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The Quarterly

Vol. 2, No. 3

BEING AND FINDING
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FOR DATING

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The Quarterly

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IT'S STILL JULY, SO WE'RE NOT LATE...RIGHT?!

I am amazed at how quickly time flies by, now that I'm almost 40. It seems like just last month we sent out the Quarterly, and now here we are doing it again! Of course, it would have gotten to you a couple weeks earlier if a computer crash didn't bring it to a grinding halt...

I know I say this just about every issue, but there are really some superb articles and topics in this issue. After the obligatory editorial (which you really ought to read), Perry Hall discusses the right heart for dating. Mark McWhorter asks "Did the Father Forsake Jesus on the Cross?" Jamie Beller examines shepherding sheep in conflict. John Krivak takes a swing at explaining something called "The New Perspective on Paul." New contributor Dewayne Bryant shows what happens when you look for Jesus outside of the Bible. And there's really so much more!

One thing I ***REALLY*** want you to make sure to look at is this issue's installment of "Paul Darst: A Novel." Even if you've not been following the story as it has unfolded since the first issue of the Quarterly, you will still profit greatly from reading these chapters. In it, a skeptic throws out many objections to disprove the Bible — and is shown conclusively that *he* is the one who is mistaken. And in one of the chapters, the purpose of each of the ten plagues is laid out in a way that puts them in context and may just blow your mind. So, seriously, make sure to read it this time.

Another one that I think deserves special mention is from a former Muslim Imam, explaining what caused him to leave Islam. There are several interesting items mentioned in there that you might find enlightening.

We thank you for your support, and as always, we encourage you to take a look at the advertisers, and consider taking advantage of the services they offer. All of them are brethren in Christ, and are worth supporting.

Thanks again!

BRADLEY S. COBB

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What's The Difference? — The Price

An Editorial

By Bradley S. Cobb

Yesterday afternoon, I was at my in-laws' house. We were sorta getting ready to head home. I say "sotra" because we weren't really in all the much of a hurry. So, morning turns into noon, and lunchtime arrived. So I went in the kitchen to help make the mashed potatoes (I'm much better now than I used to be, but that's another story for another time). I added butter (the fake kind, since some of the family there are allergic to dairy), salt, and then opened the fridge to grab the buttermilk (which, surprisingly, doesn't affect the aforementioned allergies).

The only buttermilk there was labelled "Old-Fashioned Bulgarian Style." That raises an obvious question, at least to me. *What is the difference between 'Old Fashioned Bulgarian Style' and plain-ol' buttermilk?* So, I went ahead and asked that obvious question to my mother-in-law. I expected some description of the quality, or the taste, or the texture, or something like that. Without missing a beat, she responded: "The price."

That just struck me as quite funny at the time, and I knew that somehow there was an illustration in that brief exchange.

Several different groups exist, each claiming to be different types of Christianity. But they aren't the same thing. There are definite differences. Some use instruments, others don't. Some endorse the sin of homosexuality, others remain on firm biblical footing in opposing it. Some teach the essential nature of obedience through baptism as a response to gospel message, others actually oppose baptism altogether.

So the question should arise to the minds of each and every honest seeker of truth: *What's the difference? Why choose one religious group over another?*

The difference, my friends, is the price.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.—Jesus.

Jesus didn't build hundreds of different churches, each with their own separate path to heaven. He built *one* church.

*On this rock, I will build my **church**.—Jesus.*

*There is...one **body**.—Paul.*

*I am the **way**, the **truth**, and the **life**. No man comes to the Father, except through me.—Jesus.*

Do you notice the singular nouns in those verses? It doesn't say "churches" or "bodies" or "ways," as though there were more than one. It says "church," "body," and "way." Every other "church" or "body" or "way" leads somewhere other than the Father. There is only one **true** church.

If the truth is what sets us free, then that means a falsehood will keep us slaves. Christians in Galatia fell prey to a lie that paraded itself as "another gospel." Paul wished bad things on people who taught such damnable heresies (Galatians 1:7-9). Millions today follow a book which claims to be "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." In other words, "another gospel." And the same curse will come upon them at the judgment if they are not rescued from the clutches of this false doctrine.

Baptism does also now save us...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ —Peter.

I am not for a moment claiming that baptism *by itself* saves anyone. But I will also not back down from the truth that baptism is part of God's divine plan for granting salvation to man. I've heard it said, "Some denominations practice baptism, others don't. What's the difference?" (the question being asked in such a tone that showed they thought it didn't matter either way). The answer, again, is "The Price."

If the Scriptures connect something to salvation, then there is no doubt about its importance. We can no more be saved apart from baptism as we can be saved apart from faith, or from grace, or the blood of Christ, or confession, or works, or God's foreknowledge, etc. The price for following such blasphemous ideas is a forfeiture of heaven, a rejection of the true gospel of Jesus Christ which leads to eternal destruction.

You really need to ask yourself if it is worth it. Is it worth the price to follow something that might not be the truth—since only the **truth** will set you free? Is it really worth the price to let the preacher dictate what you believe instead of "searching the Scriptures" like those praiseworthy folks in Berea (Acts 17:11)? Is it worth the price to ignore the command to "study to show yourself approved before God, a workman that doesn't need to be ashamed, properly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)?

There are a lot of devout religious people, people who include our friends, our families, our co-workers. But being devout doesn't mean you're saved (the folks in Acts 2 were devout, but they were declared murderers). Being religious doesn't mean you're saved (Saul of Tarsus was religious... and he was called a persecutor of God!).

Only the truth will set you free. Anything other than the truth is a lie. Lying? That's sin. And there is a lake of fire reserved for sinners, which includes "all liars" (Revelation 21:8).

So ask yourself if you really want to trust your eternal salvation to what "my preacher says" or what "we've always taught" or "I think" or "I feel." Because the price for being wrong...

They will say to me, "Lord, Lord, haven't we prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and done many wonderful works in your name?" And I will say back to them, "I never knew you. Go away from me, you workers of iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

What's the difference between the truth and a lie?—The Price.

What's the difference between the Lord's church and a man-made church?—The Price.

You all choose this day who you will serve... As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

DO YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS?

*We want you to enjoy this magazine more with each issue.
So if you have suggestions on how we can improve, or
you have certain Bible topics or historical (religious) items
you want to see addressed, please feel free to tell us.*

This magazine exists because of readers like you.

We are here to serve.

BEING AND FINDING THE RIGHT HEART FOR DATING

By Perry Hall

When I started dating my future wife, she was working in a bank. After hearing she was dating a preacher, her workmates were confused. “Where do you meet a preacher? You don’t go to a bar to meet a preacher!” My sage wife-to-be answered, “At church.” I don’t know if she prefaced it with “Duh” or not!

Dating is not a topic really discussed much, if at all, in the Bible (except maybe the Song of Solomon, but he was the king). Dating is a modern invention. For example, in the 1800’s it was not uncommon for a widow in the western frontier to get married again the same day she buried her husband. Marriage was for needs and survival, not love. Culture more than anything determines how we find someone to marry. In the Bible there were quite a few unconventional ways of finding a wife:

- Take a nap and wake up married (Adam — Gen.2).
- Even if no one is out there, just wander around a bit and you’ll definitely find

someone. It’s all relative, of course (Cain — Genesis 4:16-17).

- Find an attractive prisoner of war, bring her home, shave her head, trim her nails and give her new clothes. Then she’s yours (Israelites — Deuteronomy 21:10-13).
- Find a prostitute and marry her (Hosea 1:1-3).
- Find a man with seven daughters, then impress him by watering his flock (Moses — Exodus 2:16-21).
- Purchase a piece of property and get a woman as part of the deal (Boaz — Ruth 4:5-10).
- Go to a party and hide. When the women come out to dance, grab one and carry her off to be your wife (Benjamites — Judges 21:19-25).
- Become the emperor of a huge nation and hold a beauty contest (Ahasuerus — Esther 2).

Although dating is not part of the cultures within the Bible, that doesn't mean the inspired word can't help. That's why we are going to look at the book of Proverbs because:

1. ***Proverbs is about parents teaching their children (1:8); and children honoring their parents through listening.*** Parents and children need to discuss dating even when the children are too young to date. We wouldn't wait until after our children got a driver's license to talk about good driving habits. Our discussions should include letting them know it's okay not to date or even marry. One reason is the peer pressure to date as young as middle school. As those responsible for their well-being, we shouldn't create "parent pressure" by creating the wrong expectations that burden our children and make them feel inadequate by not being married. In preparing our children, my wife and I taught them to make a list of what kind of person they are looking for. If someone doesn't match that list to a greater degree than not, then don't even begin to date. Dating is not about having a fun time, contrary to our modern culture. It is a "job interview" for who you want in your life for 50+ years; and who you want to be a parent to your children.
2. ***Proverbs is about warning people about other people (1:10).*** Chapter 1:10-19 has a lengthy section about bad influences which still sounds modern for our times. When children are young and innocent, concerned parents warn them about "stranger danger." Proverbs warns about the "strange woman" (5:3 — KJV). As our children get older we watch who their friends are, and even step in when necessary. That's tough love, but necessary. Considering all this, why would we allow them to date someone we never met, didn't know, or approve?
3. ***Proverbs is about creating within ourselves the right heart for God.*** This means both parents and children have a lot of internal work to do before our children ever date; and our children should expect that same conscientious work in others. In this sense, opposites should not attract. Question — Should someone date before they are the right kind

of person others should want to date and marry? Now I understand allowing God to work on our heart and habits is a life-time process, but that doesn't take away the overall point. This concept of creating the right heart is where we will start: "guard your hearts" (Proverbs 4:23).

Guard Your Heart Above All Else

Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. (HCSB)

There are a multitude of emotions that get experienced in dating. Personally, I am not a fan of teenagers dating for that very reason. How mature are the emotions of teens who are experiencing for the first time a multitude of hormonal changes? And while today's teenagers might not appreciate what I am about to say, on average millennial teens (and even older) are not typically as mature as those generations ago.

Let's define the words in Proverbs 4:23:

- Guard/*natsar* — "to watch, guard, keep"
- Heart/*leb* — "inner man, mind, will, heart" (biblehub.com). "The seat of the emotional and intellectual life" (The Jewish Encyclopedia). In American English, the heart, when not talking about the literal beating organ, refers almost exclusively to the emotions of a person. In Hebrew it is much more. The three special functions — knowing, feeling, and willing — ascribed to the mind by modern psychologists — were attributed to the heart by Biblical writers. "Your heart is who you are, the 'true you' that directs all your thoughts and emotions. You can educate your heart (Prov.24:32) — consciously form and modify a worldview — after which decisions and actions flow from it [Prov. 16:9, 23; Luke 6:45; Rom. 10:10; 2 Cor. 9:7]. This education can be worldly, carried out by yourself, or formed by the Holy Spirit [Prov. 2:6; Jer. 24:7; Ezk. 36:26-27; Acts 16:14; Rom. 2:29]. The inclination of your heart directs your mortal life and determines where you enter eternal life [Prov. 3:22]" (HCSB Study Bible). Oswald Chambers explains that "The Bible term 'heart' is best understood if we simply say 'me.' It is the central citadel of a man's personality."

