcome" in most English translations. There appears to be enough semantic overlap in the meanings of all

³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew, A Commentary, Volume I: The Christbook*, rev. and exp. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 70. Bruner suggests that as there were three "exiles" (Egyptian, Babylonian, and Roman) in the Bible, so there are three "slaughters" in Matthew (the innocents, John the Baptist, and Jesus).

In 17:19-27, the “gates” are the focal point of Sabbath observance, as people truck their wares for commerce. God declares, *“But if you do not listen to Me to keep the sabbath day holy by not carrying a load and coming in through the **gates of Jerusalem** on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched”* (17:27). What is interesting here is that wicked pagan political foes are sent in the employ of Yahweh against His own people for the purpose of executing His judgment against them. The pagans set their “thrones” at the gates of Jerusalem (which Jesus referred to as “the city of the great King,” the very footstool for the throne of God in Heaven, Matt. 5:35), but the gates are no safeguard against the wrath of God that will soon be unleashed. Jeremiah is not to back down as he gives voice to this terrible message, and he will be sorely resisted and opposed. And God assures him, *“They shall fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD”* (Jer. 1:19). The gates are the barrier outside of which Jerusalem’s foes are ensconced upon their thrones, and as Jeremiah dares tell of it, his foes will not prevail against him any more than will their gates prevail against the onslaught by the enemies from the North (Babylon).

Jerusalem’s vulnerability to Jesus’ approach

As Jesus sets forth plans for His church, the same gates will not “prevail” against it any more than when they fell before Babylonian destroyers of Jerusalem’s temple. He ominously or derisively calls the gates of Jerusalem the “gates of Hades”! As no other Gospel mentions Jeremiah, the same goes for the word “church.” It falls in Matthew both here and in the discussion of “church discipline/disfellowship” in ch. 18. With Carson⁶, it seems best not to understand “church” in the later sense developed in the NT, which would be rather anachronistic. Instead, the word translated “church” in the Greek NT

is also found in the Greek OT (the Septuagint), and here it translates the Hebrew word “*qāhāl*,” which means “assembly.” This came to stand for the people of God as a community. Thus, Jesus is speaking of the community of people He will establish (“build”) in His role as Messiah. He and they may be spoken of together, as one. Thus, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, so (proleptically) does the church! He/they, one community of God’s Messianic people, will in eventual development (through the agency of the apostles and of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost) constitute the “church.” When Jesus enters, Jerusalem will not prevail against the church, the people for whom He stands now as Messianic representative.

Immediately following, Jesus makes the first prediction of His passion (16:21ff.) in these words: *“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that **He must go to Jerusalem**, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”* When Peter challenges this as a non-acceptable possibility, the same disciple who had just been praised as having received revelation from the Father—*upon which the church would be built*—this same disciple is now castigated as “Satan”! The reason that Jesus, one minute, calls Peter “the Rock” and, the next minute, calls him “Satan”? In Jesus’ perception: *“for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s”* (Matt. 16:23). We might recall the final wilderness temptation, in which Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world and their glory, if only Jesus will worship him. Instead, Jesus will go to Jerusalem and offer Himself up (through the criminal justice system) to the political powers.

Jesus again predicts His passion in 17:22f, and 20:17ff (see also 17:12; 26:2, and 26:12). The middle prediction is the least specific regarding who will inflict suffering and death, indicating only “human hands.” More to the point are the first and last predictions, which implicate Jewish religious leadership (elders, chief priests, scribes). But the final prediction also includes a handing-over to the Gentiles. This foreshadows the complicity of Jewish religious authority with Roman political authority that fulfills Psalm 2 (ASV):

of the Hebrew and Greek words involved in the various texts to see them synonymously. It certainly would have been nice to find complete lexical correspondence, but the difference is not sufficient to counter the force of the contextual and intertextual evidence for the interpretation offered here.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, p. 369.

Why do the nations [i.e. Gentiles] rage, and the peoples meditate a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,

Against Jehovah, and against his anointed...

The coming judgment upon Jerusalem

After disclosure of His status as Messianic Son of God, Jesus not only grows more intense with predictions of His coming Passion. Once He arrives in the Holy City, beginning with enacted judgment in the temple cleansing (21:12ff.), Jesus also sharpens rhetoric of scathing judgment against Jerusalem. Many of the parables found in this context project the same barbs. But the absolute epitome comes in chapters 23 and 24.

Even the tears and emotional depth of sadness that wells up in Jesus, cannot stave off the force of Divine judgment against Old Covenant Israel. The same Rome that is co-opted by Judaism to facilitate the Crucifixion, that same Rome will be the agent chosen by God to bring Jerusalem—and all that the Temple City represents—to fatal conclusion.

And this brings us full circle. Chapter 24 is often referred to as the “Eschatological or Olivet Discourse” and Jesus declares that He will come—twice. He will come at the end of history, at a time not even known to Jesus (v. 36), and every eye shall see Him and every knee shall bow (vs. 36-51). That visitation will come with as much sudden surprise as a thief in the night. But before this, (long before this, we now know) Jesus will come again, to Jerusalem! The Gates did not withstand Jesus when He first came, when Jewish authorities had the Son of God, their Christ, nailed to a Roman cross. Those same Gates also would prove a flimsy and weak barricade when Jesus would again come. His arrival would be forewarned by natural calamity and by the

wars of human politics. Enough warning was given from Olivet to allow safe escape to anyone with ears to hear. No one had to let the dreadful events of AD 70 take them by surprise. Those who heeded warning would see Jerusalem “surrounded by armies” (Luke 21:20). Jesus came with those Roman armies—not personally in a way visible to the naked eye. He came “ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory” (24:30); Jesus came with the destructive judgment described as “the great tribulation.” The same fate for Jerusalem was described by John in Revelation as the fate of “the harlot” desolated by the Roman beast (Rev. 17:14-18; compare also Matt. 23:34ff with Rev. 18:20-19:2). Jesus came and Jerusalem fell!



The “real” Gates of Hades

Now you may be disappointed to learn that Matt. 16:18 speaks of a “this-worldly” fulfillment of Jesus’ words, as though that might set aside an “other-worldly” fulfillment. You may think bringing judgment against Jerusalem in 70 AD is small potatoes next to a defeat of Satan and the powers of Hell—the “real” Gates of Hades. You may worry that to allow a “Jerusalem interpretation” will deprive us of deeper spiritual meaning. You need not worry! The defeat of Satan and God’s defeat over evil—through the Cross in Jerusalem—are well-established in Scripture. Yet the passages we have examined drive us to envision a fulfillment that is, at once, both “this-worldly” and “other-worldly.” And when we see this in comprehensive perspective, it drives us to consider “Jerusalem” with deeper significance in our Bible studies than perhaps we have previously. God, in judgment, can be made to stand against the people that He once called to himself. Unless we ourselves learn from this, we too are in danger of becoming Shiloh (Romans 11:22).



MY DAD
IN MEMORY OF ROGER PAUL JOHNSON

Gantt Carter

My wife's father, and the man I call my dad, died on December 26, 2018. He lived a life of longing for our God, and of love for his family and friends. I only knew him for about 6 and a half years, but how I treasure that time and reflect strongly the lessons I learned from him.

My first memory of Dad was a fatherly phone call about me coming to visit Oklahoma. I was living in Tennessee at the time. He gave up His oppor-

tunity to preach, so that I could come and preach. We met in person as I came to the house for that visit to Oklahoma (my first time in the state). He met me at the gate with a firm handshake. Simple, and yet there was something about that "man-to-man" greeting. I imagine, too, that he was probably getting a head start on checking me out to make sure I was up to the par of dating his daughter.

I did not have the greatest relationship with my biological father. This made getting to know Dad and gaining the honor of calling him “Dad,” just that much more special. The last text he sent me was, “Love you, son!!!”

Below are some further reflections on our relationship and what he taught me:

Dad showed me what it means to be a godly husband and father. I learned from his affection toward my mother-in-law and his caring nature for his children. He showed me how to be a husband who loves, guards, and provides for his wife romantically, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. He labored to provide for his family physically but providing for them spiritually was a far great priority. He exemplified the loving husband that the apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 5.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:22-32, ESV).

Son-in-laws often have fairly rocky or at least distant relationships with their wife’s father. Not so in this case at all! Dad fully accepted me into his family and treated as his son without reserve. He charged me with taking care of his daughter as he offered help in any way he could. I still remember the time the two of us were outside together after

we had told everyone that my wife was pregnant with our first child. I still recall that tight hug as he strongly told me that he loved me and to let him know if we needed ANYTHING.

I will remember him as the one who got down in the floor and played with my children. They will remember him as “Papa.” He was the kind of grandfather we all want and want for our children. He wanted them to grow up in reverence for the Master and with respect for others.

I will hold fondly to the memories of our discussions about God, Scriptures, and the work of preaching. I remember him preaching his heart out in his love for God and for God’s people. He demonstrated passion for God in all that he did, but this especially shined forth when he proclaimed the Scriptures.

He characterized the man of God who stands for truth and against wickedness. He lived humble slave of the cross who seeks the glory of God above all else. His dedication to the truth cost him much in his life, financially and even relationally, but he continued to press on faithfully before his Master. His determination to please God no matter what continues as a legacy of faith.

When I was ready to propose to my wife, I asked to meet with Dad. I sought his blessing as I proceeded with my plans to ask his daughter to marry me. We discussed several things about life and marriage. He emphasized to me the important of guarding a wife and protecting her emotionally. Knowing the troubles and stresses that can often plague the preaching life, he asked me if I would be willing to give up preaching, if it were to become too difficult on my wife and family. He also strongly informed me that he did not care what I did for a living or how well-off we our family might be, just so long as I helped his daughter please God. I will never forget that night and what he stressed about life and his desires for his family.

Servant, husband, father, son-in-law, brother, friend, leader, counselor, preacher, accountant, remodeler, and much more. Roger Johnson was many things to many people. To borrow from the music world, I will always remember him as the Dad he didn’t have to be.

UNSUNG HEROES:

Naaman's Wife's Servant Girl

Travis Anderson

Over the last few issues of the Quarterly, we have examined various ‘unsung heroes’ in the Bible. I pray they have been profitable and interesting to you. In this article, we will look at a woman (well a girl) who played such a small role in the story that we don’t even know her name, and she is often forgotten in the story—but she is most certainly a hero to the person she influenced.

This story takes place during the time of the Divided Kingdom. After the reign of Solomon, Israel broke into civil war and eventually they split into a Northern Kingdom (Israel) and a Southern Kingdom (Judah). Each had their own kings, and both would eventually be taken away into captivity, but that had not yet happened at the time of this story

Naaman's Wife's Servant Girl

Syria had been made to submit to Israel under the rule of David, but now with a weaker kingdom to oppose them, Syria had rebelled and was constantly attacking the Northern Kingdom.

Notice that this verse says ‘the Lord had given him [Naaman] victory.’ God gave victory to his chosen people’s enemy! One might say this was to punish Israel for the lack of unity that led to a split, and this might be true. But I think there is another reason: so that Naaman could take some of the conquered Israelites as slaves (more on that in a bit).

This story takes a bit of a drastic turn by the end of verse one though: ‘but he was a leper.’

Leprosy was a common disease throughout known world at this time. All 59 verses of Leviticus 13 are devoted to the treatment of lepers and the protection of the non-lepers. It was extremely contagious, as it could be passed through the air and the bacteria could live on clothes for a period of time. It usually starts with a white, pinkish patch of skin, typically on the nose, ear, forehead, or face. As it spreads, eyebrows and eyelashes disappear, then spongy tumorous growths begin on the face, spread-

ing around the entire body. It progresses and attacks the larynx so that the leper speaks with a harsh, grainy voice. It invades bone marrow, preventing blood supply, so bones shrivel and the nose, toes and fingers begin to be reabsorbed into the body. Eyes go blind, and teeth fall out.

But what makes Leprosy truly destructive is the fact that it attacks the nerve pathways so that neural impulses cannot be transmitted to the brain and the result is the inability to feel pain and injury. A cut goes unnoticed, becomes infected, spreads to gangrene. You could often smell an approaching leper before you could see him due to his rotting flesh.

It was a death sentence, because you were literally rotting away, but still alive to experience. You were essentially a zombie, but not the mindless creatures you see on tv, because you were aware of everything going on.

That is what the commander of the Syrian army had to look forward to. And once someone realizes this is what is coming, and there is no known cure for it, you would listen to anyone who suggested that there was a way for this to be stopped

So onto the scene steps our hero.

Not some might warrior in his army, or some wise sage with superstitious advice, but a humble servant girl.

Verse 2 tells us she came into Naaman’s house as a spoil of war. Syria was known to take captive the natives of land they invaded and use them as slaves, and Israel was no different. She told her master, Naaman’s wife, that she knew of a way to cure him: a prophet back in her home land could cure him of this disease.

Now how did she know this? Maybe he had done it before, or maybe he had healed people before. I don’t know, but for whatever reason, a desperate Naaman is willing to do whatever it takes to have this death sentence lifted from him. So he takes a

whole bunch of his riches and heads out to find this prophet.

If you do a modern exchange of the riches listed in verse 5, it would equate to over 3,000,000 dollars. Why so much? The pagan belief system was one where the costlier your sacrifice was, the greater chance of getting that god to do what you wanted. So Naaman is going to make sure that this god of the servant girl's prophet rids him of this awful disease.

The rest of the story is probably very familiar to anyone who went to Bible class as a young kid, and it goes like this. Naaman gets to the house of Elisha, and Elisha never even comes out to meet him, but instead sends his servant to go tell Naaman to go wash seven times in the nearby Jordan River and his leprosy will be healed.