- Above all else/*mishmar* – lit., “more than all guarding.” Surprising to me is *mishmar* also means “place of confinement, jail, prison, guard, watch, observance” (biblehub.com). “To guard something is to make sure that it doesn’t get away and that is safe from attack” (HCSB Study Bible). Think of the picture formed here by the definition. We are to keep our heart in a prison. Then when we meet the right heart in another, we can set it free.
- Source/*totsaah* – “an outgoing, extremity, perhaps source, escape” (biblehub.com).
- Life/*chay* – “sources (origin and direction) of life” (Brown-Driver-Briggs).

When we think of Proverbs we often think of isolated verses with no context. But that is not true of all of them — including Proverbs 4:23:

The Straight Path

Proverbs 4:20) My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings. (21) Don’t lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. (22) For they are life to those who find them, and health to one’s whole body. (23) Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. (24)

Don’t let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don’t let your lips talk deviously. (25) Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead. (26) Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established. (27) Don’t turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil. (HCSB)

Let’s see how this is organized chiastically:

(ASV) Anacrusis: 20a) My son, attend to my words

A – OUTWARD MAN: (20b) Incline thine **ear** unto my sayings. 21a) Let them not depart from thine **eyes**;

B – INWARD MAN: (21b) Keep them in the midst of thy **heart**. 22a) For they are **life** unto those that find them,

C – OUTWARD MAN: (22b) And health to all their **flesh**.

B’ — INWARD MAN: 23) Keep thy **heart** with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of **life**.

A’ — OUTWARD MAN: (24) Put away from thee a wayward **mouth**, And perverse **lips** put far from thee. (25) Let thine **eyes** look right on, And let thine **eyelids** look straight before thee. (26) Make level the path of thy **feet**, And let all thy ways be established. (27) Turn not to the right **hand** nor to the left. Remove thy **foot** from evil.

The central point is “health to all their flesh.”

Guarding our heart and body, the inward and outward person, leads to a totality of good. When applying this text to dating, if we want to know what is in the heart of someone – and what is in our heart – we simply need to observe actions:

- EAR — What do they/you listen to? Do they/you turn off ungodly songs? Do they/you laugh at dirty jokes?

- EYES/EYELIDS — What do they/you watch? What kind of movies do they/you like? What kind of TV shows? How

do they/you react when seeing someone indecently dressed?

- MOUTH/LIPS — What kind of language do they/you use? Do they/you tell dirty jokes? Do they/you yell at their parents? Do they/you lie? Can they/you keep confidences? Do they/you gossip?

- FEET/FOOD/HAND – Where do they/you go for entertainment? What do they/you do for fun? Do they/you handle conflict by running away?

What we are determines what we do.

Questions To Ask About the Heart from Proverbs

There are 94 verses just in Proverbs which specifically mention the *leb* (this doesn’t include synonyms). So obviously we cannot address them all

*Never date someone that
you plan on changing...
going into a marriage
trying to change the
heart of the other is dan-
gerous.*

here. Here are a select few as we look at “Being and Finding the Right Heart in Dating”:

- 3:3 — Never let loyalty (or kindness) and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.
 - Can you trust them; can they trust you?
- 3:5 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding;
 - Are they spiritually minded? It is always best to marry a strong Christian. If we live in a place where there are not many Christians, this does make it more difficult. Of course, there is something people use today that did not exist in my days – the internet! I have family members that married someone they met online. As a warning to our children the web can be a dangerous place too as ungodly people weave webs of lies and post bad-heart pictures. Sites such as Tinder and Phriendly are not a place to meet godly people.
- 5:12 — and you will say, “How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction.”
 - How do they/you handle parental instruction? How do they/you handle criticism?
- 6:14 — He always plots evil with perversity in his heart — he stirs up trouble.
 - Never date someone that you plan on changing. Don’t be someone that needs changing! There is a saying that men marry hoping their wives will never change; and women marry hoping their husbands will change. It is a fact that everyone will change. That’s life. But going into a marriage trying to change the heart of the other is dangerous.
- 6:20-21 — (20) My son, keep your father’s command, and don’t reject your mother’s teaching. (21) Always bind them to your heart; tie them around your neck.
 - Do they honor their parents? More broadly, how someone treats others does impact how they will treat you.
- 6:32 — The one who commits adultery lacks sense (*leb* – Hebrew); whoever does so destroys himself.

- Are they/you sexually pure? This doesn’t mean we can’t show mercy and grace to the repentant; but living with the memories of their sexual activity can haunt those who remained pure.
- 10:13 — Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of the one who lacks sense.
 - Do they/you only learn lessons the hard way? If so, with you in their life, your way will be hard.

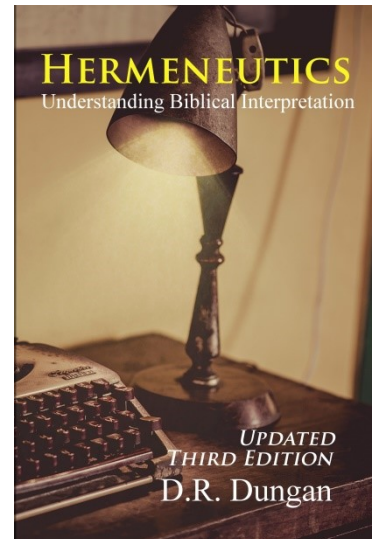
Although the Bible doesn’t address dating directly; that doesn’t mean it doesn’t apply:

Proverbs 31:11 — The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will not lack anything good (HCSB). While it sounds obvious, I wonder if it is always considered that the heart that we date is the heart that we marry. Dating is temporary; marriage is for a lifetime.

To sum up,

“Our spiritual **heart** thus controls out **actions** and our **actions** determine our **habits**, which in turn determine our **character**” (Preceptaustin.org).

We are what we do.



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The Photo of a Baby

By William Howard



On a quiet afternoon in a very quiet house I came across a photo. It caught my eye from a group of pictures. It was of an infant. She was probably four months old or younger, lying flat on a blanket looking up at the camera. The blanket was white with a repeating pattern of something yellow. The baby had a haze of downy fuzz on a round head with small ears, half hidden by pudgy cheeks. These met the tiny curve of a chin with no neck in sight. The arms were so perfectly chubby, smooth and roundish, they almost appeared like they were formed by a confectioner's craft, as though they were made of fondant or some rich icing which had been shaped by a baker and carefully placed on an elaborate cake. The shoulders were oblong and slightly raised with small fists held close. Her tummy was like a ball of bread dough set to rise. She was profoundly delicate, minute, soft and pure, but skillfully and precisely fashioned by the gentlest of hands.

It seems impossible for something this dainty to be flawlessly shaped down to the smallest details of nose and toes and fingernails all in miniature. It is mystifying and a wonder. How could something so utterly roly-poly be so sharply defined? This goes

beyond beautiful. In this little, simple form is the combination of adorability, cuteness, and the luster of sublime innocence. In her there is no concept of harm. She is incapable of any action that is not tender and expecting attention to any need. She had a slight frown which gave her a bearing of seriousness, but from a baby this expression is immediately funny. Her head is turned slightly to the right, but her eyes are bright and directed straight at the camera.

It is the eyes. Everything in the photo is soft: the blanket, the light, the shadow and the baby. Everything in the photo is soft except the gaze. The eyes were keen observers without perceivable brows. She watched with the focused intensity of keeping note of every detail. These are indeed the windows into the soul, and someone was home looking out onto the world. An infant is entirely observant. They desire to learn existence and they take it in. What does it hold? What does it hold for me? Everything is new including experience itself.

This infant, like all babies, is made of a substance not of this world but in the image of God. This is an unspoiled work of God. This someone is

looking out with eyes watching intently. Here is someone showing the most fundamental needs and desires of humanity. The very critical anticipations of the human soul are exposed and may never be so easily seen again past these years of childhood and this side of eternity. At this tiny part of existence is a person at their most basic level: Innocent, without baggage, without guile, without worry, but expecting what is the most important to us all. No infant can enunciate the needs, but all instinctively understand what is necessary for human existence, the very thing needed by the human soul. It is far more than food and shelter. It cannot be replaced by a toy.

It is love.

It is love and everything that encompasses. Where love is missing a baby feels utterly betrayed and abandoned in a world where good does not exist. But it was expected. This baby has total confidence she will be loved and cared for. All she can do is trust that those taking care of her will.

In these two eyes of a baby are the fundamental expectations and needs of all mankind – we are all the same and made of the same extraordinary substance. She wants love from those greater than her. While she expects it from everyone, that is not as essential as the love from her parents. She wants acceptance that she is someone, and that she matters. She wants to be part of a loving family with the peace and stability it brings. Though she cannot possibly explain it, she knows when love is shown in the simplest form of compassion and she knows when it is missing.

For all who have grown beyond the childhood years we can become controlled by ambition, craftiness, selfishness, pride, vindictiveness, and ruled by desires. Heaven brings us to what our soul actually wants: love from the One greater than us, our Creator. We want to be part of a loving family. We want to be accepted as someone and to know that we matter. Everyone wants a home. In heaven every yearning of the soul is fulfilled to overflowing. In Heaven the soul finds home. The soul is welcomed into the place where God has always wanted us to be. Here is contentment, accomplishment and deep satisfaction. The core and essential desires and purpose of the soul is supplied so richly it is beyond abundance.