Naaman is insulted by this. First, because Elisha didn't even greet him, and Naaman saw himself as quite important, and he had saw this situation playing out quite different. He assumed Elisha would come out and do a dramatic calling down of his God's power to cleanse him. I'm sure he had seen this sort of thing play out with pagan gods and their priests.

And Second, the Jordan was a muddy river. He saw himself as above going down into a dirty river, much less dipping down completely in it seven times. He says the waters elsewhere are much cleaner, why didn't he tell me to go there?

He rages, but his servants talk him into at least giving the prophets instructions a try. We obviously don't know for certain, but I imagine Naaman was complaining and grumbling the whole way to the river. I imagine he was complaining to his servants about how he was above this as he stripped down because he wasn't going to get his nice clothes all dirty. I imagine that after he had dipped down six times he stopped and complained how his leprosy was just as bad as it was when he set out on this trip, and that he was wasting his time.

And then, when he popped back up after that seventh time, expecting his skin to look just as bad as it had before, it was completely gone. Not only was his leprosy gone, but his skin was as smooth as a baby's skin.

I now imagine him feeling about 2 inches tall after all the anger and complaining he did, but now his death sentence has been lifted.

This is such a pivotal moment in his life that he is going to go back to Elisha and proclaim that not only is the God of Israel a powerful God; not only is he the most powerful God of all the gods; but that he is the **ONLY** God, and that even when he has to go back to his home country and his master (we assume he means the king of Syria) makes him go into the house of false gods and bow down, Naaman wants Elisha and God to know that he is truly bowing to Jehovah God, and not the pagan gods he once believed in.

Scripture doesn't tell us anymore about Naaman outside of this chapter, but what a conversation that must have been between him and that servant girl!

I wonder how many people he must have influenced for Jehovah because of this faith-altering and life changing experience that started with a simple statement from a prisoner of war he used as a servant for his wife.

Lessons to learn from Naaman's hero

She let go of her past. She was the spoils of a war-time raid, She had been taken away from her family, her village, her people, and her culture. But she wasn't holding on to that. The easy human reaction would have been to gloat and snicker over her captor getting that deadly disease. But even though she was a servant, she wasn't a slave to her past by refusing to let go of her hatred or be willing to forgive them for what they had done. This is the kind of mindset God expects from his people (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

She pointed people to God. If North Korea were to attack and invade and take you back to North Korea as a prisoner of war, would you act like this? Would you, if you were able to, marry, have kids, raise your family there, embrace the culture, work for the benefit of your community? God would expect you to. Why? Because God is your God, no matter where you live and no matter what happens to you. And since he is in control, he has a plan for all that should that happen to you. Maybe he wants you to be this servant girl, and influence someone to turn to God.

She showed concern, even for the enemy of her people. It would be easy to, under this girl's circumstances, to become depressed and blame God and feel hostile towards everyone, but that is not what God would expect from his children should they find themselves in that situation. He would want you to act just like that servant girl. She was genuinely concerned for her master's well being. As a thirty year old man, I pray that my desire for the good will of my captors who had forcefully removed me from everything I knew and loved, would be as this young girl's was.

She was faithful in the present. One of the beautiful things about how God can use us is that rarely does he use one person to share the entirety of the good news with someone. She didn't tell Naaman why or how this prophet could heal him. She didn't tell him why he had this leprosy. She didn't condemn his pagan worship. She simply pointed him in the right direction, towards a more knowledgeable and mature man of God. Some brethren have confided in me that sharing the entirety of God's plan for salvation, or the importance of his church, or the necessity of baptism, or anything else like that is something they feel inadequate at doing.

Guess what? God can still use you! Maybe your job is to be the role of the servant girl: point the people you are concerned about, to someone who know can better explain to them the will of God. And it turns out, you know somebody who fits that description. Talk with your elders, your deacons, your preacher, or other more knowledgeable brethren.

This servant girl didn't hold a theology degree from a university or go to preaching school. She wasn't on the church's payroll, and she hadn't read a dozen books on evangelism. She just simply did what anyone can do, she pointed a lost man towards someone who could help him.

This young girl had a faith instilled in her that did not leave. Parents, if your young child was taken captive into a Muslim country, far from you and your local congregation, would they remain faithful to God as the servant girl did?

But preacher, my kids have grown and gone, so what can I do now? Consider Deuteronomy 4:9-10. And in fact, we all have a responsibility to instill

that faith into all of the children we come into contact with—especially in our home congregations.

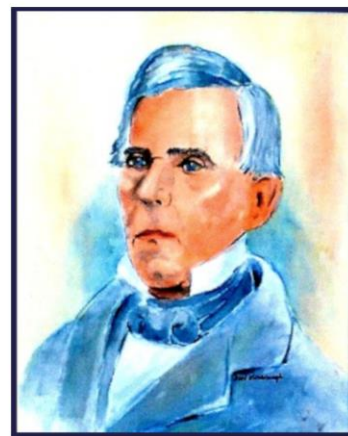
I teach the junior high senior high class, not because they are my kids, but because I want to do my part to teach them the faith that so many teachers helped instill in me.

So ask yourself, if your child was forcefully taken from you this afternoon, brought to foreign land, and made to live in a culture that did not even mention Jesus Christ, would they still believe in and follow the God we read about in this Bible?

If you feel as though they would, then great, keep up the good work. If you feel as though they wouldn't, or know some child that couldn't keep that faith, let this lesson encourage you to be that change in some young soul's life. Because someone, be it a parent, a grandparent, a member of the community, or all of the above, took the time to teach and instill a love of God in this small girl so strongly that despite all the reasons to blame God or to forget him, she didn't.

And that led to her pointing Naaman in the right direction. Who, after being healed, believed in that same God. And he influenced who knows how many people to do the same. And it all started because someone took the time and made the effort to put those passages from Moses' final sermons in to practice.

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MESSAGE **BOARDS**

PREACHING THE “OFFENSIVE” GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Michael Shank

I heard a preacher one time say, “I want to preach the gospel so clear that Ray Charles could see it and Stevie wouldn’t have to Wonder!”

Look at Acts 17:2-7.

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

There’s Paul and Silas preaching the gospel in Thessalonica (v.1), and look at the results: one positive and one negative.

We find a positive in v.4 – some believed and accompanied Paul and Silas. Hey, what did NT believers do? They believed and were baptized – Acts 2:41, 18:8, etc. So there were some that believed and accompanied them – that’s a great positive;

But we also see a negative – “but other’s did not believe and sought to bring harm upon Paul and Silas.”

We have no MP3’s of their sermons, but friends, they must have preached with enthusiasm, and passion, and excitement – don’t you agree? Those who rejected their preaching were stirred up to the point of violence – because the brethren sent them away under the cover of night (v.10). Have you ever known a preacher to have preached in such a way that his life was in danger?

What was the charge laid against Paul and Silas? Verse 6 – “These that have turned the world upside down have come here also!”

How do we measure up to that accusation today? Are we turning our county upside down with our preaching and teaching? Do people see the church of Christ and say, “Now those folks are clean living, Bible loving, and Jesus Christ preaching people?” Are we different in their eyes?

Or do they say, “Ah, they’re just another denomination! I can’t tell them from any other ‘church-goers.’”

You know what our problem is? We want to fly below the radar. Don't want to be noticed. Don't want to rock the boat – let's not make any waves. Sure don't want to be unpopular.

Don't you realize that the whole reason that you are a Christian today is because someone back in the past decided that the gospel of Christ was more important than worrying over making a few waves?

Thank God for courage and strength and a love for the Lord that outweighs a love for the world!

WE MIGHT RUN 'EM OFF!

Over the years I've met a lot of Christians who were more concerning with "running someone off" than they were with converting that person to Christ. They'd say, "Well, it's better to have someone continually attend services than to teach something that made that person make a choice of whether or not they were going to obey the Lord."

I've heard brethren say, "I sure hope that sermon doesn't run 'em off!"

Preaching the gospel is offensive to many people. But not preaching it is offensive to God! Listen, I want to preach the gospel so clear that Ray Charles could see it and Stevie won't have to Wonder!

Look at Acts 19:25-29);

Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard

these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aris-tarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Over the years I've met a lot of Christians who were more concerning with "running someone off" than they were with converting that person to Christ.

What do our "please don't offend anybody" brethren think when they read this? This type of preaching caused confusion and strife among these folks, so God must have been upset with this, right?

Wrong! Look at the Record again in Acts 19:18-20.

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before

all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

From this text we can clearly see that the preaching of the word of God caused some to be so offended that they "believed, confessed, and showed their deeds" (vs. 18).

WHAT PREACHING THE GOSPEL IS ALL ABOUT

Look at Acts 7:51-60.

Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen, [who was] calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Did Stephen preach in such a way as to not “run somebody off”?

Preaching the gospel is telling the greatest story ever told – the horrible death that Jesus voluntarily experienced for you. How his body was cared for and prepared; how it was laid in a rich man's tomb and a stone sealed over the door. And how death could not hold Him – he came forth from the grave alive!

Preaching the gospel is preaching this message of good news, and how men and women are responsible to make a decision. We've got to tell them what to do to be saved – you'll find those soul-saving, life giving instructions in Acts 2:37-41.

We can't pussy-foot around and candy-coat our words brethren – every lost person needs to be brought to the point of decision – make a decision today. You see, when you tell someone they need to be saved, you are telling them that they are lost!

Some don't like it when they're told they need the Savior. Look at John 8:32-37.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

THE RIGHT QUESTION AND THE RIGHT MOTIVATION

Nevertheless, while some may be offended, it is our work to take the word of God to them wherever they are (Acts 5:42). Do a personal study – look at New Testament preaching and the many reactions to it. If you do this you'll find that our fear should not be in running somebody off – our question ought to be why are we not pricking the hearts of everyone around with the gospel to the point that we generate a reaction from them?

I hope I offend you today! Yes, I hope I offend you right into the waters of baptism (if you aren't a Christian), or into a humble repentance before your Savior (if you have already become a Christian).

The Gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

If you reject Christ's words, you're not rejecting me – you're rejecting the Lord.

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THE MACCABEES

Kyle Frank

The Maccabees were a family of warriors of the Jewish race. They fought against the Seleucid Empire, of which they were a part, from 167 B.C. to approximately 143 B.C. They managed to achieve complete independence from about 110 to 63 B.C. They very often ‘encouraged’ people to become “religious” Jews by forced conversion. They expanded the borders by warfare and conquest and actively sought to reduce the growing influence of Hellenism in the land.

A brief historical sketch will aid us in gaining a proper understanding as to why the Maccabean revolt occurred.

It appears that the thread of history which became the Jewish revolt begins with the decree of Cyrus which allowed the Jewish people to return to their ancestral homeland. Unlike the wealthy immigrants, the main actors in the drama are those that were less than affluent. Cyrus gave the go-ahead but also acted directly so that the settlers could go to Palestine—on *HIS* nickel. His government gave the proper permits which helped the immigrants to travel across national boundaries, use national resources in the reconstruction of the land and finally, he gave the funds which were so necessary for them to move despite the opposition from the locals. A record of this process can be found in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Taking a step back, there isn’t much to be seen in history until around 458 B.C. when Ezra is sent to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes. What he discovered was very disheartening. The city lay in utter ruins and badly needed to be rebuilt. The natives, the non-Jewish neighbors, received the early settlers with complete hostility. They wanted nothing less than the complete removal of the upstart settlers who were determined to rebuild the wall around the city. The biblical book of Nehemiah tells the story of the rebuild of Jerusalem as well as the opposition. We read in Nehemiah 4:7-8 the names of the opposition to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem: *But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the*

Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. Despite this we see the completion and dedication of the walls of Jerusalem.

Another great milestone leading to the history of the Maccabees is the campaigns and reign of Alexander the Great, who died in 323. His empire was broken up and given to his Generals. In 311, Seleucus (one of Alexander’s generals) came to possess Babylonia. Palestine turned out to be a battlefield. It was a possession of Ptolemy from 323-315 when Antigonus became ruler of the land. He was killed in the battle of Issus and the possession returned to Ptolemy of Egypt. It was finally regained by the Seleucids in the person of Antigonus III.

In 175 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 215–164 B.C.) became ruler of the Seleucid Empire. He defeated a fellow suitor, Heliodorus, after Heliodorus assassinated Seleucus. Antiochus went to Syria and declared himself king. He saw the office of High Priest as at his discretion and used it thusly. He felt that he could appoint and or dismiss them at his whim and did so. He used religion as a unifying factor in his empire and had the people worship himself in the supposed form of Olympian Zeus (in 169 B.C.). His title, *Theos Epiphanes*, means “the manifest god.” His enemies changed his name by one letter to *Epimanes* which meant “mad man” or “insane.”

Soon after Antiochus’s accession to the throne, he was called upon to mediate a dispute between the High Priest and his brother. This led to a widening conflict which ended with Antiochus invading Egypt in 170 B.C. Once he was victorious he set up opposing men in high office who would be too busy opposing one another than to lead a revolt against Antiochus.

When he arrived back after his Egyptian adventure he heard that Jerusalem was in rebellion against him and he desecrated and plundered the temple of

its treasures and left the city under one of his military commanders. (1 Macc. 1:20-29, 2 Macc. 5:18-22; Josephus *Ant.* 12.5.3 246-247).