Hell is a different conclusion. Hell is to be cast away and forever abandoned as nameless, worthless, and utterly forgotten in an endless existence separated from the One we want the most. The expression

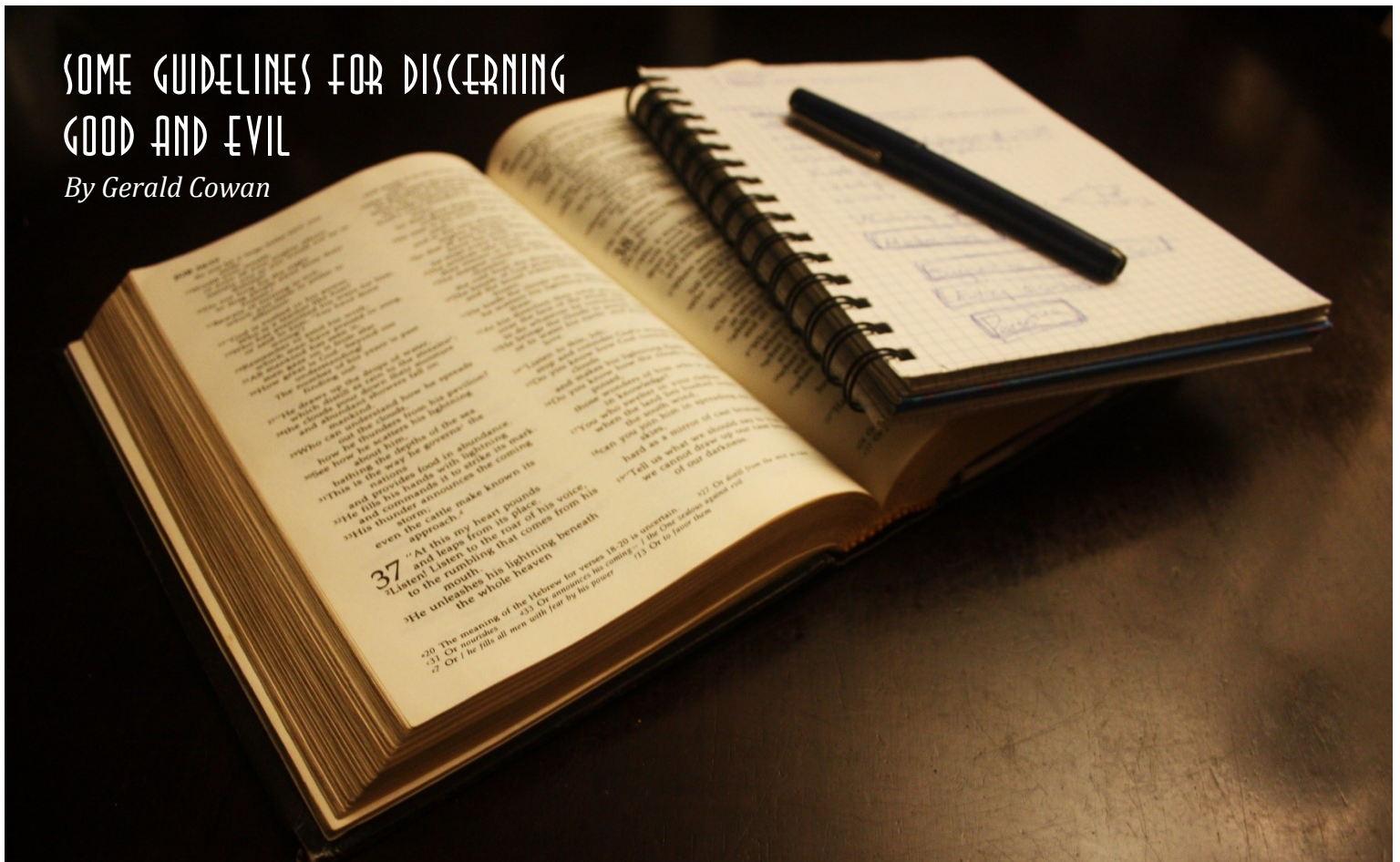
of a baby reveals what we really need and desire. In that gaze is the wide-eyed doorway into the soul. It revealed what we are: a soul wanting nothing more than love and approval from the Creator. A baby cannot explain it, but would know instinctively when needs are met or denied. We would all know when someone holds us as a treasure or we have been cast away. It matters. When all the baggage and deception and clutter of this world have been removed then we will see: all that ever mattered was the love of God.

Matthew 18:2-5 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.



SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNING GOOD AND EVIL

By Gerald Cowan



Hebrews 5:11-14 describes and compares Christians in two stages of growth: babes and mature, of full age. The “grown up” Christians are those who, by personal effort and experience, have developed the ability to distinguish right from wrong. This suggests a very real problem for the sincere Christian.

How can one know for certain what is right and what is wrong?

Answers do not come automatically. They are not instinctive. But they are available to all who are willing to search the scriptures and accept what they find there. Opinions are worthless, personal preferences mean nothing.

If one will not let the Bible speak for itself, then he has no uncompromising, reliable standard. For all those who accept God’s word as final, the guidelines we are to consider in this study ought to be helpful. If God said it, that settles it. God’s words are not temporary unless they themselves say they are (1 Peter 2:25).

GUIDE LINE NUMBER ONE:

The Bible Plainly Says That Some Things Are Right And Others Are Wrong.

Some sins receive specific mention. Read, for example, the lists of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 4:25-31, and Colossians 3:5-9. Sin by any other name — no matter what you call it — is still sin. The fact that these are listed as *wrongs* means they are *sins* and that should settle any question about them forever. Christians must not engage in such things. The fact that they are not considered as *sins* by our “enlightened and liberated” society does not change what God says they are. Some sins are glamorized by improper role models — entertainment and sports figures for the most part — and have become an accepted part of “pop culture,” which is mostly non-religious and often anti-religious.

Many activities are not mentioned specifically, but they are adequately covered by clearly stated principles. Read Galatians 5:19-21 again. The last item on the list is “such like” or “similar things.” When one is uncertain about an action, he ought to

look to see if it is *like* anything that is specifically prohibited. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul lists several things which are good. The word “such/similar” appears here too: “against *such things* there is no law.” The principle involved here is that the rightness or wrongness of an act may be determined by its similarity or likeness to other acts which are known to be approved or condemned. There are other principles too: expediency, influence, stewardship, and conscience. These will be discussed at some length in a later part of our study.

Answers to the questions of Christians must be found in the New Testament. Generally speaking, moral requirements of both Testaments of the Bible are the same, at least when properly understood and applied. But there are some significant and important differences in the Testaments too. For example, easy divorce and remarriage was tolerated under the Old Testament because of the hardness of the hearts of people. But this is not the principle that guides us in the New Testament (Matthew 5:31-32, 19:8-9; see also 1 Corinthians 7). The laws about worship and stewardship have changed too. We do not have animal sacrifices, and we are not bound by the law of tithes in our giving. The commandments and laws of the Old Testament are figuratively dead — no longer to be bound upon anybody (Colossians 2:14, Ephesians 2:14-15).

This does not mean that the Old Testament should not be studied carefully, or that it has no modern application. The fact that the old law says something does not sanction that thing now. We obey what the New Testament says. If it is not repeated in the New Testament it is not to be bound upon Christians, now or ever. People who lived faithfully by the Law given to them in the Old Testament are examples of righteousness for us, encouraging us to keep faithfully the law that has been given to us in the New Testament (see James 1:25, Hebrews 11:1-12:4 and 8:7-13). Those who broke the old law and suffered as a result stand as a warning to us (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11). Although the old law has been set aside and replaced with a new and better law and covenant (Hebrews 7:11-12,

18-19, and 10:9), the old law still serves the valuable function of clarifying and strengthening the new law.

GUIDELINE NUMBER TWO:

Conscience Can Be A Great Help, But Can Be Mistaken Unless Its Function Is Properly Understood And Accepted.

The Bible does not define *conscience*. The word is used some thirty times in the New Testament, but the writers assume the readers know the meaning. The commonly accepted definition says that *conscience is the faculty by which the moral awareness of the person is maintained*. It urges one to (a) do what he believes is right and avoid what he believes is wrong (Romans 14:5b, 14:22-23) and (b) pass judgment upon all one’s decisions and activities (Romans 2:14ff. 1 John 3:19-23). A normal conscience is *knowledge of right and wrong, and the conviction that one ought to do right and not do wrong* — as he understands right and wrong to be. Shame, guilt, remorse, and regret are the usual results of violating one’s conscience.

No person is born with complete or perfect knowledge of right and wrong. Conscience must be educated, trained to recognize right and wrong (Hebrews 5:14). The faculty itself is inborn and universal, but its function is the product of its environment, custom and habit, social impressions, and formal education. It is something like a computer. It must be programmed. It must receive certain information before it can make meaningful responses. The fact is self-evident in the case of the computer. No one doubts it. Though it is more difficult to understand and accept, it is just as true in the case of the human conscience. Feeding false information or faulty standards into it causes a malfunction — it gives wrong answers.

One accepts a standard and then abides by it to maintain a good conscience. There are many standards one may choose from: The Bible, Old Testament or New Testament; other religious books such as the Quran or Book of Mormon; creed or cate-

The fact that they are not considered as sins by our “enlightened and liberated” society does not change what God says they are.

chism, seminary, church, society, science, family, government, law, etc. But being a recognized standard does not make it right and valid. You cannot make a thing right or wrong by voting on it, passing a law, etc. Would $2 + 2 = 7$ if the nation's law or dear old dad said so? Can society make drugs right? How about marriage to a six year old girl (Islamic law)? You get the point.

One who disregards or abuses his conscience will lose it. It will become inoperative and dead. Like dead nerves with no feeling, it cannot accuse or excuse (Romans 2:15). Paul speaks of this condition as "having the conscience scarred or seared, as with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2) so one is "incapable of feeling" (Ephesians 4:19). On the other hand, one who acts in conformity with his convictions is said to have "a good conscience." As Paul said of himself, "I have lived in all good conscience to the present day" (Acts 23:1). But we know from his own admission that, though his conscience did not bother him at the time he did it, he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus (Acts 26:9-10), *sins* for which he later sought and received forgiveness (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

It should be apparent from all of this that a person must properly educate his conscience before he can safely follow it. We can determine what is right for a person to do all the days of his life (Ecclesiastes 2:3) by accepting the moral and spiritual standards of God and applying them to our own lives (Ecclesiastes 12:13, John 13:17, 14:15 and 12:48). It is important that our conscience not "hurt" us. But let us also be sure that it does not hurt God, that we have *a conscience void of offense to God and man* as well as to ourselves (Acts 24:16).

Summary to this point: the Bible plainly says that some things are right and others are wrong. Let it speak for itself. It will guide you into all the truth and make you perfect, furnished completely for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3-4). A well-educated conscience can be of great help, but remember that its effectiveness depends upon what is put into it, how it is programmed, and whether it is heeded and followed by the person.

GUIDELINE NUMBER THREE:

The Advice And Example Of Other Persons Can Be Very Helpful When Tested And Considered Carefully.

The advice or counsel of others — individuals, groups, establishments, or organizations — must not be substituted for Biblical principles. It can only be a help in understanding and applying them. Remember too, one must verify from personal Bible study all advice given by others.