Antiochus' Madness Celebrated

The next time that Jerusalem had contact with Antiochus was when he was on his way back from fighting in Egypt. He had been opposed by earlier “troublemakers” and had to quell them. When he was returning from Egypt, he received a communication from Popillius Laenas, a Roman that he knew from an earlier time, while he had been a political hostage in Rome. The message was short and sweet. It was an ultimatum from the Roman senate which instructed him to evacuate Egypt or face action from the Roman military. He had learned of the military might of Rome during his residence there. He complied with the ultimatum immediately and had no further trouble from Rome. Of course, he was bitter and came up with a scheme to make Palestine loyal to him by various ploys, causing them to act as a buffer between him and Rome.

Since he felt himself to be Zeus incarnate, he ordered that a policy of Hellenization be carried out in Palestine. In 167 he determined to exterminate the one thing in Judea which opposed him completely, that of its religion. He forbade them to live according to the law. He forbade the Sabbath, feasts, sacrifices, and circumcision of children. His policies were draconian at best and absolute blasphemy at the worst. His officers were ordered to destroy any copies of the Torah that they could find, whether in public or private. Alters that were idolatrous were set up to offer unclean sacrifices as well the eating of swine's flesh and anything else that they could find to commit. (2 Macc. 6:18) The climax of this ungodly movement came when on Kislev 25 (December 16, 167 B.C.) the temple became desecrated—in worship to Zeus; swine flesh was offered upon the altar (Dan. 11:31-2, 1 Macc. 1:41-64; 2 Macc. 6:1-11). The new law required these to be done on the twenty-fifth of each month. That date

celebrated the birthday of Antiochus Epiphanes and was in truth, in honor of him.

The Revolt Begins

In 166 B.C., this policy was to be carried out in every village, town, and city of Israel. A heathen altar had been set up and imperial representatives were present to observe that every citizen acted in compliance to the policy. A small village called Modein, which was close to Jerusalem, became the flash-point for the revolt that was building in the hearts of many Jews. Here, there lived an elderly priest named Mattathias who dwelt with his five sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazer, and Jonathan.

A representative of Antiochus arrived to compel the citizens to renounce God and to offer unclean sacrifices. Mattathias, the acknowledged leader of the village was told to show

his example by doing so, but he refused. Another citizen stepped out to commit the crime and was slain by Mattathias, along with the King's representative. The altar was torn down and Mattathias proclaimed “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me” (1 Macc. 2:15-27; Josephus *Ant.* 12.6.1 265-272). Mattathias, his sons and every follower fled to the mountains and the Maccabean Revolt was on.

While Matthias and his followers were in hiding, rumors of exterminations came to them and some of these caused him and company to fight on the Sabbath to survive the onslaughts on Antiochus' evil soldiers. This revolt became a war between the two “religions” that of Antiochus and his Hellenizing teachers and the men of Jehovah—those that fought to keep God's laws and traditions. Groups that had been loyal to the law, such as the Hasidim came over to the rebel cause, seeing it as a struggle between right and wrong. War was waged against Jews who had been compliant to Antiochus. During this time, Mattathias died, leaving his son Judas in control.



Judas Maccabee (166-160)

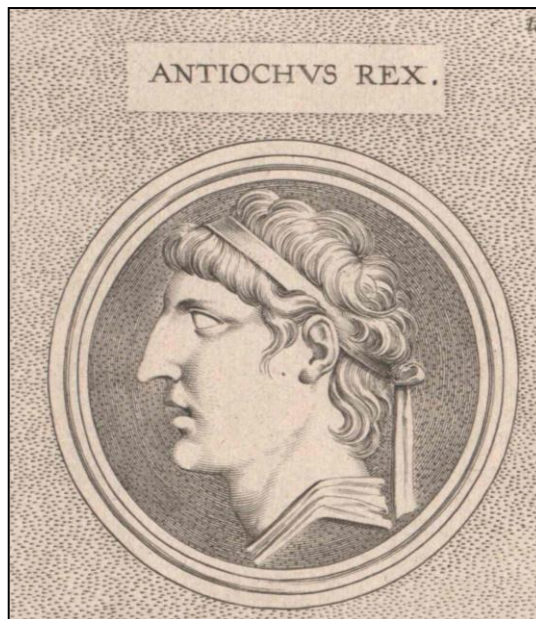
When Judas picked up the fight, it became very obvious that the right man for the job had been chosen. He fought like a wild animal, cutting down his opponents wherever they could be found. He changed the way that the rebels fought. Under his father it had been hit or miss in raiding. He raised the battles from guerrilla battles to well-planned campaigns. He drew men from far and wide to his now full-fledged army. He defeated a couple Syrian governors and drew even more men to his cause in doing so.

There were several goals for Judas and his brothers. The first was to make all of Judea independent. Campaigns were fought in Judea, Galilee, Idumea, and Ammon. The rebel forces were successful in most cases. They were accomplishing more than they could have dreamed possible. (1 Macc. 5:9-68)

Despite these great victories, there was still the prohibition against the Jewish religion. This was the next goal to be sought. To accomplish this, Judas sought to eliminate the influence of Antiochus in Jerusalem, the center for the Jewish religion. In the summer of 163 a siege was laid around a place called “the Acra” which was the source of Antiochus/Syrian power. To eliminate this would be to eliminate “the knife” which was aimed at the throat of Judaism in its headquarters city—Jerusalem. Some Syrian soldiers, as well as turncoat Jews, managed to escape to raise the warning in Syria (1 Macc. 6:18-27). But, Antiochus IV was dead and his nine-year-old son (under the guidance of a regent/guardian), Antiochus V Eupator, went south from Antioch and defeated Judas in a battle outside of Jerusalem. A siege was then turned on Jerusalem, which was short on food due to it being a sabbatical year. Political maneuvering lead from one thing to another and a peace treaty was signed between Judas and Antiochus V’s guardian. The treaty guaranteed religious freedom. But, of course, some form of retribution happened and the Syrians

tore down the wall that surrounded the city before they left the scene.

Next, political freedom was on the menu. Having achieved the true goal of the revolt—religious freedom—Judas sought political freedom from Syria in 162-160 B.C. A nephew of the late Antiochus IV escaped from Rome and managed to kill Antiochus V, as well as his guardian. He then installed himself on the Syrian throne as Demetrius I Soter [Savior]. Various political intrigues involving the office of High Priest occurred (1 Macc. 7:15-20) and Demetrius and his representatives still fought with Judas,



which ultimately led to his sending ambassadors to the Romans, asking for assistance in dealing with the Syrians. A treaty was made between the two warring parties. Demetrius was warned that if he interfered with Judas, war with Rome would occur. But, before the response was received, an army was sent against Judas and at the battle of Elasa (10-12 mi. north of Jerusalem). Judas was slain. His body was removed by his brothers and was buried at

Modein (1 Macc. 8:1-9:22, Josephus Ant. 12.106-12.11).

Jonathan (160-143)

The death of Judas was a heavy blow to all who hoped after Jewish freedom. His younger brother Jonathan was chosen to be his successor. The Hellenists enjoyed a brief period of control from Maccabean opposition while they (the Maccabees) were in the southern wilderness of Tekoa only able to launch guerilla raids against the Hellenists/Syrians. In the month of what would be May, the High Priest, Alcimus, died while the military commander Bacchides left his command in Judah and returned to Antioch. A period of two years of “peace” followed until the Hellenists requested Bacchides to return from Antioch. He suffered a defeat by the Maccabees at the battle of Bethbasi. A new peace treaty which followed proved to greatly weaken the Hellenists. They no longer held control as they had

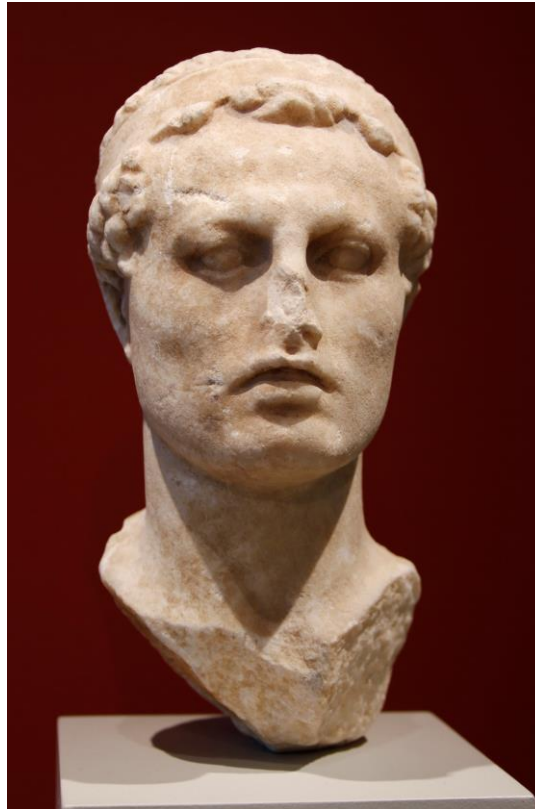
in earlier times. Demetrius did not appoint the High Priest as he had previously. Under the new peace treaty Jonathan would certainly have something to say since he was under the new High Priest. Also, Jonathan made his new headquarters at Micmas, where he judged the people (he was very harsh towards the Hellenizers) For the next five years there was no new High Priest appointed and in the vacuum of power Jonathan grew substantially. (1 Macc. 9:23-73, Jos. *Ant.* 13.1-6, 1-34)

In future years the people of Judah were assisted greatly due to power struggles in Syria. A man named Alexander Balas pretended to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes and challenged Demetrius I for the throne of Syria. Both contenders vied for Jonathan's support. Demetrius offered to hand over the Jewish hostages held in the "Acra" stronghold. He also abandoned all the strongholds save two (1 Macc. 10:14; 11:41; 13:43). Jonathan exploited the circumstances by moving his headquarters to Jerusalem. Alexander Balas made Jonathan High Priest and gave him the title "Friend of the King." Then, not to be beaten, Demetrius offered more promises such as exemption from various taxes, subsidy of the Jewish army, surrender of "the Acra" and several other "offers" such as offering money for rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem—that the Syrians had torn down. This head-to-head competition ended when Demetrius was slain by Alexander. Fortunately, Jonathan had sided with Alexander, who rewarded him richly. He named him as a general and also governor of Judah.

In the year 147 B.C., Alexander Balus was challenged by Demetrius's son Demetrius II Nicator. Alexander Balas was defeated and assassinated two years later. Demetrius II was only sixteen years of age when he ascended the throne in 145 B.C. Jonathan took advantage of this new king's experience and attacked the Acra, where Hellenizing Jews were still in control. Demetrius ordered Jonathan to with-

draw the siege and report to him at Ptolemais. Jonathan continued the attack but reported to Demetrius with a large number of gifts. Demetrius was shocked at the audacity of Jonathan but named him as "Friend of the King" and supported his High Priesthood and granted him the addition of three districts in Samaria.

At this point in time, a man named Trypho (a general of Alexander Balas) claimed the throne for a man named Antiochus VI. Jonathan, seeing some political hay to be made, sided with Trypho and because of his new-found loyalty, was named head of civil and religious aspects while his brother Simon Maccabee became the head of the military. Jonathan, at this point, contacts the Romans again regarding reconfirming the alliance between the two. His continued success in military operations made Trypho nervous and led to his arrest by Trypho. Simon, Jonathan's brother thought that he had negotiated a release, but the effort failed, leading to Jonathan's death. Of the original



Maccabean family, only Simon survived. He became the leader and began a new dynasty of Hasmoneans. The line of the Maccabees ended with Simon while the new group, the Hasmoneans, began with him (1 Macc. 10:67-13:30, Jos. *Ant.* 13.4.3-6.86-86-212)

Sources:

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,
Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible,
Age of the Maccabees.

Israel:

Descent into Depravity

David Dean

Israel failed. There really is no better way to describe the conclusion of events recorded in the book of Joshua and the first chapter of Judges. God had commanded His people to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan—in some cases even to “utterly destroy” them—yet, when we study the book of Judges, we notice these people are still very much alive and active in the now-settled land. What does this mean for the children of Israel? Will they be able to remain the holy people that God expects? Sadly, the experienced Bible student knows this failure is but the start of the Israelites’ descent into depravity.

The book of Judges is often taught in an interesting manner. We study the book as if it is just a collection of stories featuring God’s victory over the pagan nations persecuting and enslaving Israel. All the while, we ignore the very clear reality that the Israelite people are directly responsible for the problems they face. This reality is evident by the second chapter of Judges. This chapter sets up the pattern for the book by expressing the anger of God at Israel. Why? Because:

“the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers [...] and provoked the LORD to anger” (Judges 2:11-12).

The chapter continues to explain how God would punish the children by sending oppressors, and then He would raise up judges to free them when they acknowledged their sins. However:

“it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers [...] they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (Judges 2:19).

The book of Judges is not a glorious account of the righteous God protecting His persecuted people as we often portray it; instead, it is a tragic account of a people in constant rebellion against their God.

Israel’s descent into depravity does not take place all at once. Instead, what we observe is a gradual decline. The first few judges start out great, but as with all continuous rebellion, the depth of wickedness slowly grows. Gideon would create an ephod, or image, out of 1,700 shekels of gold and place it in his city—an act that the Bible acknowledges “became a snare unto Gideon, and his house,” (Judges 8:27). By the time we get to an individual such as Jephthah, we find the leaders of the people have become significantly corrupt.

Jephthah, seemingly out of touch with the nature of God, chooses to bargain with God instead of placing his trust in Him.

“Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30-31).

The battle would go well for the Israelite people, being described as a “very great slaughter” (Judges 11:33). Upon returning to his home, Jephthah is greeted by his only child, a daughter, rejoicing at his victory and return. While people disagree on the exact manner Jephthah fulfilled his vow, the fact that he did so is without question.

Between Gideon and Jephthah, we see a leadership that has slowly pulled away from God. When the leadership of the people turns away from God, it is not long before the people themselves follow their example. In the case of the judges, the people of Israel had already been spiraling, but the decline of their leadership only worsens the fall. We see a glimpse of the moral state of the people themselves at the end of the book of Judges, and the scene is not a pretty one.

Our account starts in Judges 19. When a man of the tribe of Levi is beset by men from the tribe of Benjamin who intend to sexually assault him, he instead sends out his concubine. The woman is raped all night and left for dead at the door of the house where her master was staying. The man takes the woman, cuts her into pieces, and sends her as a message to the tribes of Israel. In chapter twenty the situation worsens to the point of civil war breaking out between the tribes. Benjamin is nearly com-

pletely wiped out before the war is stopped. Many lessons can be taken from this passage of Scripture, but one of more interesting concepts is the parallel between this account and that of Genesis 18-19. The inhabitants of Sodom also demanded the right to sexually assault a visitor in their city. Likewise, they were destroyed, just as a tribe of God’s chosen people faces near-extinction during the events of Judges.

The line of judges would end with Samuel, and while he was faithful to the Lord, he too closely followed the example of his mentor Eli concerning the raising of his children. So, when Samuel was old and he set his sons to judge over Israel, the elders declared, “thy sons walk not in the thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5). With that declaration, Israel’s descent into depravity concludes. Instead of being a holy people, the Israelite nation had fully embraced the practices of nations around them—a direct result of their failure to follow God’s simple command to “Rid the land of its previous inhabitants” (Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-18). Of course, it is important that we acknowledge that during this period not everything was lost for the nation of Israel. In fact, there is “Hope in the Darkness.”

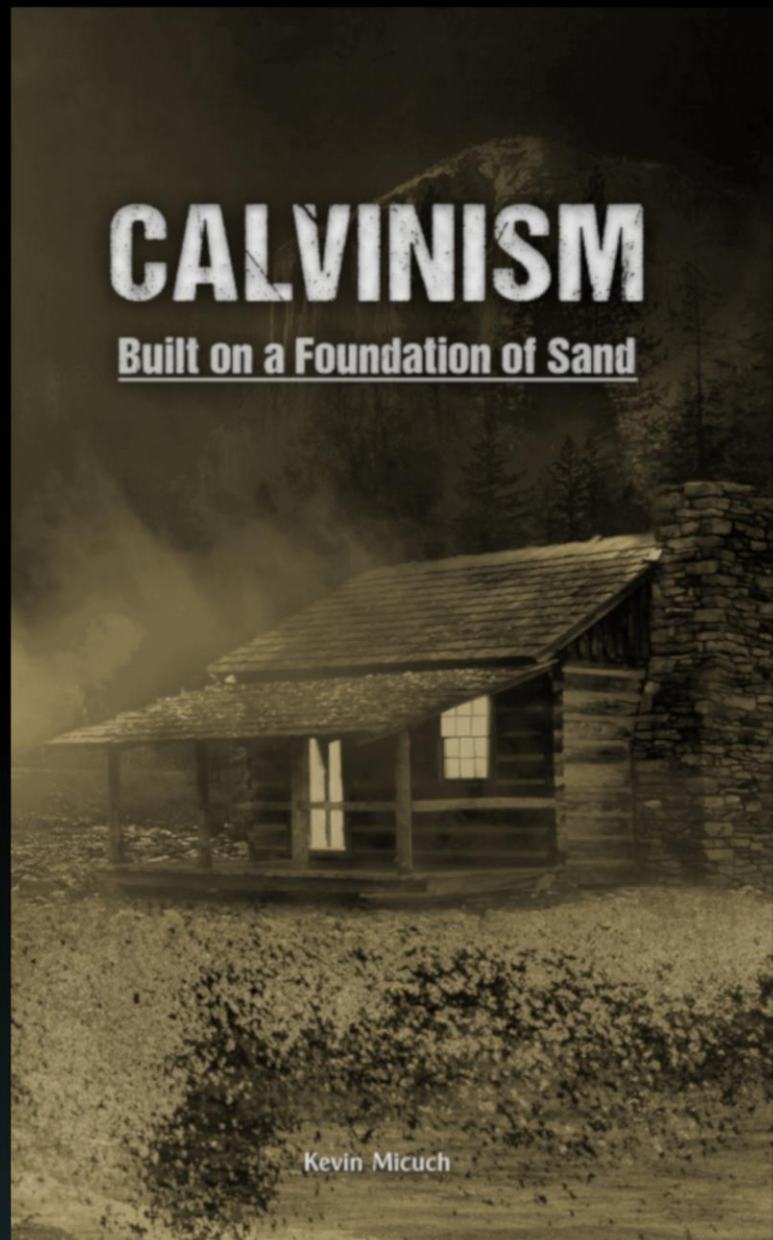
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Walk in A Manner Worthy

(Part 2D)

A REVIEW OF EPHESIANS 4:1 - 11

Jake Schotter

For the last year-and-a-half, we have been “worming” our way through Paul’s arguments in Ephesians chapter four. Because we have spent a while in this chapter, it would be good for us to review what we have studied so far and share some new insights.

The approach to this study is a simple one. The outline we have formed through our study will be given and comments will be made on each of the sections headings. Please grab your Bible, follow the outline, and have access to the previous issues for further explanations!

EPHESIANS 4:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul’s writings can be divided into two clear sections that are often seen in the word “therefore”
 - a) Doctrine: clear theology is given about what the church must believe and teach.
 - b) Duty: based on what we believe, we act in a certain way.
 - c) This is a common thread in Paul’s writings (Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1)
2. Ephesians follows the same pattern.
 - a) Our “position” in Christ (chapters 1-3): predestination (ch. 1), faith (ch. 2), salvation to all (ch. 3).
 - b) Our “practice” in Christ (chapters 4-6): In 4:1, we see the word “therefore”: The focus is now on how we behave as Christians and the church

3. The Christian “walk” is one of Paul’s favorite metaphors (7 times in Ephesians; 16 times total).
 - a) He wants us to be sure that we are going to meet the expectations the Lord has for us.
 - b) Philippians 1:27
 - c) Believers are to live lives of integrity and be consistent with the proclaimed Word.
4. This chapter can be outlined into three clear sections using the acronym “W.A.L.K.”
 - a) W – *walk* in a manner worthy (4:1-6)
 - b) A – *allocate* our gifts (4:7-16)
 - c) LK – *laying* aside the old self for the new man by *killing* off the mannerisms of the old man (4:17-32)
5. As this chapter progresses, Paul gets more and more personal...
 - a) He begins by addressing the congregation as a whole (4:1-6)
 - b) He addresses believers by their common gifts (4:7-16)
 - c) He ends with the individual Christian (4:17-32)

DISCUSSION

I. WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY (4:1-6)

- A. The call to walk in a worthy manner (4:1)
 1. Paul’s concern (“therefore”) – This word is very important to pay attention to. There are at-least four reasons why we should
 - a) It reminds us of the importance of studying Scriptures in their context
 - b) It leads us and points us to the life we are to live in light of the doctrines discussed in prior chapters.

- c) It reminds us that the life which we are to live is a life which always results from the application of doctrine.
- d) It is through our understanding of this concept (the application of doctrine) that we are sanctified.
- 2. Paul's credibility ("the prisoner of the Lord")
 - a) Paul wrote this letter from prison, underscoring the fact that he was suffering for Christ's sake.
 - b) He knew that his own obedience would cause pain and persecution.
- 3. Our calling ("walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called")
 - a) Philippians 1:27 (this is a command with no wiggle room!)
 - b) "the calling to which we have been called"
 - i. "the calling" – the divine offer of salvation (Ephesians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)
 - ii. "called" – we are expected to act in a certain way. We must be able to have consistency in our beliefs and our behavior (Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1)

B. The characteristics of a worthy walk (4:2-3)

- 1. Humility
 - a) When we compare ourselves against the perfect standard of Christ, we have no room for pride. This is our attitude towards ourselves.
 - b) James 4:6
- 2. Gentleness
 - a) This is the delicate balance of our emotions, especially anger. There is a time and place for righteous anger but not at the wrong times, in the wrong ways. This is our attitude towards others.
 - b) 1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Timothy 2:25
- 3. Patience
 - a) Because God was patient with us, as sinners, we need to be patient with others.
 - b) 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 1:16
- 4. Tolerance
 - a) This is not the world's tolerance of blind acceptance but the ability to deal with others and their shortcomings.
- b) Matthew 5:48b; Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 4:8
- 5. Love
 - a) When we exhibit love, we desire the best, seek the best, and do the best for others. It is an all-out effort that will motivate us to be proactive in preserving the unity of the Body (Ephesians 2).
 - b) Colossians 3:14
- 6. Diligence
 - a) Unity requires intense effort and care. Drawing on Ephesians 2, again, this was vitally important between the Jews and the Gentiles as they assimilated in the name of Christ.
 - b) 2 Peter 1:10, 15; 3:14
- C. The church has a worthy walk (4:4-6) – These six characteristics are safeguards for the church and they prepare us to be able to agree on what truly provides unity. To be unified, we must first have the right attitudes.
 - 1. "One body"
 - a) The church is the body of Christ from the past, present, and future – all who have believed, been baptized, and added to the body of Christ.
 - b) 1 Corinthians 1:10; Matthew 16:18
 - 2. "One spirit"
 - a) The context is dealing with unity in the "one body." It is not likely a reference to the Holy Spirit. As the "one body," we must be of "one spirit" – a mindset that is intently focused on being unified in how we treat one another as Christ would and teach the doctrine of Christ.
 - b) Philippians 1:27 is a parallel passage and Paul's use is clearly of having a certain "mindset" in the congregation.
 - c) There are those who take the view that this is the Holy Spirit, especially with His role of revelation. However, this would make sense being with the "one faith" because it refers to the teaching.
 - 3. "One hope"

- a) Since we have responded to the call of salvation, we may have the confident expectation of eternal life with God.
- b) Ephesians 1:11-12, 18; 1 Corinthians 13:13
- 4. "One Lord"
 - a) The word "lord" means that Christ has all authority and is our master over all aspects of our lives.
 - b) Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:7; Acts 20:28; Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 8:5-6)
- 5. "One faith"
 - a) This is the settled body of revealed truth that we are to teach, entrust, and commit to others.
 - b) Jude 3; 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 17:22-23; Exodus 20:3
- 6. "One baptism"
 - a) There is only one way into the body of Christ. Baptism is not just a mere identification.
 - b) Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Romans 6:4-5
- 7. "One Father"
 - a) Our God is the only true God, has a relationship with us, is sovereign, present with us, and is powerful.
 - b) 1 John 3
- c) The key to unlocking this verse is in a study of the word "captive"
 - i. The devil was defeated (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20; Job 2:6; Revelation 20:10; John 12:31; John 16:11)
 - ii. Death was defeated (Hebrews 2:14-15; John 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Matthew 16:18)
 - iii. Christ and Christians conquer (Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 1:17; Romans 8:37; Revelation 6:2)
- 4. The explanation by Paul (4:9-10)
 - a) The descent and ascent of Jesus in His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection.
 - b) 2 Corinthians 5:21; Acts 1:9-11; Philippians 2:6-10; Ephesians 1:22-23

B. The gifts that have been given to the church (4:11) (Note: a person's spiritual gifts permits a Christian to be able to serve in an official capacity.)

- 1. Functions that have ceased
 - a) Apostles
 - i. The definition can be very wide (one sent or a messenger) to very narrow (the 12 apostles). Paul focuses on the narrow definition.
 - ii. Ephesians 2:20; Acts 1:21-25; Ephesians 3:5; John 14:26; 16:13-16; Hebrews 2:3-4; Luke 6:13; Galatians 1:1; Matthew 10:5-6; 28:19-20; Acts 6:4; 20:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 15:8)
 - b) Prophets
 - i. The prophets were people who received revelation from God and spoke on His behalf.
 - ii. Paul's usage of the phrase "apostles and prophets" (c.f. 2:20; 3:5) indicates these are not the prophets of the Old Testament.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 12:24-25; Acts 15:32
- 2. Functions that still continue
 - a) Evangelists
 - i. The meaning of evangelist: "a messenger of good" and is closely related to "preach the gospel"

II. ALLOCATE YOUR GIFTS (4:7-16)

- A. The grace that has been given by Christ (4:7-10)
 - 1. The exclusivity of this grace (4:7)
 - a) This "grace" is not related to our salvation; rather, it is what enables one to serve God.
 - b) Ephesians 3:7; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Colossians 1:25, 29
 - 2. The emphasis on the importance of unity in diversity
 - a) This is a diversity of gifts used for the building up and growth of the body.
 - b) 1 Corinthians 12:7
 - 3. The expression from the writings of David (4:8)
 - a) Psalm 68:18
 - b) It was the custom of victorious rulers to come back from their battles with spoils and slaves. They gave these gifts to the people.