Some have great difficulty in accepting instruction from others. Perhaps because they are quite sure of themselves and feel no need of help. Perhaps they are too proud to admit that they need help in making ethical decisions. Some simply do not trust other people. But there are some good reasons for seeking advice from others. Here are three things to keep in mind when you apply this guideline:

*The advice or counsel of
others—individuals,
groups, establishments,
or organizations—must
not be substituted for
Biblical principles.*

Do not seek advice only from those whose understanding and experience are about the same as your own. Seek help from those who are older and more experienced, morally and spiritually more mature. Experience teaches lessons that are seldom learned any other way. Guidance from one whose ability to distinguish good from evil has been sharpened and strengthened by exercise and

experience (Hebrews 5:14) can help one avoid many mistakes, and come much more quickly and confidently to the things he ought to do. Mature persons have faced many of the same decisions we all have to make. They know, through observation and experience, the usual results of certain actions and attitudes. They usually have the advantage of insight gained by observation of others too.

Do not seek advice only from those who are known to share your feelings or your point of view. People who want to do a certain thing will often ask advice from those who already do it. The conclusion is quite predictable: the person who does a thing often tries to *justify* himself. The person who wants to do the thing takes the approval of one who is already doing it as evidence of its acceptability. There are times when this only serves to illustrate what Jesus said about the blind leading the blind, with both end-

ing up in the same ditch (Luke 6:39). It is often wise to listen to a dissenting point of view. This is why debate, when both sides of an issue are examined, attacked or defended, can be valuable. It will help you clarify your thinking and make your conclusions more nearly valid, if you look honestly at all sides of every question. What passes for debate too often is simply a platform from which to state or reiterate one's position, one's talking points — often ignoring the question and contradicting evidence. Televised political debates have underscored and proved this point.

Sometimes the information you get from others does not come from questions and answers, but from observation of their lives, attitudes and activities. If you are trying to decide whether an activity is right or wrong, pay careful attention to the effects it has in the lives of those who participate in it. “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:16). Also weigh carefully the lives of those who do not participate in it. Watch for the effects on one's personality, and on one's appreciation for the finer and nobler things of life. Notice how it affects one's relationship to the Lord and to his church. Intelligent and critical observation can keep us from making some very painful mistakes. Some will not ask you. They will observe you and, if they are wise, observe the results of your attitudes and actions and life — good or bad. You may never know what influence and impact you have, for good or bad, in the lives of others.

GUIDELINE NUMBER FOUR:

Consider The Consequences Of Every Choice You Make.

Learn from the past, but also from the possible consequences for the future. It is easier to learn from the past — the results associated with each choice and action are generally measurable. We must learn to look objectively at the possibilities and potential in every choice — pay special attention to the probabilities. This principle must be applied in at least three areas. We will notice each of them separately, but first a special note on the consequences of sinful choices.

There is a price that must be paid for the privilege of sinning (Romans 1:16-18, 32; 2:2-7 and 11-16). Do you understand what it cost the Lord to offer grace and salvation to man? It cost God His only

Son. It cost Jesus Christ his life. We need to see that grace and salvation and peace with God are costly for us too.

Part of the price we pay is guilt — real and objective guilt, whether one acknowledges and feels it or not (James 2:10). Guilt causes mental anguish, an accusing conscience (Romans 2:15). Some have a very tender conscience. A 13 year-old wrote to President Cleveland in 1895 and apologized for using two cancelled stamps, and “getting away with it.” Compare John 8:7-9 “Let him without sin cast the first stone. And each of them, being convicted by his own conscience, went away.” Some seem to have a very hard inoperative conscience. A 16 year-old shoplifter had no guilty feelings about stealing, and felt that merchandise displayed in the store was “up for grabs” if one was smart enough to get away with it (from Ann Landers' column in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, Sept. 22, 1973). Compare also 1 Timothy 4:2: “Conscience seared...” and Ephesians 4:19: “being past feeling.” But in both cases the conscience is impaired, damaged, dysfunctional — it is not normal. Those involved are “without normal feelings” (Romans 1:31).

The price also includes physical and social consequences. The marks of sin are often evident — stained and broken bodies and minds. The guilty are often afraid they will be found out and punished. When they are found out and punished they are sometimes rejected by those they most desire fellowship with.

Of course the ultimate consequence — the price to be paid for sin — is spiritual death, rejection by God (Romans 6:23), eventually eternal hell, if the sin is not forgiven. One may escape mental, physical, and social punishment for his sins in this life, but some day every person must “stand before the judgment seat of Christ” and “give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10, 12) in order that he may be rewarded or punished, “according to what he has done in the body, good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

In considering the consequences of your choices there are three areas of concern to be noted. ***The first area of concern is the possible and probable effects upon you, yourself.*** Concern for your own best interests is not necessarily selfish. God's basic appeal to man is based upon man's desire for self-preservation and protection (see Acts 2:40, Philippians 2:12-13, and Matthew 16:24-26). As a matter of

fact, it is only because of our *self-consciousness*, the awareness of our humanity and our identity as unique individuals made in God's image, that we are capable of morality at all. In determining the consequences of any choice upon one's own self, consider these three aspects, listed in ascending importance:

How will it affect the body? Our bodies belong to God, not really to ourselves. The body is designed to be *a house for the human soul* and *a temple for the Holy Spirit of God* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We will have to give an account to God for all that we do *in* the body, *to* the body, *for* the body, and *with* the body (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, 10).

How will it affect the mind — one's ability to think, reason, question, and choose? Is a drunk or drugged doctor, lawyer, pilot, driver, baby-sitter, or preacher OK? Our minds and thoughts can easily be corrupted, and so they must be carefully guarded (Mark 7:15, 20-23; Philippians 4:6-9). We get conscious and deliberate input from media we expose ourselves to. We are bombarded with subliminal input from sources we have control over. To think we will not suffer the effects of improper exposure is foolish, futile. A certain preacher viewed pornography in doing research on the effects of it on a Christian and later lamented, "Now I can't get those images out of *my* mind." Even translations or edited versions of the Bible can adversely affect the mind. Some try to be accurate, some do not — some strive only for readability. Some are modified for a target audience — such as homosexuals, youth, etc. Some are designed to be friendly to other religions. Wycliffe now produces a Muslim-friendly version that identifies God with Allah (a blasphemy) and denies the deity in Jesus and the personal being of the Holy Spirit.

How will it affect the soul and spirit? This is the most important principle, but doesn't always get proper consideration. Think of the point just made about the mind. Do improper translations have any effect upon one's spiritual health and hope? In considering any idea or attitude, any act or involvement, any substance to be ingested or collected, take notice of what it will do to one spiritually. Will it deepen or lessen one's interest in spiritual things? Will it increase or decrease one's sense of fellowship with God and His people? Death — not just the death of the body but eternal separation of the soul from God — is the ultimate consequence for those who choose

to sin and do not seek God's forgiveness (Romans 6:23, James. 1:13-15).

The second area of concern: the effects it will or may have on other persons (same three possible effects as for yourself). Whether we like it or not, we are responsible for the impact and influence of our choices upon others (1 Corinthians 10:31-32, Romans 14:19). Will the choice you make strengthen or weaken others? Will it mislead others? Will it tempt the weak? Will it offend anyone, or cause anyone to sin? (1 Corinthians 8:9-13, Romans 14:13, 21). It is a sin to be a bad influence.

The third area of concern: the effects your choice will or can have on the church and the cause of Christ. Will it hinder or help the evangelistic program of the church? Will it create problems in fellowship (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14)? Will it cause others to glorify God (Matthew 5:16, Philippians 2:13-16)?

CONCLUSION

All the activities that are right and good for Christians will easily pass all these tests. Any activity which fails in any of the guidelines we have mentioned here is wrong. No matter what your convictions may be, and no matter what the opinions of others may be. Bottom line and final consideration: only what God says counts forever. *The word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which, by the gospel, is preached to you* (1 Peter 1:25).

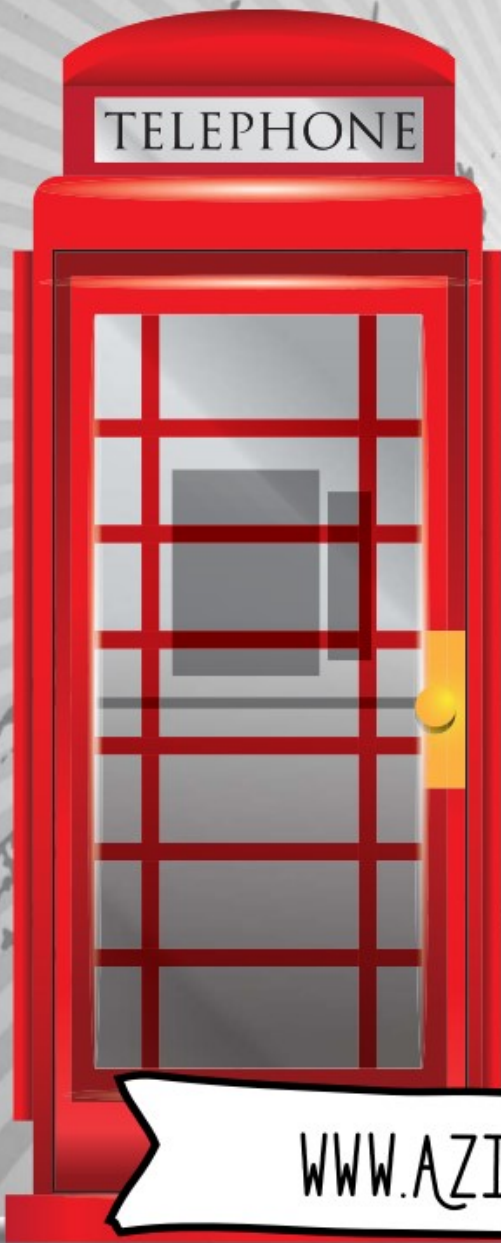
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Unsung Heroes: King Jehoshaphat

By Travis Anderson

How many of you remember anything about Jehoshaphat? At one point, not too long ago, I couldn't have told you for sure if he was a king or not. And if you gave me that, I couldn't have told you if he was from Israel or Judah, good or bad, late in the divided kingdom history or early on

And that is the point of this article (and Lord willing, future articles): to look at lessons from characters we know little or nothing about, or to look at characters we might recognize, but have forgotten stories or overlooked details

But before we jump into the middle of the story, let's look at some background.

Background

First, the entire book of 2 Chronicles focuses on one main theme: Distress. The Jews are constantly faced with distress, both from without and within. Sometimes God sends their distress because of their own sin, with the consequences and punishment.