- ii. The mandate for evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-47; John 17:18)
 - iii. The ministry of an evangelist is to reach people in and out of the church.
 - iv. The movement: the overwhelming evidence suggests that evangelists worked with a congregation (2 Timothy 4:5; 1:3-4).
 - v. The motivation for evangelists: love (2 Corinthians 5:11, 14; 1 John 5:2-3)
 - vi. Our mentor for evangelism: Philip (Acts 21:8 is the only time someone is called an evangelist in the Bible. His story is recorded in Acts 8).
 - a. Philip was submissive to the will of God (8:26-27a)
 - b. Philip was aware of opportunities (8:28)
 - c. Philip was knowledgeable with the word of God (8:30-35)
 - d. Philip was knowledgeable with the fundamentals
 - e. Philip demonstrated that evangelism is not a one-time act
- b) Pastors
- i. The Greek word for teachers is not preceded by an article and are connected in the original languages. Notice “He gave some as...” but not for “teachers”
 - ii. The denominational hierarchy connects these two, even though it would be redundant as being able to teach is a requirement to be an elder.
 - iii. Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 14:6; Romans 12:7-8
 - iv. Another word for “pastor” is “elder” or “shepherd” (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7; Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1-4; John 10:1-18; 1 Timothy 3:5)
- c) Teachers
- i. The teacher of the word of God needs to preach the pure word of God and be a workman before he shares to make sure it is orthodox.
 - ii. James 3:1; Ezekiel 3:17-18; 33:7-9; Acts 20:26-27; Hebrews 13:17
- C. The growth that is to occur among Christians (4:12-16)
- 1. The progression (4:12)
 - a) There will be growth because Christians become equipped (2 Peter 1:12-13, 15)
 - b) There will be growth because Christians become servants
 - c) Then, the church will be built up (1 Peter 2:2)
 - 2. The purpose (4:13-15)
 - a) The church is to grow for unity in the faith (Ephesians 4:2-6)
 - b) A knowledge of Christ (John 10:27)
 - c) Spiritual maturity (2 Corinthians 3:18)
 - d) Sound doctrine (Acts 17:11; 1 John 2:13-14)
 - e) Speaking in love (Ephesians 4:15)
 - 3. The power (4:16)



How are you walking?

TABERNACLE SHADOWS

Part 10: The Laver

Mark McWhorter

As one entered the Court the first piece of furniture seen was the Brazen Altar. When a person walked past the Altar toward the Tent, one would see the Brazen Laver, (Exodus 30:17-21; 38:8; and 40:7). The Laver also gives pictures related to Christ and the Church.

The Laver was made of brass obtained from polished brass mirrors of the women who gathered at the Gate (Exodus 38:8). These had been highly prized by the Egyptians.

The Laver had a foot of brass. In Ezekiel 10:6, Ezekiel sees Jesus standing with “feet like in color to polished brass.” The foot gave the Laver stability and makes it firm. If the Christian is consistent in approaching the Laver, he is kept from falling from the faith, (Jude 24). As the foot held up the Laver, so Christ holds up himself and the Scriptures. God will hold up the Christian, (Romans 14:4 and 16:25).

Size

There were **no specifications** to size and shape of the Laver. This indicates there is no limit to the power of the Christ and his gospel. Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 2 Timothy 1:8, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the

power of God.” (It is of interest that Solomon had detailed size and shape for the Laver in his Temple. This may be due to the ‘permanent’ status of the Temple and its picture of Heaven.)

Since there was little water available, it is likely that the original water came from the Rock, (Exodus 17:1-7; and Psalm 78:20 – large amounts gushing torrentially with inundation). The Laver was useless without the water. God was specific in commanding that it be filled with water, (Exodus 30:18). The whole purpose of the Laver was for washing.

The lack of dimensions also means there is no lack of cleansing water. There was a never ending supply of clean water in the laver. It did not matter when they were in the desert. It did not matter when they were in Canaan. God provided enough water to always cleanse. Consider the amount of water needed to daily wash the priests involved in the Brazen Altar and the Holy Place. Consider the Passover and the number of sacrifices requiring washings. Zechariah 13:1, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” There is no limit of cleansing power from the fountain of the New Covenant.

In Revelation 4:6 and 15:2, the faithful are presented as standing on or by a sea of glass (crystal). Those in the church who overcome are clean and in the presence of the Father and the Lamb. Revelation 22:1-2 pictures the river clear as crystal. Perpetual purity for those who overcome. Only those in such a state of purity can approach the Throne of God. By

picturing the word of God as a Sea indicates that those in Heaven have ALL of the word of God. There are no more secret things or mysteries.

Anointing

The Laver was **anointed** with the anointing oil. That sanctified it, (Exodus 40:10). It made it most holy, (Exodus 30:29). It was sprinkled with the blood from the atonement sacrifice. It could not be used until the blood contacted it. Christians cannot be useful until they have been contacted with the blood of Jesus. His blood is what sanctifies. His blood is what makes a person holy.

Washing

In Exodus 29:4 and Exodus 40:11-12, we are given the facts regarding Aaron and his sons (soon to be priests) being **washed** at the door of the Tabernacle. They only had to do this once to become priests. The washing was required to be a priest. There is no priesthood without the complete washing.

The High Priest had to do it one day each year on the Day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16:4). He actually washed several times that day.

Every time one wanted to go into the Holy Place, he had to wash his hands and feet at the Laver. And every time one approached the Brazen Altar, he had to wash his hands and feet, (Exodus 30:20 and 40:32).

Thus, one had to make sure he was clean (holy and sanctified) before his worship in the Holy Place or his worship (presenting and offering sacrifice, eating portion of the sacrifice) at the Altar. Isaiah 52:11, "...be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

Hands represent work and service, (2 Samuel 22:21). A Christian must dedicate his work and service to God.

Feet represent a walk of life, (Isaiah 52:7; Hebrews 12:13; and Proverbs 4:26). The Christian can have only one walk of life – in the Way.

If a priest did not wash, they would die, (Exodus 30:21). Christians must be constantly washed by the blood of Jesus to live the proper spiritual life. Other than priests only those who were to become priests used the Laver. They became priests at the Laver.

Representation of Baptism

People become **Christians** at the Laver. The Laver represents the step of Baptism in the plan of salvation.

Initial justification occurs at the Laver. It is the act of obedience which brings entrance into the church. Luke 7:29, says justification occurred with those baptized by John the Baptizer. This was not entrance into the church but was the act of obedience for those looking for the Christ.

Paul stated that baptism is what makes one a Christian, (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; and Galatians 3:27). Peter said the same thing, (1 Peter 3:21 and Acts 2:38). Philip preached baptism to the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts 8:35-36).

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5 use the word 'washing' in reference to baptism. A form of the Greek word is used in the Septuagint in Exodus 30:18; 38:8; and 40:30 and translated 'laver.' Thus, the Septuagint makes a connection between baptism (washing away of sin) and the Laver.

It is when we are washed that we contact the blood of Jesus. Revelation 1:5, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Anyone who teaches that water is unnecessary to become a New Testament priest ignores the type from the Tabernacle and the simple teaching of the New Testament.

The necessity for the priests to wash before entering the Holy Place or approaching the Brazen Altar. This prefigures baptism for priesthood in the New Covenant. 1 John 1:7-9, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Laver Required for Working

Priests worked in the Court. Christians as priests work in the Court. If the priest did not wash at the Laver, he could not participate in the things inside the Holy Place. Psalm 24:3-4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a

pure heart....” Those things in the Holy Place were his portion, all belong to him, but only if he has washed appropriately.

Holiness

Without **holiness** no man shall see the Lord, (Hebrews 12:14). We are continuously cleansed with the blood. We must be clean to have worship accepted and to be in fellowship, (1 John 1:7-9). David alluded to this holy cleanliness when he stated, “I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord,” (Psalm 26:6).

We are to pray by lifting up holy hands, (1 Timothy 2:8). Holy hands are clean hands washed at the Laver. Solomon referred to this principle in regards to the feet in Ecclesiastes 5:1, “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God”

There is no limit to the holiness available from Christ and his word.

Laver as a Mirror

The Laver was a **mirror**. As one looked into it, one could see if he was clean and pure. Since Christ is the Word, the Laver represents the blood and the Word. Both are necessary. One cannot be cleansed by the blood unless one is also accurately reflecting the commandments, the Scriptures. The non-Christian cannot accurately reflect the Word without being baptized and thus cleansed with the water.

James 1:23-24 says the mirror is the word, “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth....” (James 1:18). Psalm 119:9, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Isaiah 52:11, “... be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

We are sanctified by the Word, (John 17:17). “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,” (John 15:3).

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart,” (Psalm 24:3-4).

In Ephesians 5:26, we read that God sanctifies the church by the washing of water by the word. Baptism gets us into Christ but his blood will con-

tinually cleanse us as saints if we ask for forgiveness. We must ask for forgiveness thus indicating repentance, (1 John 1:7-9). The action of repentance by approaching the Laver and washing was required. God did not allow the priest to enter into worship without such. “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,” (Hebrews 10:22).

Final Furnishing

The Laver was the **last piece of furniture described** by God and then built. Perhaps emphasizing that the Word as given by God in Scripture is final. Once given, there is no more to be added. This is vital since mankind must look in the mirror of the Laver to see if they are clean according to the Law. There needs to be no questions as to whether they can know all that God wants them to know. There is emphasis that Christ is the Word, the Law.

Perpetual

It is the **perpetual usage** of the Laver that brings what Paul desired for the Thessalonians, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Thessalonians 5:23).

Covering

There were no instructions for **covering** the Laver when transporting it. The water is always available. The Laver representing Christ, his word and baptism is foolishness to the world, (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21, 23, 25). They easily see the Laver, but have no recognition of its value. Christians carrying it are openly advertising their allegiance to it. It is interesting that much of the professed Christian world deny the importance of baptism. Yet it is the Laver that is not covered during transport and thus not a mystery of importance. Most of the items of the Tabernacle were either covered or dismantled for transport.



The Most Famous Rooster in the World

Bill Boyd

This is a Bible story about the most famous rooster in the world. He was a good little rooster. He may have been one of the best little roosters God ever made. Every time you see a rooster, I want you to remember that God made roosters, and every time you hear a rooster crow, I want you to remember this story.

God made the first rooster on the fifth day. People often ask, *“Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”* We know that the chicken came first, because the Bible says that God created *“every winged fowl after his kind”* (Genesis 1:21). Later, when God cause the animals to go into the ark, he sent in a chicken and a rooster. We know what roosters do. I suppose that every morning while Noah and his family were in the ark they were awakened by a hearty, *“COCK-A-DOODLE-DO!”*

We do not read a lot about roosters in the Bible, but we read about one that was very important. Most people probably did not think he was important. They probably thought he was just a regular old rooster, in fact, they never even called him a rooster; they just called him a *“cock.”* *“Cock”* is sort of like a nickname for *“rooster.”* It does not sound like a very nice nickname, but it fits, because as a rule, roosters are cocky. You see, most roosters believe they have an important job to do. They get

up early in the morning and crow because they think they are the ones who get everything going. That is what this little Bible rooster used to do. Every morning he would get up, take a good stretch, strut over to his perch, ruffle his feathers, take a deep breath, and crow out as loud as he could, *“COCK-A-DOODLE-DO!”* He was so diligent and faithful in this, that God knew he could count on him.

Peter was one of the apostles of Jesus, and he was a little cocky himself sometimes. On the night before Jesus died, Jesus told his apostles that they would flee away from him. Cocky Peter said, *“NOT ME!”* Actually, he said, *“Though all men be offended because of thee, yet I will never be offended.”* But Jesus said to Peter, *“Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”* (Matthew 26:33-34). Peter meant what he said. Later that night a mob of men came to take Jesus by force. Brave cocky Peter drew his sword, and he would have fought them all to save Jesus, but Jesus told him to put his sword away. They arrested Jesus and brought him to Jerusalem, and the disciples fled just as Jesus said they would do, but not Peter. Peter followed the mob all the way into the judgment hall, and he waited outside while Jesus was on trial.

So far Peter was being very brave, but it says in Matthew 26:69-74, "Now Peter sat without in the palace, and a damsel came unto him, saying, thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man."

Now the little rooster did not know about any of this. He only knew that God wanted him to get up every morning and go out and crow. So being faithful to God, he woke up, took a good stretch, strutted over to his perch, ruffled his feathers, took a deep breath, and crowed a good loud "COCK-A-DOODLE-DO!" Peter heard. Here is what the Bible

says: "And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:74-75). God used this little rooster to reach the heart of Peter. This humbled Peter, and he never forgot this lesson. He later became a great gospel preacher.

Here are three things I want you to remember. First: God made you for a reason. Second: No one else may think you are important, but you are important to God. Third: You need to do what God says, and be faithful to what he wants you to do. You may never know what great things God can do because of you if you will be faithful. The little rooster never knew how God used him to reach the heart of Peter, but just think of all the people that have heard, believed and obeyed the gospel because of Peter. Every time you hear a rooster, let it remind you to be faithful to God every day, and always do what he wants you to do.

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PAUL DARST: A NOVEL

D.R. Lucas

Chapter Thirty-One: Positive Commandments.

The interest in the meeting the next evening was very great. Love found himself in a quandary. The investigation had settled the matter that immersion was the only undisputed baptism, the one recognized by all the churches and creeds. He had never been immersed and now the question presented itself before his mind as to his own duty. Henry had puzzled him very much over the question during the day, and he confessed that he did not understand the subject. His only hope of light was Rose Leyden, and as soon as the meeting was opened he directed the conversation to her, a part of which we insert here.

LOVE. — “Miss Leyden, will you tell us why you, having been sprinkled for baptism in your infancy, should have been immersed?”

ROSE. — “The fact that infant baptism and sprinkling are sectarian, and that immersion of believers is the common ground of the whole Christian world, ought to be enough.”

LOVE. — “If there was any particular importance to be attached to the ordinance it might be, but it certainly cannot make any difference about a mere outward ceremony.”