But more often than not, as is often the case in our lives too, there does not appear to be a logical reason for the distress, at least on the surface through secular eyes (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Through human weakness, the power of God becomes evident. The greatest example of this is Jesus: through the sufferings and hardships of the cross, the resurrection is made possible. Just as the cross would mean nothing without the empty tomb, the tomb could have never been filled without the cross.

The deep truth is that our human suffering need not be an obstacle to the joy and peace we so desire, but can become, instead, the means to it. The great secret of the spiritual life, the life of the beloved sons and daughters of God, is that everything we live, be it gladness or sadness, joy or pain, health or illness, can all be a part of the journey toward the full realization of our humanity. It is not hard to say to one another: "All that is good and beautiful leads us to the glory of the children of God." But it is very hard to say: "But didn't you know that we all have to suffer and by that suffering enter into the glory of God?"



Distress in the life of Israel became the testing ground wherein God formed them to be His people.

Isn't that how we normally judge the kings as if to whether they were good kings or not? We look at how they handled crises, be it temptation of idols, women, power, or threats from foreign nations: we measure them by how they handled these things.

As Christians, distress is our training ground too. Being a Christian would be easy 24/7 if temptation wasn't hard, if no one ever threatened Christians for

their lives, and if a church wasn't in danger of shrinking to the point of extinction. But it's when times are hard and distress comes that we are hardened into the soldiers and servants that God desires us to be.

Jehoshaphat is one of the most famous kings in Judah, if for no other reason than he was one of the few good ones. In chapter 17, we find that he follows the example of his father Asa, the previous king, in that he devotes his heart to following God. However, he strikes an unwise alliance with the king of the Northern Kingdom and it almost costs him his life. God had commanded Israel multiple times in the Law of Moses to not make alliances with any nation. However he calls out to God and his life is spared. That is really the only negative in his kingship we have record of.

In chapter 19 he builds a judicial system to handle problems within the land (2 Chronicles 19:8-11). So even in the handling of civil matters and disputes, be they spiritual in nature or not, God and his law are to be the ultimate guides to how the land is governed, both on the local and national scenes. But these issues that he has maneuvered are nothing for what is about to come his way in chapter 20.

Jehoshaphat Encountered a Problem **(verses 1-2)**

After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi).

Since the Philistines had been removed from the face of the earth during the reign of David, no enemy was more fearsome than the Moabites and Ammonites. Both nations were just east the Jordan River valley, and conducting joint military operations against Judah and Israel would have been easy due to their proximity. Their intent is not revealed, but in those days war was for one of two things: Either to grab land, or to plunder and take loot and slaves. Whatever the case was, it did not look good for King Jehoshaphat and his nation

Jehoshaphat Turned to God **(verses 3-4)**

Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

The first thing he does in response to this news is turn to God. But he doesn't do it alone, he gets his whole nation to turn to God with him. What a beautiful picture: here is a man faced with a great challenge, and his first reaction is to get God's people to turn with him to God.

Far too often that is not our first reaction. We often think 'what are we going to do about this?' not 'God, what should I do about this?' And even when we do turn to God, even if it is our first response like Jehoshaphat, do we rally God's people with us?

For some reason, we seem timid to seek the help of God's people as we seek God! We don't want people to worry about us. We don't want to feel like we are weak or sick. We like to be private people, even with our problems.

Church: that is the Devil's plan! He has somehow convinced us that praying for it on our own is better than all of God's people praying for it. He has convinced you that it is okay for you to keep others from praying to God about something. And when you think 'oh, people don't need to know about this illness or this struggle,' Satan smiles.

Often in Paul's letters to the churches, he asked them to pray for him. Paul, an apostle. A man who saw Jesus long after he had ascended. A man who knew the power of God in his life over and over. A man who could work miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. A man who had the biggest impact on Christianity behind Christ himself — *this man* asked the church to pray for him! And if we can't do that too, then we are saying we don't need prayers as much as Paul did.

Jehoshaphat enlisted the people of God when going to God, and we should too.

Jehoshaphat Remembered God's Promise **(verses 5-11)**

And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of

the LORD, before the new court, and said,

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you — for your name is in this house — and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy — behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit.”

Jehoshaphat recalled how God had helped His People before and how He promised to help them in the future. As we read prayers like this, and many of the psalms are like this as well, we almost cringe as if God needs reminded of what He has done. But these prayers are not just designed to be a plea to God, but also a reminder to those who are listening as well.

This sort of prayer was common in Hebrew culture because not everyone had a Bible to look up God’s promise or Google to remember what He had accomplished in the past. Common people needed reminding of what God had done at every chance possible. Public prayers were one way this was accomplished. And then, with the reminder of what God has done for them in the past, coupled with the promises for the present and future, he asks for help now.

Jehoshaphat Admitted His Powerlessness (verses 12-13)

“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

That last phrase of verse 12 is wonderful. Notice how he doesn’t ask God to annihilate their enemies. He simply asks God to be the judge and act according to His character. If the armies are justified in attacking Israel, then so be it. If they are not, then tell them what to do.

How often, when faced with distress, plead for God to just take away our struggle? Maybe we should just be praying for the strength to overcome it, as the first century church did concerning governmental persecution.

God Answered Jehoshaphat’s Plea (verses 14-17)

And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said,

“Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.”

This is the hard part sometimes: waiting on God's answer. Because it rarely happens immediately, and it rarely happens in such an obvious direct way. But if they had been looking for a certain answer from God, and that was all they were looking for, they still would have missed it. They would have found some way to dismiss this man, saying it wasn't really God's answer and keep on looking. I know this because sometimes that is what we do: we are so intent on looking for a specific answer that we miss the one we need.

That was exactly what happened with the servant girl Rhoda. Peter was literally knocking on the front door as the disciples were in the back praying for Peter, who they thought was in jail, and when Rhoda came and said "Peter is here," they dismissed her and told her she was crazy!

As Christians, we have to be looking for God's answers to our prayers, not our own preconceived answers to our prayers.

Jehoshaphat Expressed His Praise (verses 18-24)

Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said:

"Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed."

And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever." And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who

had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another. When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped.

Even in a moment of silence and or quiet reverence, some can't keep themselves from just bursting out with praise to God. What they shouted or what it sounded like aren't told to us, and it really doesn't matter. What a beautiful scene that must have been in an otherwise tense and scary moment in the lives of these people!

So now they need a battle plan. Except they don't, because God has told them that all they need to do is watch, and God will take care of the rest.

So what did Jehoshaphat do? He set singers to actually stand in front of the soldiers and sing. Maybe some of the men were apprehensive about what was going to happen. Maybe they weren't sure that 'waiting and watching' was the best strategy.

They sing 'his mercy endures forever.' The Hebrew word for *mercy* refers to the covenant faithfulness of God. It communicates that God has made a pact with his people and that he intends to keep it. I'm sure this seemed silly to the enemy, but in a moment, it's not going to seem so silly.

When faced with a great temptation, do we sing praises to God?

King Jehoshaphat is using worship as his weapon. God didn't command them to do this, he just took it upon himself to trust in God's promise, and to praise Him even before He did what He said He would. We need to do the same

As they begin to sing, God causes the armies to turn on one another and everyone ends up killing everyone else. As Israel arrives on the scene, they look and only see the fallen bodies of all the soldiers.

Jehoshaphat Enjoyed the Blessings (verses 25-30)

When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among

them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day.

Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

Once they go down to the sight of this blood bath, they find spoils everywhere. It takes them three days to gather it all!

What is the first thing they do when they get back to Jerusalem? They don't even go home, they go straight to the temple and being praising God once again!

When God answers our prayers and we overcome whatever distress God has led us past, do we thank Him in a prayer, or do we praise Him with everything we have first and foremost, before doing anything else? It's a beautiful picture here and I absolutely love it

Conclusion

We all face distresses. Each of our distresses look different, but they are there. How are we responding to them? Is our first reaction to seek God? To listen for God? To praise Him even before He leads us over our distress? To praise Him immediately after our distress has been defeated?

King Jehoshaphat may not be a household name here in 21st century America, but he most certainly was during his reign as King of Israel, and it had to do with how he handled his nation's distress.



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Blessings For The Believer (Ephesians 1:3-14)

For many years, Hetty Green was called America's greatest miser. When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at \$100 million dollars, an especially vast fortune for that day. She was so uptight with her money, she ate cold oatmeal in order to save the expense of heating the water. When her son had a severe leg injury, she took so long trying to find a free clinic to treat him, his leg had to be amputated because an infection set in. It was also said she hastened her own death by bringing on a fit of apoplexy while arguing the merits of skim milk because it was cheaper than whole milk! In a sense, there are many Christians just like Hetty Green. They have access to all the resources one can possibly think of and still not use them.

There is no excuse for anyone not to be thankful for the grace of God in their life. We know the Lord blesses everyone — from the air we breathe to the sensational sights we can see around us. God has given all of us sufficient knowledge that He exists, through His creation, and enough so that we are held accountable for denying His place and power in it (Romans 1:20-23; Matthew 5:44-45). We know that every good thing is from God, for non-Christians and Christians, to not only show His power but to also exhibit His wonderful character (James 1:17). The love of God is made known in blessings God gives to all indiscriminately. This is called common grace. However, we must distinguish the differences between God's special love for His own and His general goodwill towards all (Acts 14:15-17).

There is another group of spiritual blessings that He gives to only Christians. A great example of such blessings is found in Ephesians 1:3-14. In the Greek, this is one long run-on sentence. However, I believe it's fitting and very symbolic of the blessings of God — they keep on going and going and going, and the blessings never cease to end! This passage also

makes clear that there are some gifts from God that are only available to those who are saved.

While this is a pause in our current study of Ephesians 4, with our calling to act in a certain way as the church, remembering the blessings that God has given to us should encourage us even more to “walk in a manner worthy”(4:1).

THE REALITY OF THE BLESSER (1:3)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,”

The existence of our blessings is only possible through God, excluding everyone else. It is significant to see that God is mentioned 21 times in these 12 verses. He is the absolute focus here and that is made plain when we notice Paul's four-part thesis.

Paul begins with praise (“blessed”). The Greek word is where our English word “eulogy” comes from. Paul is going to be commending someone, singing their praises when he begins a statement with “blessed.” The question is — who does Paul have in mind?

He then answers that question with a person! The person is the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This answers the question, “who?” But another question arises — “why should we praise the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?” What makes God praiseworthy? Usually when you are praising someone, you feel compelled to do so. You have good reason to sing their praises. Paul, again, answers our inquiry.

The “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” should be praised because of His great power. It was He who has, is able to, and forever will be able to “bless us with every spiritual blessing.” Remember, there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. We are merely responding to a call. God is at the fore-

front in all of this blessing business. We are simply recipients of God's great gifts.

Finally, Paul ends his thesis with the place — “where are you able to receive these blessings?” Paul answers, “*in the heavenly places.*” Paul uses this phrase five times in his letter to the Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

It refers to the place where Christ is now exalted as King (1:20), the place where the various spiritual powers learned about God's great plan (3:10) and the place where he defeated the “spiritual forces of wickedness” (6:12).¹

We must conclude that this is beyond the material world, the place of spiritual activity, and where the war between good and evil was fought and won because of Christ's resurrection and ascension. Because of this victory, this secured our ability to receive these blessings² and emphasize that God has power over the whole universe (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:15-17).

You see, as Creator, God is able to choose whoever He wants to bless. And the blessings mentioned in this passage deal with salvation. Therefore, we must understand who the blessed are, as the text suggests it is a very specific group of people.

THE REVELATION OF THE BLESSED (1:13)

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

Here, at the end of the text, we find the answer. Even more, throughout this section, we find 10 ‘clues’ pointing to the believers who are specified in verse 13. The phrase, “*in Christ,*” or similar references to being in Him are found in verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, and 13.

You have to be “*in Christ*”! When you heard the gospel, you heard the very words of God and those who are “*in Christ*” have responded in obedience

through baptism. The bottom line is this — to be considered a believer, you have to be in a loving and obedient relationship to Christ (John 14:15, et. al.).

Now note that this passage says you have to be “*in Christ.*” There is no inclusion for every religion that exists or any allowances for good works. Those who proclaim an inclusive, all roads lead to heaven type of Christianity are not teaching true Christianity at all. Paul says these people are damned to destruction (Galatians 1:6-9) and the apostle John wrote,

“The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

We know that true Christianity, the path to being a true believer, is a very narrow path (John 14:6; Matthew 7:13-14, et. al.).

THE RECEIVING OF OUR BLESINGS (1:3-14)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In

¹ Orbison, Jr., Guy and Denny Petrillo. **A Study Of The Epistle To The Ephesians.** Workshop in the Word. 2011:2.

² Although the context is different in Ephesians 4:7-10, the general idea is discussed there, as well. For further elaboration, see the author's article in Volume 1, Number 4, pp. 70-75.

Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Paul, here, refers to 10 specific blessings that come from God to those who believe and are "in Christ." First, let's see what believers receive from the Lord.

He begins with a very general statement: He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (1:3). When someone around us sneezes, we instantly blurt out, "bless you!" but when we're honest, we know those are just words. However, when God decides to bless someone, you had better believe that His "bless you!" will be extremely excellent and beyond description. For believers, we know that these blessings are certain, they are powerful, and they are eternal.

Paul, then, gets more specific. He has chosen us (1:4). Before the world was ever created, God had His chosen people in mind. Before the days of Israel and the church, He already ordained a group of people to be His own; to be "holy and blameless." This is divine election — God chooses whom He wants. God has a specific purpose and impact for choosing a specific group of people for Himself. He makes His people "holy" — His people are to be separated from the contamination of the world and "blameless" — the people are no longer held accountable for their sins. Who deserves such things? No one! However, since this is the case, Paul would implore God's people in the church to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called" (Ephesians 4:1).

Third, God has accepted us (1:4-6). Through Jesus' payment on the cross (Acts 20:28), we are able to be God's children! This is God's love, kindness, and grace — all freely given! We read in Ephesians 2:4-5,

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

The bottom line here is this: God accepts you into His family if you accept Him. If we do not believe, the salvation provided by God cannot be applied to us.

Fourth, He has redeemed us (1:7). The imagery of the word "redemption" is the concept of purchasing someone from bondage, to set a person free from enslavement. For Christians, Christ has set us free from the shackles of sin. Paul wrote to the Romans,

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:11-14).

Fifth, God has forgiven us (1:7). Not only have we been saved from our prior condition of slavery, but our past has also been completely forgotten. The reality is "all of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6) but praise God, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). That was the reality of our condition as sinners until we were able to experience the extent of God's forgiveness!

Sixth, He has lavished His grace upon us (1:7-8). These are some hefty words Paul uses here! "Lavished grace" — getting something that you don't deserve already, and that gift is lavished. In other words, this gift is given generously... in extravagant quantity... to cover thickly or liberally with! The Khone Falls in Cambodia has the greatest volume of the world's waterfalls at 2.5 million gallons per second³ — now imagine filling a communion cup at the base of this waterfall! That's the imagery we should have as to how overwhelming and wonderful God is when He lavishes grace upon Christians. It's that great! In John 10:10 we have an example of God's grace of life. Jesus said, "I came that they may have

³ www.britannica.com/place/Khone-Falls. Accessed 7 June 2018.

life, and have it abundantly.” This current life everyone lives is a gift in itself; for Christians, however, we also have eternal life which will be so much better than this current life, with God, for eternity!

Seventh, God has made known the mystery of His will to us (1:8-10). God’s plan was not made known in the Old Testament — but under the New Covenant, it has. As we see throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul explains what this mystery is. The mystery is the gathering of all people, Jew and Gentile, in Christ — being reconciled together into one body (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:19-22). Again, this unification of both groups was made possible only through the death of Jesus on the cross.

Eighth, God has provided an eternal inheritance for us (1:10-12). We should immediately be reminded of Peter’s grand description in 1 Peter 1:3-4 where we read:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Again, this inheritance is made possible by God’s mercy, and it can be experienced by everyone and enjoyed by those who are “in Christ”! This is where Christians will be able to be victorious and reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12).

Ninth, we are saved and sealed by God (1:13). The gospel’s power is put into effect when we hear the word of God, believe it, and become obedient to that Word (James 1:21-22). When you submit your life to Christ in baptism, you are saying God is in control — not your flesh, nor your desires, but God’s. His Spirit is what you take on because you are being transformed into His image. When something is sealed, a book with the owner’s signature in it, a binding document with signatures, that says you are under the authority of the person whose stamp is on the seal. It resembles ownership and approval. To God, the seal signifies that you are His and that your will is not your own, but His. We are sheep in His flock and He will protect us and provide for us everything we need. To us, it is not only a reminder of *who* we are, but *whose* we are! We must, therefore, be loyal and we will be secure and provided for. To

others, it shows that you are a Christian, that you ought to behave differently, better, because you are an example to follow. They will know who our Master is because we obey Him. Those who are “sealed in the Holy Spirit” are those who are truly saved and live lives that resemble the nature of Christ.

Christians must have a lifestyle that is holy (1 Peter 1:16). Now, this leads to the 10th blessing. The expectation of holiness has its conditions (faithfulness and purity) and if you continually strive for that, you will have confidence in your salvation!

If you do have a worthy walk, you are guaranteed your salvation (1:14). When you have the spirit of God in you, you may have the confidence that your salvation is sure, safe, and secure. It is your salvation! The apostle John wrote:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

THE RESPONSE OF THE BELIEVER **(1:6, 12, 14)**

“to the praise of His glory.”

Three times in this passage we read what we must do — “to the praise of His glory” (1:6, 12, 14). Got it? Our response to these blessings must be to praise God! One author wrote, “His own good pleasure was the sole cause of this election.” Everything we do, we are to glorify God because He has blessed us beyond description, as we have seen.

CONCLUSION

Aesop wrote a fable entitled, “A Miser.” It went like this...

“A miser, to make sure of his property, sold all that he had and converted it into a great lump of gold, which he buried in a hole in the ground. Every day he went to visit and inspect his treasure to gloat in it. This roused the curiosity of one of his workmen, who, suspecting that there was a treasure, when his master’s back was turned, went to the spot, and stole it away. When the miser returned and found the hole empty, he wept and tore his hair. But a neighbor who saw

him in this extravagant grief, and learned the cause of it, said, ‘Stop being downcast, take a stone and put it in the same place and think that it is your lump of gold; for, as you never meant to use it, the one will do you as much good as the other.’”

The lesson is that the worth of something is not in its possession, but in its use. For the Christians who are reading this, if you don’t live out your faith,

what good does possessing the title ‘Christian’ do you? You might as well replace it with something else that resembles who you actually are. However, if you are a faithful Christian, you have way more than the worker with the lump of gold. You have God’s grace lavished to you, in overflowing abundance!

The question for us is this: since we have received the grace of God, will we give Him the glory He deserves?

A SPECIAL REQUEST



Since I was eight years old, I have pursued becoming a minister of God’s Word. I am driven to “preach the word” (II Timothy 4:2), spending time in rigorous Bible study, attending Bear Valley’s Future Preachers Training Camp each summer, writing articles for different publications, and mentoring with Godly and experienced men.

I graduated this last May with honors from Desert Edge High School, in Goodyear, AZ. I have been accepted to attend Freed-Hardeman University, where I will be starting in August of this year. I wholeheartedly believe this is the plan God is leading me to make. I am excited for all that I will learn at FHU and how to apply it in a fruitful ministry that helps others become aware of what the Bible teaches and the salvation found only in Christ. I am convinced that God is going to use me as a vessel (II Corinthians 4:7) as I pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Biblical Studies.

I am seeking support as I study to refine my skills and gain wisdom to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of preaching. I humbly ask you to consider being my partner and supporting me financially on this journey. I am seeking \$20,000 of support for each of the 4 years that I will be attending FHU. This is in addition to the scholarships and grants that I am already receiving. Any amount of support is appreciated and I will be providing a full report of the funds I receive, how they are being used, and quarterly updates on my academic and spiritual progress during my schooling. References are available upon request.

Please prayerfully consider supporting me. I am eternally grateful and committed to His work. For more information or to pledge your support, I can be reached at:

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602-316-7800
2744 N. 142nd Lane
Goodyear, AZ 85395

God bless,

Did the Father Forsake Jesus on the Cross?

By Mark McWhorter

When Jesus was on the cross, he made the statement, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.” Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46 tell us this means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Many believe that Jesus was speaking from personal grief of being forsaken by the Father in heaven. Is this a proper understanding of what Jesus said? What are the theological implications of this understanding?

Jesus’ statement is a quote of Psalm 22:1. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” Because this Psalm contains several prophecies regarding Jesus’ crucifixion it is concluded by some that Jesus states this because of a personal separation from God.

Father

Notice that the statement does not use ‘Father.’ Instead it uses ‘God.’ If one looks at how Jesus uses the term ‘God’ it is most often used as a more general reference to the Godhead. In most instances where he uses the term ‘Father,’ there is a personal familial relationship intended. The ‘Father’ knows and cares for Jesus and others. The ‘Father’ gives things to Jesus and others.

Jesus calls the First Person in the Godhead ‘Father’ many times. And many times it is ‘my Father.’ It is the Father who sent him.