ROSE. — “There is where you mistake, it is not *A* mere outward ceremony, it is an act of obedience *from the heart*, consequently affects the *will*, and being a positive commandment, resting on authority, cannot be a mere outward ceremony.”

LOVE. — “What do you mean by a positive commandment?”

ROSE. — “I mean a commandment that must be obeyed as an act of faith in the power and authority of the one that makes it.”

LOVE. — “Are not all commandments to be obeyed for that reason?”

ROSE. — “No. A moral commandment is to be obeyed, because it is right in itself. If God had never said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ man would have learned it is wrong to kill, for all men love life and nature revolts at its destruction. But how would a man ever

know that the blood of a lamb would make an acceptable sacrifice to God without a commandment?”

LOVE. — “Then you make baptism one of God’s positive commandments.”

ROSE. — “Certainly, and God who overlooks infractions of the moral law because they affect man alone, has always required exact and perfect obedience to every positive law, because it affects his divine authority and governmental character.”

LOVE. — “If that is true, I must be immersed!”

ROSE. — “True? Surely it is true and it is a wonder to me that as clear a thinker as yourself has not perceived it ere this time. God has always governed men in that way. In fact, it is the only way he can control the *will* of intelligent, responsible beings. In order to harmony there must be one supreme will and all others must bow to that.”

LOVE. — “Go on, Rose, perhaps that will help me to solve a difficulty that was presented today by Henry. He said a man was a simpleton to believe the nonsensical story that God told Adam he should not eat of a certain fruit.”

ROSE. — “That is it, all the objections that infidels make to the test that God made for Adam in the garden of Eden, many persons who profess to be Christians make against baptism. If you had asked Mr. Henry to substitute a moral commandment for the one God gave Adam, in Eden, you would have found he could not do it. Can you find a substitute? Try it.”

LOVE. — “I can think of none, unless he had said, ‘the day thou doest a wrong to thy wife, Eve, thou shalt surely die.’”

ROSE. — “Then Adam could, and doubtless would have said, ‘I love Eve, she is my wife, I cannot do her a wrong.’ There would have been another motive beside obedience to God. But when the fruit was good to eat, pleasant to the eye, and the *only reason* for not eating was, God said he must not, then it was a question of *will*, of authority, an act of faith not to eat.”

LOVE. — “But has God continued that method?”

ROSE. — “Most assuredly he has. Take the case of Abraham. The moral law said, ‘whoso sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed,’ but the positive commandment of God was, ‘take the life of thy son Isaac.’ What did the angel of the Lord say to him when he was about to use the fatal knife?”

LOVE. — “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.”

ROSE. — “Did not God know before that Abraham feared him?”

LOVE. — “It seems as though he did not, but I suppose he did. What do you think?”

ROSE. — “If you will not call me presumptuous I may say that either conclusion is reasonable. To say that God cannot create a being with full volition to obey or disobey is to question his Omnipotence. To say that man is only a machine that God has made to run just so long and in just such a direction, is to make him no greater than man, for man can make a machine that will do his will. It is only degrading God to say that man cannot transgress the will of God. The higher we elevate man the higher we elevate God. It seems foolish to me to think of elevating God by degrading man, for it surely requires an All-wise, Omnipotent Jehovah to make a man with so much power that even the Creator himself can hold him to an accountability for the manner in which he uses the vast power delegated to him. Be this it may, one thing I know certainly, that God always tests man’s will by a positive commandment.”

LOVE. — “Has God always done this? Give me another instance.”

ROSE. — “The brazen serpent in the wilderness/.”

LOVE. — “That is what Henry called a ‘snake salvation.’”

ROSE. — “Yes, but could those persons be healed without looking upon the brazen serpent?”

LOVE. — “Certainly not.”

ROSE. — “Was it the brass that healed them?”

LOVE. — “No. God healed them when they obeyed the commandment to look.”

ROSE. — “Just so, it was an act of faith. When God commands men to ‘be baptized in the name of Christ, for the remission of sins,’ if I say it is essential as an act of faith to obey, many persons will call

it a ‘water salvation.’ I fear there are more infidels in the world than Mr. Henry. What is true of the brazen serpent is true of every positive commandment that God has given. Moses and Aaron were neither of them permitted to enter Canaan. Why was it? Had they violated any moral law?”

LOVE. — “No. They smote a rock twice instead of speaking to it as God commanded and took the honor to themselves.”

ROSE. — “That is just the reason exactly, for God requires perfect and exact obedience to positive commandments. Why was Saul rejected as king of Israel?”

LOVE. — “Because he saved Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, with the oxen to make a sacrifice to God, when he was commanded to slay them.”

ROSE. — “And what were the fearful words God uttered to him?”

LOVE. — “Behold to *obey* is better than *sacrifice*, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

ROSE. — “How true, and what a lesson! My profound conviction is that the person, who from a sincere desire to obey Jesus goes down into the water and is baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, shows more genuine faith in God and Jesus, than any mere philanthropist that ever lived, no matter how much he may have given of his substance to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.”

LOVE. — “You had better be careful, Miss Rose, for that is an unpopular doctrine.”

ROSE. — “I know it, for there is not much faith in God now. I do not, and would not, underestimate the value of man’s work, of philanthropy, for Jesus has said, that ‘he that gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward,’ but man’s relation to God is first and highest, and acts of faith in their relation to the divine government rise infinitely above any mere acts of mercy or sacrifice. The obedience to a positive commandment must be an act of faith in God, an obedience to the moral law of philanthropy may be wholly an act of faith in man.”

LOVE. — “But still I cannot see how it is that God can bestow a blessing better upon a person in obedience to a positive than a moral commandment.”

ROSE. — “That is very easy to me. What is sin?”

LOVE. — “God says it is a transgression, *i.e.*, a passing over law. The will of man is involved and man is active in transgression.”

ROSE. — “Then if man’s will is involved in sin, man must be active in the forgiveness of sin. God cannot forgive him and maintain a just government without requiring the faith of the individual to be brought out in an act that tests that faith. A positive commandment is all that can do that, as we have already seen.”

LOVE. — “Is that the reason the Prophet commanded Naaman, the leper, to dip himself seven times in Jordan?”

ROSE. — “Yes; and how mad Naaman became and would not do so until the servant asked him if the Prophet had told him to do some great thing whether he would have done it. Naaman admitted that he would, but to just go and dip himself in Jordan, it was too humiliating to his pride. How many Naamans there are today! If the giving of a thousand dollars, or making loud, and long prayers, or some great thing, could introduce them into the body of Christ, into remission of sins, they would do it, but the idea of just being dipped in water for that purpose is absurd to them. That was the difficulty with the Pharisees — a pride of will. They were the children of Abraham and the prophets, but ah! they ‘rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being dipped of John.’ Do you remember the title Abraham received when he had offered up his son Isaac?”

LOVE. — “James says, ‘Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness and he was called *the friend* of God.’”

ROSE. — “Jesus says also, ‘Ye are my *friends* IF ye do whatsoever I command you.’”

LOVE. — “The same principle holds good then in the New Testament. Can you give me a case?”

ROSE. — “Plenty of them. Take the case of the blind man. Jesus took clay and anointed the eyes of the blind man and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and he went and washed, and came seeing. Did that clay or water cure his eyes?”

LOVE. — “No, of course not, but I see now how it was, Jesus put the healing power at the end of an act of faith, and when he obeyed the commandment, the power of Christ healed him.”

ROSE. — “Just so with forgiveness, Jesus says, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ Jesus puts forgiveness at the end of an act of faith, ‘be baptized,’ and when the commandment is obeyed, if the individual believes, God forgives his sins. The water cannot take away the sin. That is the mistake of the baptismal regenerationist. He conceives that God has actually put the power in the water, instead of in the obedient faith. Baptism is the act of man, forgiveness is the act of God; the one is an act of faith, the other an act of love.”

LOVE. — “Then it does a man no good to be baptized in a moral sense.”

ROSE. — “No, it will make you no better morally; it will do your family or your neighbor no good.”

LOVE. — “Then what good will it do, and why should I do it?”

ROSE. — “Jesus commands it. Is not that enough? Are you going by faith or reason? You cannot see clearly perhaps, now, why Christ has commanded it. If you could it would not be a test of faith. But, like all the positive commandments of God, when we obey them we see clearly the reason that we cannot see before.”

LOVE. — “Can you see a reason for the act, having obeyed it, that you could not before?”

ROSE. — “Certainly I can. Abraham understood, after he made the offering, why it was commanded; Naaman understood why he was commanded to dip himself in Jordan, after he was healed; and I understand now why I was commanded to be immersed.”

LOVE. — “I confess that I do not clearly see the reason why I should be immersed, but I am satisfied Jesus commands it. I believe in Jesus and purpose to obey him in any event.”

ROSE. — “Just like myself. I could see a reason why I should believe, for I could only grasp things unseen by faith; I could see why I should repent, for sin was wrong; I could see why I should pray, for that was the natural outgoings of my heart; I could see why I should join the church, for the power of association would give me strength; but why I should be baptized, I could only see that Jesus commanded it. Now I see that faith affected my heart, repentance my life and purpose, prayer my religious nature, the church my social nature, and baptism my *will*. I had to say the Lord knows best,

and then I found my will sweetly blending with the will of God. It was my Gethsemane. I had to say “*not my will*, but thine, O God, be done.” Now, while there are many things I do not understand; while I cannot tell why I should be persecuted as I am; why my motives should be questioned; why old friends should treat me harshly; yet I have not the least disposition to murmur, for I know Jesus will bring it out all right. Death may soon come, and I feel as if I could almost bid him welcome now. I was once laid in an emblematic grave of water, and from that struggled into life again, a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of my Master, and surely it cannot be very hard to die now. I cannot see Jesus, my eyes have never beheld him, but my heart, my life, yes, even my will, are all his. Even now I seem to pass, with him, Gethsemane; I pass the cross, with its tale of suffering and woe; I pass the tomb, and Jesus has left them all. He has triumphed, and so shall I. I passed my Gethsemane in my baptism. I am carrying my cross up Calvary now, but it is light in the resplendent glory of his; I shall soon lay it down, the angel stands ready to roll the stone away from my grave; I shall not fear death; shall be at home. Oh, the depth of the riches of his love who can tell, for it passeth all understanding!”

Rose ceased, having seemingly almost forgotten the subject before them. The look: of triumph on her face, and the sweet, tender pathos of her voice, took them all too near the throne for the spell to be rudely broken. Noting this, Love in a few broken accents, dismissed the assembly, who, quietly and without a word, retired from the house. In solemn silence they wended their way to their several homes. Tongues were quiet, but thought was active in every heart.

Chapter Thirty-Two: Death Of Henry.

Unruh Henry lay upon his dying bed. And what is death? Is it a foe or friend of man? Who can tell? If — ah! that terrible *if* — if it extinguishes all rational being, all consciousness forever, it is preeminently man’s greatest foe, it is his end. If it but ends a *condition* of existence, and not the existence *itself*, it may be his best friend, it is his benefactor. But ah! who can answer the question? Let us try. The Infi-

nite exists. Out of nothing, nothing comes. Something is, something always was. Intelligence or mind is, mind always was. The Infinite exists. Infinity must be unlimited. If it be but matter and force, it is limited. If limited it is not Infinite. There must be, therefore, an Infinite mind. Infinity is an essential part of the Universe. The universe exists, therefore, the Infinite exists, and that Infinity is an Omnipotent Intelligence, or Mind — an Infinite God. Thus we reach the Intelligent First Cause. Here we stand on the rock. Reason has reached its grandest triumph. It has found an Infinite mind. If that mind does not exist, reason is infinite; for out of nothing, nothing comes, and reason apprehends the infinite. God exists. He is because I am. Here we hold. No wave or storm can move our ship from this anchorage. We are his creatures.

We desire to live beyond the grave. Has God ever told us that we shall? If not, why not? Does he lack *power* or *will*? It cannot be power, for he is infinite. If it be *will*, then it is a matter of fact to be tested by proof. He has caused the earth to bring forth food to answer the needs of the physical man. He has provided for the bird, the bat, the bee, and the beaver. He gave them an instinct to guide them. They make no mistakes. To man he gave reason and mind. They reach a higher realm. Truth and error, abstractions, have their province alone with man. Objects alone cannot express them. They must have language. Abstract ideas are possible only in this way. The only possible way for the development of mind is by language. If God has made any provision for man it must be in language. His provision for the animal creation shows his *will* to do so. Therefore God has spoken to man. But how? By the tongue of man, by inspiration, in harmony with the laws of the universe. Jesus of Nazareth is the manifestation of God in the flesh. God speaks through him. He died, he rose from the dead. The problem is solved. Death is but a shadow. There is light beyond. The soul shrinks, perhaps shudders, in the valley, but the Father’s word assures.

A father and child were in a car. The car was rushing through a tunnel. It was dark. The child was afraid. It expressed its fear. The father cheered and sustained it by saying, “there is light beyond.” The grave is a tunnel, but the Father says there is light beyond. Then,

"Why should we start or fear to die?

*What timorous worms we mortals
are?*

Death is the gate to endless joy,

And yet we dread to enter there."

But, alas! Henry thought not of all this. And did he need no help? Yes, every soul needs it in a dying hour. What help did he possess? A philosophy. The philosophy of Voltaire, of Darwin, of atheism. The philosophy of limitation, of materialism, the philosophy that limits the infinite to matter and force. A philosophy that says, man is nothing. He is only an organism. He existed not before birth, he will not after death. Religion is a delusion, patriotism a sham, Jesus a myth, immortality a fable, the soul a breath of air, good and evil chimeras of a distempered imagination, conscience a matter of digestion, and death an eternal sleep. This philosophy was his strength in the great battle with death. And what was it? A broken reed, a cantrip light, a dismantled ship, an *ignis fatuus*, a shadowy nothingness. Hope, but why talk of hope? For what? Annihilation! This ill-begotten child from the dark womb of despair, is all the comfort in such a philosophy. Its god must be materialism, produced by an abortion of nature, which, if the philosophy be true, has given birth to hope in man without a father. A greater miracle than the birth of Jesus! Nature conceives and gives birth to veneration, faith, and hope in man; by the embrace of despair, a greater miracle than ever was described by the pen of the apostles, if all they detail is true.

But the hour of death is drawing near. The tide of life is flowing out into the unknown sea. His wife, the bride of a few short months, is indeed a ministering angel. Her religion was once a theory only. It is deeper now. It makes her more kind to him than his philosophy. The tears with which she bathes his fevered brow, as she strokes in piteous sympathy the golden locks that fall across his aching temples, soothe his distempered spirit more than all his philosophy.

His friends are there. Love and Paul and all the rest. Their coming cheers him, and his soul rouses in desperate energy. He bids them all withdraw and leave him alone to talk with Love. They all silently withdraw. Love and Henry are alone. The man of

God and the dying atheist. It is their last interview on earth. If atheism is true it is the last forever.

Henry turned with a wistful, anxious look to Love and said: "Do you believe as firmly in immortality as you have always said you did heretofore?"

"Yes, and it grows stronger every day. If it is not true, the universe is a failure."

As if scarcely heeding what Love had said, he raised his head from his pillow, and with a wild expressive gaze said, very earnestly:

"It must be so! I can't die without it! I have made a mistake. Of what use is my philosophy now, and all my research and study? Just as I am prepared to live I must die. And death the end! Oh, that I could believe! It were better that I had been educated to believe in immortality, even if false, though I had been as ignorant as a Hottentot, than to be as I am, and thus to die without a ray of hope. Life never seemed sweeter to me than now. O, what am I do?"

Love, who had taken hold of him during this outburst, laid him gently down, trying to comfort and soothe him as best he could, telling him there was but one thing for him to do.

"You must nerve yourself for the struggle. There is a great All-Father, and he is just and merciful, he will do right. If you cannot believe in and trust his love and the love of Jesus, his Son, I cannot help you."

"O, I cannot believe in him, it is dark, all is dark! No ray of light. Why was I born? Alas! born to die! That is all. No; no! This cannot be all. I must live. I will not die! If I die I must live again! Tell me you know it is so!"

And thus he talked until his physical nature began to sink. A storm was raging without. The storm passed by. A bright rainbow appeared in the east. Hope mingled with every hue. It was God's token. A storm was raging within. A cloud was gathered cold and dark about a human soul. No rainbow of peace was there. The thick darkness of materialistic philosophy was the cloud. Despair was the token. It was the black, ungainly raven of Poe, whispering, "Nevermore."

But the end approaches. The friends return to the room. Love breathes a soft and plaintive prayer, responded to by the sighs and tears of the weeping company. Paul Darst learned a never-to-be-forgotten lesson. Henry, with one hand in that of his wife,

reaches the other in a pleading way to Love, who takes it kindly in his own, prepares for the final struggle. It comes. He says:

“This is terrible! terrible!! terrible!!!”

The eyes close, the tongue is silent, the heart ceases to beat, and all is over. The great soul of Unruh Henry has gone — where? Hence. Where is that? To the unseen. Unseen to whom? To God? No. To us? Yes.

The remains of Henry were followed to the grave in silence. If they were all that remained, if death was an eternal sleep, if no pitying angel was there, if no God could hear, why offer to blind fate the mockery of prayer or worship? Love would not do it. He would exemplify the philosophy. He would give the remains a decent sepulcher, but no word of prayer, or faith, or hope, should be spoken. The dreary sadness of earth to earth and dust to dust, must teach its lesson alone. Every eye that looked upon the clay was suffused with tears. Every soul was troubled, but why? It was only clay. It was quiet. It would harm no one. In a short time the flesh would be gone, the blood would be ashes. A ghastly skeleton only would remain. But why ghastly? We gaze upon dead and decaying matter every day and do not weep. Yet, if we find a human skeleton in a desert, it touches our finest sensibilities. Is it education? It cannot be. It must be nature’s work. Victor Hugo must be right when says: “Matter may disquiet us, for the matter before which we tremble is the ruin of our spiritual body. For dead matter to trouble us, mind must have inhabited it.” Did mind inhabit these remains? If so, where is it now? Philosophy says, annihilated, gone back to dust. Revelation and reason say, it lives in the unseen and will live forever. Verily, Paul is right when he says: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

Chapter Thirty-Three: The Church Of Christ In Bethel.

During the investigation, Rose had written to Mr. Linn, who came to Bethel. He had a long conversation with Mr. Love and Dr. Van Buren, which so impressed them, that they gave him a history of their proceedings, and invited him to remain and assist them in the work, as they had fully made up their minds to try and organize a church on the basis

of the Holy Scriptures, without a supplementary creed. Paul Darst, Mr. Love, and many others, wished to be immersed, at least, but did not know how farther to proceed.

At the meeting that night, Mr. Linn, being introduced by Mr. Love, proceeded to show the organization of the church in the apostolic age as follows:

1. Same head. Eph. 1:22.
2. Same confession of faith. Matt. 16:16; Rom. 10:9.
3. Same constitution and laws. 2 Tim. 3:16.
4. Same officers. Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1.
5. Same membership. Acts 2:44; 5:14, etc.
6. Same name. Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; Acts 11:26; Peter 4:16.

The clear statement of Mr. Linn, added to the previous investigation, made a profound impression upon the audience when he announced himself ready to answer any objections that might be urged. The objections were made and answered as follows:

MR. HARVEY. — “What will be the order of worship in your new congregation?”

LINN. — “The same as in the apostolic church. ‘And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.’ Acts 2:48.”

HARVEY. — “We all agree in singing, in prayer, and in preaching, but how about the breaking of bread. How often shall we do that?”

LINN. — “We learn that the disciples met on *the first day* of the week to break bread.”

HARVEY. — “I know, but that does not say every first day of the week.”

LINN. — “Very true, neither does it say, ‘Remember *every* Sabbath,’ but *the* Sabbath, means every Sabbath, and *the first day* of the week must mean *every* first day.”

HARVEY. — “That is all the objection I see on my part; although I have been sprinkled for baptism, see it is sectarian, as all creeds do not admit it, and as immersion was the apostolic practice, I am willing to be immersed for the sake of harmony and union.”

WINGOOD. — “Mr. Linn, I have a question. Are we all to give up our opinions? If so I, for one, cannot do it.”

LINN. — “No; let everyone hold his opinions, but hold them as private property. Certain things we

agree in, such as one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God, one body, one Spirit, one hope, etc., and the worship of the church, in these we unite for action, all else is a matter of opinion, and every man has a right to his own opinions.”

WINGOOD. — “I see the matter clearly now. I wonder why I never saw the essence of human creeds as I see them now. The deductions of a strong mind like that of Luther, Calvin, or Wesley, are made the measure of all who adopt their creeds. Hence the opinions of Calvin are the governing opinions of the sect to which I belong. I always supposed I was governed by the words of Jesus, but I find I am governed only by the deductions of Calvin from the words of Jesus.”

LANIRE. — “But if you are now immersed, will you not adopt the opinions of the Baptist sect instead of the opinions of Calvin, and be governed by the opinions of that sect?”

WINGOOD. — “No; for sprinkling is only a deduction of Calvin’s, for he himself admits that the word Jesus used means immerse. He says:

“It is a matter of no importance whether we baptize by entirely immersing the person baptized in the water, or only by sprinkling water upon him; but according to the diversity of countries, this should remain free to the churches. For the sign is represented in either, although the mere term ‘baptize’ means to immerse entirely, and it is certain that the custom of thus entirely immersing was anciently observed in the church.”

“So, according to Calvin himself, if I am immersed, I actually obey Jesus, but if I am sprinkled, I only obey a deduction of his that sprinkling will do as well. When it is for a union of God’s people I surely can obey Christ, even if my opinion is that Calvin was right in his idea of the matter. When he speaks as a theologian, he says sprinkling, when he speaks as a scholar, he says immersion. Little did I think when Paul commenced seeking light, it would

lead to such glorious results as now seem to lie before us.”

BELCAMP. — “The people with whom I am identified are called Baptists, because they baptize; but if all are going back to the primitive form, our name, as a designation, can be no longer necessary. I am ready to lay it down, and go with you in the one body of Christ, to be Christians, disciples of Christ, saints, and brethren, just as it was in the apostolic age.”

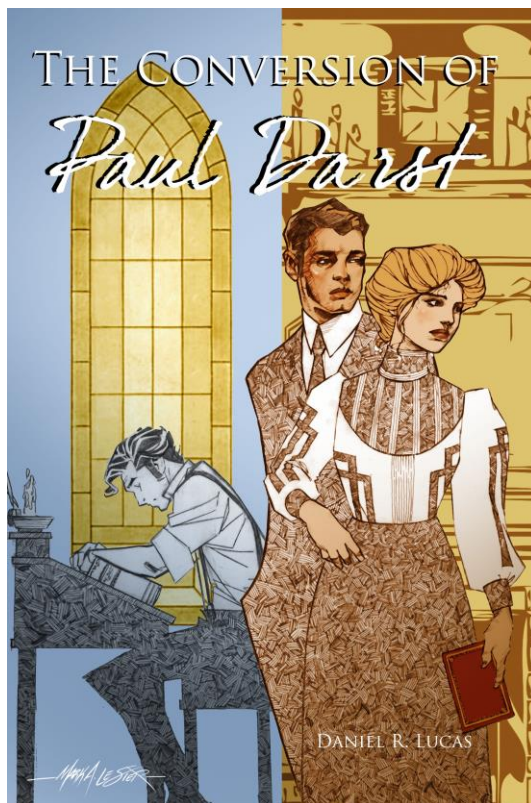
LANIRE. — “I am ready to go with you, if it is to

restore the ancient church, to unitize the people of God once more. I see the failure of dogmatic speculations to accomplish the work. I find in the *Methodist*, one of our leading papers, the following historical statement, and I see no reason why it should not be the work of today to restore the former glory of the church. The editor of the *Methodist* says:

“The primitive church, during most of the ante-Nicene period, paused not in its mighty aggressive work to define, in an authoritative way, dogmatic formulas. The apostles’ creed was centuries in forming, by accretions, and was not used publicly in the

churches till about the time of Ambrose of Milan. *The sacred writings were the only symbol known to the primitive Christians, and that was the most saintly and most successful period of Christianity.*”

Many others gave in their adhesion. Paul, Love, Van Buren, and all the rest, who had not been immersed, were baptized by Mr. Linn during the next two weeks, while the meeting continued, and at its close a congregation of nearly two hundred members was fully organized, on the “foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.” All entered heartily into the work; Love, with a sense of freedom that was very exhilarating indeed. To be free to preach the same gospel the apostles preached, and when sinners cried out,



“What must we do?” to be permitted to tell them, like Peter on Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; or like Paul to the jailor, tell them to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” and then to speak the word of the Lord to them that they might believe, and take them the same hour of the night and baptize them, that they might lay hold on the promise of Jesus, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” or like Ananias, when he found a believing penitent like Saul, to say to him, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord;” in a word, to feel that he owed allegiance only to the Lord Jesus and his word, was a sense of freedom that none can ever appreciate, except those who have once been bound on the iron bedstead of a human creed, and then have come into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ.

Wingood and Sister Emma, Lanire and Kittie, Belcamp and Lucy, Harvey, and Darst, and, of course, Rose, were all there; the joy of the latter, like a river, calm and voiceless, but full and deep.

And was there no opposition, you inquire? Alas! there was. I would that I could say that it was from the infidel portion of the community alone, but it was from those also who had boasted all their lives in the great blessing of so many churches in order that everybody might have his choice. This class, under the lead of Judge Leyden, were very bitter, especially after Mr. Linn came. They wrapped their Pharisaic cloaks around them, and refused to hear him, because they said he was a heretic, a Campbellite, or something of the kind. The spirit of partyism is always so strong that it makes its devotees indifferent to the use of means to accomplish the end. The old dogma that “the end justifies the means,” had its literal fulfillment, for a rigid adherence to the truth was not one of their most accomplished methods. Many harsh and untrue things were uttered, which it is better to forget. But when Albert Darst, Job Raines, and Mrs. Henry, gave in their adhesion to the new congregation, the opposition wavered, then became sullen, and finally silent. The Church of Christ, after the primitive order, was thus one of the established institutions of the city of Bethel.

Chapter Thirty-Four: **A Short Chapter.**

Paul Darst had become a Christian, Rose Leyden knew he loved her still. Not a word had been spoken by either on that subject since their separation on that bright June day. Rose was alone in the parlor. She had sent for Paul to come and see her, and now awaited his coming. She knew he would come. Why she knew, love alone can tell. The great reason why she had refused to marry him had been removed. How would she meet him? What should she say? Which shall speak first? And I have wondered, curious reader, whether such prying idlers as you and I ought to stay and witness the interview. Rose looks out of the window. Paul is coming up the walk. How rapidly her heart is beating? It is the same old Paul.

Paul knocks at the door.