Jesus teaches the disciples to pray to ‘Our Father,’ Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2. This shows that prayer is a personal communication with the One

who cares, loves, and wants to take care of those on earth.

Jesus prays to his ‘Father’ in the Garden, Matthew 26:39, 42; Luke 22:42. In the most critical time of his life, the night before he is to be crucified, he talks to his ‘Father.’

At the point of his death, he commends his spirit to his ‘Father,’ Luke 23:46. He knows that his Father is listening. He knows that his Father is close. He knows he has done everything his Father has required of him. It is a moment of intimate relationship between the Son and the Father.

But, between the Garden and his moment of death, he is supposed to have pleaded with ‘God’ because ‘God’ has forsaken him. This prayer of supplication does not use the term ‘Father.’ In the moment when he is supposedly separated from the Father, he does not plead with the ‘Father.’ Then, just a little afterwards, he turns his spirit over to his Father. If he was separated and forsaken, how could he, just a few minutes later, confidently pray to his Father?

Then after his resurrection, he says he has not yet ascended to his Father, John 20:17. Again, he uses the personal relationship.

It does not make sense that he would not use the term ‘Father’ in the prayer of pleading for a personal relationship when he is on the cross.

God is Trustworthy

Psalm 22:2 says that God has been cried for, but he has not heard. In Psalm 22:3, the important word

‘But’ is used. The person of Psalm 22 recognized the God is holy (v. 3), and that he delivered the fathers of the past who trusted him (v.4). The fathers cried unto God, and were delivered (v.5). There was no confusion.

These verses make no sense if the person speaking in Psalm 22:1 knows for a fact that God has forsaken him. For if it is a fact that God has forsaken, then there is no security or encouragement from the fact that God was always trustworthy before this incident.

If God had delivered those who trusted him, and the thoughts of the person of verse one indicates God has forsaken him, then the person of verse one must not have trusted in God. For there to be comfort intended from verses 2-5, means the speaker of verse one is mistaken.

Since Jesus was God and full of the Holy Spirit, it is not the case that he could be mistaken, unless the Holy Spirit left him. Jesus had trusted the Father his entire life. He lived the perfect trusting life. He prayed to the Father in the Garden that His will be done. Was Jesus praying for the Father to forsake him (if that was the Father’s will, as some claim)? And if he was praying for the Father to forsake him, why did he then supposedly cry out in despair that his Father had left him?

Was Jesus trusting that the Father would forsake him? If Psalm 22:1 is a quote intended for Jesus’ thoughts, why would he be confused about his Father forsaking him? If Jesus knew the prophecy, he would know there was to be a forsaking. If he knew the forsaking was to occur, then there would be no confusion from the forsaking. Thus, Jesus would be making a personal statement of his condition, which was not a true representation of his situation. Psalm 22:5, says there is no confusion for those who trust in God.

God Is Near

Psalm 22:6 has Jesus stating that he is a worm which has the reproach of men. He is despised. Those around the cross shout that he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him, v. 8. They are laughing and mocking him, v. 7. Verse ten has Jesus stating that God was with him from his birth.

Verse eleven has Jesus asking God to not be far from him. Trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Jesus prayed to the Father in Mark 14:36 that the Father’s will be done. If it was possible to save man by other means, Jesus asked that to be done. But if not, Jesus wanted his Father’s will to be done, Matthew 26:42. This indicates that Jesus trusted in his Father to be near him.

In the Garden at his arrest, Jesus told his disciples that he could ask the Father to rescue him with twelve legions of angels. This indicates that the Father is with him in the Garden. The Father is with Jesus at his arrest. So, it is the Father’s will that he be arrested. Jesus is obedient in allowing himself to be arrested. He is starting his trip toward the cross.

He is beginning his role as the sacrificial atonement lamb. He is holy. Thus, the Father is near. Psalm 73:28 states that the author trusted in God and was thus able to come near to God. No one trusted the Father more than Jesus. This trust put him, as a man, closer to God than any other human who has lived.

If Jesus, as a sinless man, was asking the Father to be near him, and the Father refused to be near him, then there was misplaced trust by Jesus. If Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and thus inspired to speak the truth, and to pray the truth, there is confusion from God. God would be inspiring Jesus to ask for something that Jesus knew could not occur. While he prayed in the Garden that the Father could find another way, he also admitted that he knew his Father’s will had to be done. In Psalm 22:11, he is not asking for another way. In verse 11, he is asking that the Father stay near to him.

He states the same in Psalm 22:19. This is twice in the Psalm that he asks for the Father to be near him. Those declaring that the Father forsook him, have him twice asking for something which he knew was not his Father’s will. Jesus had prophesied of his crucifixion. He knew he was to die for the sins of mankind. But, he never stated that his Father would forsake him for doing such.

God Brought Jesus to Death

In Psalm 22:15, Jesus states that the Father brought him to death. The Father’s will was for Jesus to die on the cross. If the Father’s will was done, it would mean the Father was pleased. If the Father was pleased, it means the Father could look upon the scene with joy.

In Psalm 22:20-21, Jesus wants God to save him from the sword and the lion’s mouth. These are

equivalent to Jesus praying to be rescued out of death, Hebrews 5:7. The Greek word ‘ek’ being used in this verse indicating that Jesus was not asking to not die, but to be brought out of death.

In Psalm 22, Jesus is not stating that if God is near he would not die. He knew he had to die, John 12:33. He knew his death was the reason for coming to earth. For him to pray that God not let him die, would be to pray for something against his Father’s will. The Father brought him to die.

Jesus Would Be in the Congregation

Psalm 22:22, has Jesus saying he would declare the Father’s name and praise him in the congregation. This assurance is immediately stated after asking that the Father save him out of death. He is confident that the Father hears him. He is confident his prayer will be answered.

Thus, there is no time when the Father is not near him.

The Father Did Not Despise Him

Psalm 22:24 declares that the Lord did not despise nor abhor the one praying in the verses just above it. It clearly states that in nothing had “he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.”

Nothing could be clearer than that statement. The Father heard all of Jesus’ statements. The Father was near him at all times.

It is claimed that the Father turned and forsook Jesus on the cross because he could not look upon a sin-filled Jesus. But that claim is in direct conflict with Psalm 22:24.

Because the Father was near and heard Jesus, all those who fear Jehovah can praise him. Because he was with Jesus throughout the entire death process, those who fear the Lord can glorify him.

Praise Comes to Jesus for What the Father Did

Psalm 22:25 states that the praise Jesus will receive from worshippers is because of the Father. The righteousness of Jesus, which came through his obedience to his Father, and from the Father accepting all that he did, would be declared by his followers, Psalm 22:31.

Because Jesus was fully obedient, and because the Father was always near him, and because the

Father brought him out of death, mankind has the blessing of the Kingdom of the Lord, Psalm 22:28.

Because the Father was near to Jesus, and heard Jesus, those who follow Jesus and the Father have a heart that shall live forever, Psalm 22:26.

It is impossible to conclude that the Father turned his back on Jesus, and because of that action, mankind has hope of living forever.

It is impossible to be near at the same time one is separated due to abhorrence. It is impossible for the Father to be pleased and forsaking at the same time. It is impossible to praise and glorify the Father for turning his back and forsaking Jesus on the cross.

The Holy Sacrifice

The atonement, sin, trespass, and peace sacrifices had to be without blemish, Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 5:18.

The sin and trespass offerings were holy. The sacrificial animal did not become sinful. It was not sacrificed *as* sin, but was sacrificed *for* sin.

The Brazen Altar was holy. Nothing unholy was to be put on it. Yet, some declare that the sin offering became sinful. This would require an unholy thing being placed on the holy Altar. That is the case or it would require stating that an unholy thing (the animal) was at the same time holy. It would require something unholy being accepted by God. It would require an unholy thing being sanctified *while still unholy*.

Since Jesus was the Antitype of the sacrifices, this line of ‘reasoning’ would require Jesus being a holy sacrifice while also being unholy. It would require the Father accepting an unholy thing while being holy. It would require God sanctifying Jesus as a sinner—as the most sinful man in history. It would require the Father accepting and forsaking Jesus at the same time.

Bearing Iniquity

According to Leviticus 10:17, the priests were given the role of bearing the iniquity of the Israelites. They made atonement for sins before the Lord.

Since the priests, in their role of mediation of sin, were Types of Jesus, the Antitype, then their spiritual state while bearing the iniquities is important in the state of the Antitype. The priests were to be holy. They had to make sure their spiritual

state was clean and perfect, before they could bear the iniquity of the people.

Nowhere does God claim that priests became spiritually sinful by bearing iniquity. To be spiritually sinful would mean being in a state of unholiness. Unholiness cannot exist with holiness.

The priests took blood of the sacrificial animal into the Holy Place. The Holy Place was holy. Nothing of imperfection and unholiness was allowed into it. Yet, if the priest became unholy by bearing iniquity, unholiness was commanded to enter the Holy Place. Iniquity would be taken into nearness with God. This would especially be troublesome on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place. The High Priest, who was to be holy to enter into the Most Holy Place, would be unholy when entering the Most Holy Place.

If Jesus, as the Antitype, became full of sin, thus unholy when bearing the iniquity of the world, then the Type/Antitype is inconsistent. It makes Jesus unholy on the cross. Yet Jesus was holy. Only a holy priest could bear iniquity in the Holy Place.

God is Light

God is light and in him is no darkness, 1 John 1:5. Jesus was God. Therefore Jesus is light.

If Jesus became sinful, then Jesus became dark. This would mean that Jesus was light and darkness at the same time. This is a contradiction that has no rational basis.

Or it would mean that he had no light and was only darkness. This would mean that Jesus gave up his Deity.

Or it would require accepting one of the tenants of Gnosticism in which only the human Jesus was on the cross.

What Cleansed Jesus?

If Jesus actually had the sins of the world staining his spirit, he was sinful. God requires blood to cleanse sin. In fact, he required the blood of Jesus for that purpose.

If Jesus was guilty of sin, because he personally took into himself the sins of the world, what did the Father use to cleanse Jesus? Did the Father use the unholy blood of Jesus to cleanse the unholy Jesus?

The Father could not simply pardon Jesus of these supposedly acquired sins. Jesus lived and died to be the perfect example for all mankind. He had to live as a man to accomplish this. Thus, he was a

man while on the cross. The Father was limited by his own justice in what he could do for cleansing Jesus as a man.

When Did the Father Cleanse Jesus?

At what point did the Father cleanse Jesus? According to the claim that Jesus personally became sinful and thus was abhorrent to the Father causing the Father to forsake him, Jesus died in sin.