Rose opens the door.

“Paul!”

“Rose!”

That is all I can let you hear them say; we leave them alone. These words are enough, for Whittier, the poet, Quaker though he is, has said:

*“The bridal bells shall say:
Hope and pray, trust alway,
Life is sweeter, love is dearer,
For the trial and delay.”*

Chapter Thirty-Five: **Subsequently.**

A year has passed since the event recorded in the last chapter, and I am on a visit to Bethel to write these last words of this history.

A gathering of the friends are assembled at the hospitable mansion of Dr. Van Buren, to bid me welcome. Here comes Arnot Love, the Pastor of the Church of Christ in Bethel, but who is that with him? They call her Mary, sweetest name for woman, and he introduces her as “Mrs. Love.” Ah! I understand now. Mary Brown has found that religion is a life of faith and hope in Jesus as a person and not in dogmas about foreordination. And here come the rest, “Bro. Paul and Sister Rose Darst,” announces the good Dr. Van Buren, and adds, “do you know that Paul is preaching the gospel?” No! I did not, but it is well.

“Bro. Aaron and sister Katy Wingood.” Ah, yes it was Katy Lanire. Well how we do change!

“Bro William and Sister Lucy Lanire.” What! she looks like the same Lucy Belcamp.

And still they come.

“Bro. Harvey, and” — “No,” said Harvey interrupting, “I believe too much in liberty yet, when I see the slaves around me, and you know I always was a liberalist.”

“Bro. Raines.”

“Why, Job, I am glad to see you!”

“Glad to see you, Parson, for I want some help in convertin’ Judge Leyden. Think I’ve got him on the stool of repentance now. He’s got so he won’t argy; and when a man won’t argy he’s gone sure. I knew when Elder Linn just presented that are common ground of union, I said, well, Job, that’s so, them is facts, I can’t argy agin that, it’s too plain; so I just give up the ship and surrendered the whole cargo, and you don’t know how happy I am to think that Jesus cares for me. I know I’ve been sinful and said many foolish things, but I’m sure he that prayed for, and forgive his murderers, will treat Job respectful like. I’ve never persecuted any of his followers anyway. I’ve give up the idea of convertin’ Ike Loar, cause Ike can’t understand it, but I don’t think the Lord’s got the scratch of a pen agin him no how. Elder Sleeper is foreordained to be a poor critter and I can’t help him, but I do think the Judge is working around all right. He give me a note this evening to invite Paul and Rose to come home. Don’t say anything about it, for Job wants to surprise them. You know I can’t pray much, I ain’t got education enough to preach, but I’ve got a faculty for sayin’ things that make people see the folly of quarrelin’ and Jesus says, ‘blessed are the peacemakers,’ so I guess I’ll just be a peacemaker, and then, perhaps, when Job gits a place among the angels he’ll enjoy it to the full extent of his capacity. Jesus wore a seamless garment, and a crown of thorns, and I can’t think he’ll be ashamed of even poor wayward Job.”

“Sister Henry.” Ah! Is that Sister Henry? I might have known it by the habiliments of woe. All eyes turn to her in sympathy as they see the look of calm resignation that lights up her features with a saddened hope. Sorrow has wrought a confiding trust

and love for Jesus in her heart that naught can eliminate.

But we must not linger here. The Christian people of the world are yet divided. They must be united. Millions yet sit in the shadow of the great darkness of heathenism. The light of the gospel must be sent to illuminate their horizon. True earnest men and women must do this work. Now is the time for work. The Savior’s prayer for the union of God’s people must and will be answered.

The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ. The writer is ready to bear his humble part in the great work. Reader, *how* is it with you?

*We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling;
To be living is sublime.
On! let all the soul within you
For the truth’s sake go abroad:
Strike! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages — tell for God!*

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About the Authors

Travis Anderson grew up in Southwest Missouri, attended Brown Trail School of Preaching, moved to Bismark, IL (where he still preaches), and is excitedly engaged. He loves being the father of his two children, playing softball/baseball, and doing the work of a minister (even with its difficulties).

Tom Baxley is presently the minister for the Highway 9 church of Christ, but has high hopes of one day venturing to Middle-earth, hoping to rebuild and minister to the great city of Osgiliath, and finally teach them the greatness of ultimate frisbee and disc golf. Until that time he will remain in Alabama with his wife and three children.

Bill Boyd was kind enough to submit an article, but due to this issue running late (see page 1), your editor wasn't able to get a bio from him in time. And I don't know that he'd be fond of one being made up for him...

Dewayne Bryant is the minister for the New York Ave. church of Christ in Arlington, TX. He has served as a professor of Bible for four different schools and works as both a minister and as a Christian apologist for Apologetics Press and the Apologia Institute. **Gantt Carter** lives in Elk City, OK, with his wife (Julie), and their two growing children. He preaches for the 2nd & Adams congregation, enjoys martial arts and fishing, teaches online Bible classes, and was one of the stars of an underappreciated YouTube show about FBI agents.

Gerald Cowan has taught at the British Bible School, done mission work in Albania, written for several brotherhood papers, preached for five decades, and continues to encourage a young man (your editor) to be a better Christian. His "Personal Periodicals" are available via email. Contact him at GeraldCowan1931@aol.com.

David Dean serves the church of Christ in Fouke Arkansas. He divides his time between studying God's Word, preparing for various sermons and bible classes, and spending as much time as he can with his wife and two children. In whatever time is left David can be found with a book in his hand and

a cup of coffee!

Kyle Frank is a disabled workaholic whose idea of fun is spending twelve hours a day reading the American Standard Version (of 1901), Restoration Movement biographies, sermons, and seeing how many writing projects he can keep going at once. He also runs So and So Publishing.

Bill Howard is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his "retired" time writing detective novels and studies for new Christians, as well as encouraging others and supporting the new elders where he attends in Dale, Oklahoma.

John Krivak is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Daniel R. Lucas was part of the Union army during the Civil War, and served as a Chaplain for several years afterwards. He died over 110 years ago, and probably never considered that you would be reading anything about him in 2019.

Richard Mansel is a preacher, writer, book-lover (whose passion lately is histories focused on World War II), and former editor of *Forthright Magazine*.

Mark McWhorter is an overachiever, a finder of treasure, explorer of old and significant houses, occasional dumpster-diver, and an expert in everything from open-heart surgery to Russian politics. (And you think I'm making this stuff up...) He is also one of *three* writers for this issue of the Quarterly who are former residents of Marion, IL (and another still lives there).

John T. Polk has been preaching the gospel for five decades, in pulpits, in person, and in print.

Rod Ross has been married for 44 years, with three grown children (married), and nine grand-children from ages 3-16. A lover of baseball, Ohio State football, hunting, fishing, Roy Rogers movies, and American history. He suffered a stroke in 2011, which left him legally blind, unable to drive, read,

and work; but, he still believes that everyone should do what they can. He maintains a website, three Facebook groups, three Facebook pages, sends out an email lesson Monday – Friday, teaches Bible class, preaches every Sunday morning and evening, and does a weekly radio program. He does each of these in small time frames, followed by power naps.

Jake Schotter loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He has been very fortunate to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them cheaply. He is a freshman Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

Michael Shank wrote a book that went viral, *Muscle and a Shovel*. He has written two other published books (not counting workbooks), and his wife, Jonetta, has written another. Their home is

somewhere in Colorado.

Samuel Stinson began preaching shortly after he obeyed the gospel in Kentucky in 2004. He has preached in Florida, Kansas, West Virginia, and Nevada and is currently teaching college English.

Bradley S. Cobb spends his early morning hours listening to podcasts on money, manhood, war, and the Bible, while loading boxes on some of those big brown delivery trucks that seem to be all over the place. He also occasionally crawls through 50-year-old insulation and dust to run wire, in addition to editing books, stories, and manuscripts for authors both dead and alive. He's proud to be married to his best friend, and they have four Christian teenagers (one of whom just turned 18).

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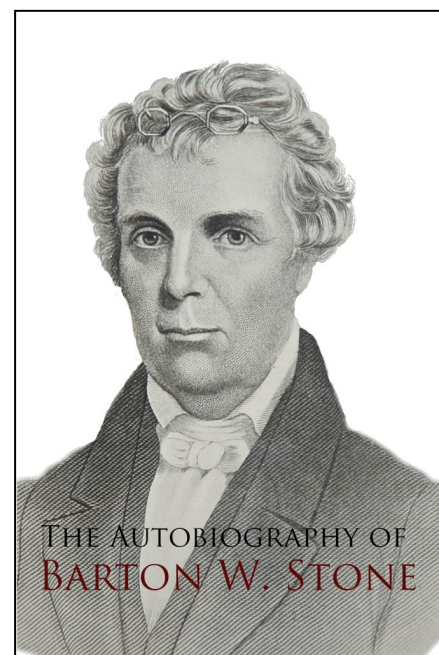
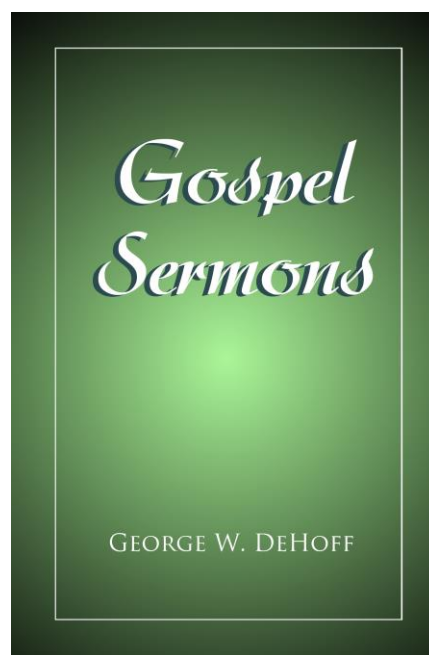
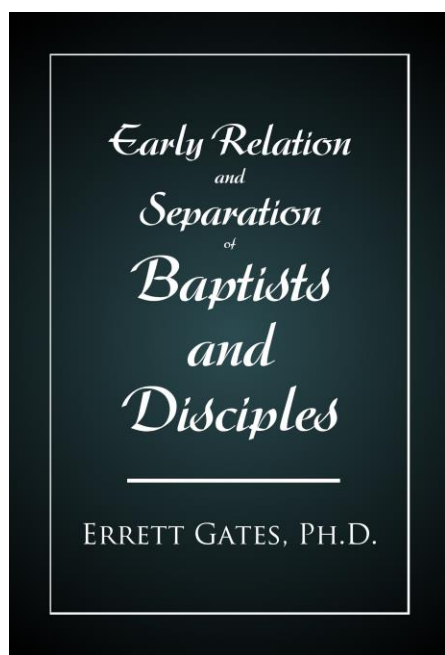
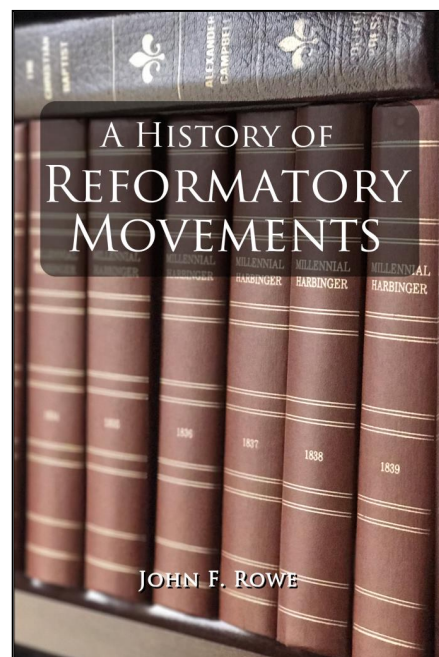
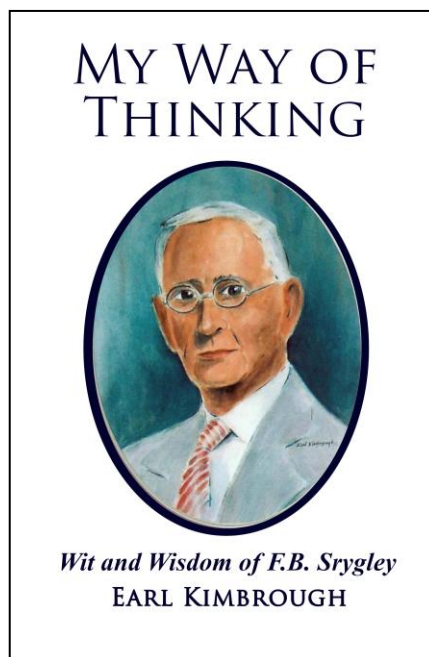
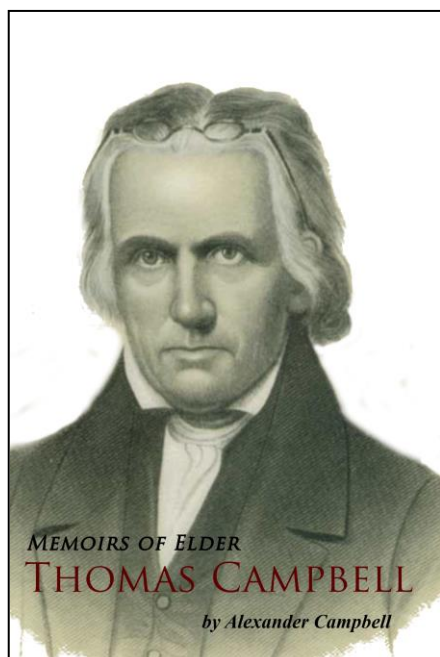


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