If he did not die in sin, then at some point while Jesus was on the cross, the Father forgave him. This would have to be after Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1. But Jesus had to die in sin, according to the claim. If he did not die in sin, he could not be the Lamb taken to the Brazen Altar and 'killed' as the sin/trespas/atonement/peace sacrifice. He would only be the Lamb that suffered persecution and then was cleansed before he died.

If he died in sin, did the Father forgive and cleanse him sometime after death? If so, he had to do it before Jesus entered paradise, Luke 23:43. Yet there is nothing in Scripture prophesying such forgiveness or cleansing.

Where Did Jesus Go After His Death?

Jesus also would have to know that he was dying in sin but going to paradise. It is stated that a person receives the reward for what is done in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 5:10. The belief that he was personally guilty of all the sins of the world, being full of those sins, would require Jesus being rewarded post-life for those sins. His physical death would not appease the Justice of the Father.

It may be argued that since Jesus did not 'do' the evil which he now had indwelling him, he was not held eternally guilty for them. But that argument falls apart by the very argument it makes. It would have Jesus being held guilty and yet not being held guilty. It would have the Father forsaking Jesus because of the evil in him, but then accepting him in spite of the evil. It would have Jesus only suffering a physical death but no eternal spiritual death.

If Jesus had spiritual death, by having all the sins of the world making him guilty of sin, then he could not go to Paradise. He would not be allowed in Heaven. There would be no example for mankind. Scripture teaches there is no change of spiritual status after physical death, Luke 16:20ff.

What Did Jesus Mean?

So, what was Jesus communicating when he quoted Psalm 22:1? If he was not speaking of and for himself, for whom was he speaking?

The thought of being forsaken was the thought of many of his disciples. The Israelites of the First Century were looking for a Messiah who would restore the earthly kingdom of Israel. They thought he would be the earthly King of their restored primacy as God's people.

Even Jesus' apostles had trouble moving past this belief. When Jesus is arrested, only a couple of apostles follow him and the arresting mob to the Temple. Those standing around the cross do not understand what is happening.

The apostles are distraught after the crucifixion. They are in a state of despair. They wonder what will happen now that their Savior is dead.

On the cross, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 as a way of directing his followers to the entirety of the Psalm. The first verse of the Psalm is their belief regarding their hopelessness. But if they look at the rest of the Psalm they should realize that the crucifixion is the plan of God. They should read and understand that Jesus is dying for the true purpose of the Father.

There should be no lack of trust in God. He has always been faithful and trustworthy in his helping his people. God always delivers his people.

They should realize that they will be praising and glorifying God, Psalm 22:23.

They should realize that all the world will remember the crucifixion and turn to God, Psalm 22:27.

They should realize that indeed the kingdom is God's, Psalm 22:28. He is in charge and is the Governor. He has not turned his back on them nor forsaken them. Quite the opposite; he has answered their pleas, and fulfilled his promises.

Because of his salvation brought through Jesus, there will be a seed that will serve him, Psalm 22:30. That seed will come with the fulfilled promise of Joel 2 and Isaiah 2.

Conclusion

There are many theological difficulties and inconsistencies in ascribing to Jesus the thought that his Father has forsaken him.

But there is great impact in assigning the thought to those who were following and close to Jesus. Rather than a darkness in God's eyes, the crucifixion was the culmination of the Son pleasing the Father. Rather than a time of separation of the Godhead, it was the perfect example of their unity.

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SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP THROUGH CONFLICT

By Jamie Beller



One of the most challenging tasks that confront shepherds is conflict among the sheep. Whether the conflict is between sheep, or a sheep entangled in a conflict with a predator, such conflict can be detrimental to the sheep involved, as well as to the flock as a whole. Imagine, as a shepherd leads his sheep, he hears commotion among them. He investigates, and sees the commotion is a conflict among the sheep. Or, imagine a shepherd, leading his sheep, hearing commotion that causes his sheep to scatter, and he sees that this is caused by a predator, seeking to devour one of the sheep. What should shepherds do in these instances? What should shepherds do when they see their sheep in conflict, whether with each other, or with a predator?

While the aforementioned examples illustrate the challenges of shepherding sheep through conflict in the physical sense, there are certainly similarities that exist with shepherding in the church. Just as there is conflict among the sheep in the physical sense, there is often conflict among the sheep in the spiritual sense. Sadly, one of the most neglected areas of shepherding is knowing how to shepherd the sheep through conflict. It may be that this area of shepherding is neglected due to ignorance. Perhaps it may be neglected because of indifference, thinking ‘we have a better way to settle conflict’ (a way that may seem better does not necessarily mean it is scriptural). Whatever the cause for neglect may be, there is too much at stake to be negligent in shepherding the sheep through conflict.

We must understand that conflict among the sheep can be much like cancer to the body; if left unresolved, it can spread quickly and be deadly. Thus, shepherding the sheep through conflict requires shepherding (1) Scripturally, (2) Swiftly, and (3) Sincerely. Sadly, conflicts among the sheep are

“swept under the rug” rather than being resolved, and as a result, the conflict becomes like a boil that festers and festers until it eventually bursts. Just as there was conflict among God’s people in the days of old, so there will be conflict among God’s people today. Thankfully, Christ provided a way by which conflict among sheep can and must be resolved. When conflict among the sheep exists, shepherds and sheep of the flock must be peacemakers.

The purpose of this writing is to ascertain from Scripture the role and responsibility of shepherds shepherding the sheep through conflict. For the purposes of this writing, the term ‘conflict’ will have reference to disagreements that are divisive and detrimental to the relationship and fellowship among sheep, as well as their relationship and fellowship with the Chief Shepherd. This writing shall approach the subject with consideration of (1) The Reason for Conflict, (2) The Recognition of Conflict, (3) The Response to Conflict, and (4) The Resolution to Conflict.

THE REASON FOR CONFLICT

Whether conflict is with the world, or among sheep, there are a variety of reasons as to why conflict happens. A casual observation of First Corinthians indicates some of the reasons for the existence of conflict among the brethren in the church at Corinth. Consider not only the cause to the various conflicts, but also Paul’s resolution to those conflicts:

- Personalities — **The Reason for Conflict**, “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos;

and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” (1 Cor. 1:11-12).⁴

- **The Resolution to Conflict:** “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). When conflict is over personalities, the resolution to such conflict requires us to understand that it was Christ who was crucified for us; it was by the authority of Christ that we were baptized. As a result, it is Christ whom we should follow, and of whom we shall be.
- **Pride — The Reason for Conflict,** “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up (proud), and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).
- **The Resolution to Conflict:** “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit (soul) may be saved (be brought to repentance, JGB) in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

While there are other examples in First Corinthians that set forth reasons for the conflict within the church at Corinth, the resolution to the conflict always began with Paul appealing to the Lord and His authority. When conflict involves the congregation, shepherds must first appeal to the Scripture in resolving such conflict. Though the conflicts within the church at Corinth seem to have involved the entire congregation, the reasons for conflict are generally the same whether the conflict involves an entire congregation, or if it is a conflict among two brethren.

In the context of addressing forgiveness, Jesus declares,

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall

hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican (Matthew 18:15-18).

Though Jesus is addressing a personal conflict wherein one brother has trespassed (sinned) against another brother, there is no prohibition to go to a brother, who trespasses publicly, in a private manner. As it relates to the conflict being between two brethren, it must be understood that the admonition toward the brother who has sinned, is not to humiliate them, but rather to “gain thy brother” (be reconciled with them, Matthew 5:22-23).

While a great deal more can be said about the text, the remainder of this work is concerned with *Shepherding the Sheep through Conflict* when conflict is among brethren.

THE RECOGNITION OF CONFLICT

While it is hoped that conflict among brethren does not reach the point of having to involve others, far too often one or both involved in the conflict involve others before ever seeking to resolve the conflict between themselves. When such occurs, both individuals need to be rebuked and called to repent. Shepherds, sometimes you may be asked to get involved in a conflict before you ought. When one or both individuals seek to involve you in their conflict, remind them of what the Lord’s instructions are concerning conflict between brethren. Remind them that the Lord said, “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). Sheep and shepherds alike, if it is a sin for the individuals involved in conflict to involve others without first having sought to be reconciled, would it not also be a sin for you to involve yourself before you ought to be involved? Sheep and shepherds alike, the recognition of conflict also means recognizing that it was a definite sin that is the reason for the conflict. Brother H. Leo Boles notes:

“It must be a definite sin, and not an imaginary wrong or grievance that comes under the teachings of Jesus

⁴ All Scripture references are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

here. Oftentimes members of the body of Christ imagine that they have been sinned against when, in reality, no sin has been committed against them.”⁵

Shepherding the Sheep through Conflict means knowing the sheep well enough to be able to recognize when there is conflict among the sheep. How shepherds respond to the conflict that is among sheep is critical, and will either help or hinder reconciliation.

THE RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

In my experience, I have seen various responses to conflict among brethren. Unfortunately, one of the most common responses to conflict with another brother has been to “go and tell everyone else about the brother’s trespass in hopes that they will straighten him out.” Such a response is not only sinful, but makes the individual who responds in such a way, as well as those who listen, in need of repentance.

Another way in which individuals have responded to conflict with another brother, is to act as though a trespass never happened, though treating them as if it did through avoidance. Perhaps we take for granted what is lost in a conflict among brethren. If resolution to conflict means, “thou has gained thy brother,” what would it mean without resolution? Would it mean that without resolution, one is still separated from their brother?

Scripturally, Jesus teaches us that the response to conflict, when it is a personal conflict among brethren, is for brethren to talk to one another (Matt. 18:15). Brother Dan Winkler observes,

“The word he (Jesus) used for agree (Greek *sumphoneo*) is a compound of two Greek words: *sun*, ‘together,’ and *phoneo*, ‘to sound’ (we get our English *symphony* from this word). The idea is that of two people sounding out their differences.”⁶

⁵ Boles, H. Leo, *A Commentary on The Gospel According To Matthew* (Nashville, TN.: Gospel Advocate, Co., 1989), p. 375.

⁶ Winkler, Dan, *Forgiven, Forgiving, and Free* (Huntingdon, TN.: D&D Publishing, 2017), p. 55.

When conflict between brethren is of a private nature, the response of fellow sheep or shepherds must be one that encourages and exhorts them to talk *to* one another and not *about* one another. Though such an approach may seem like the shepherds are being indifferent, the response is one that encourages a Scriptural response toward resolution, and expects a Scriptural response to conflict.

Within Matthew 18:15-17, we read of the various responses to conflict. Concerning such, brother Winkler notes:

“Jesus tells us how to come together and discuss our past (Matthew 18:15-17). First, we are to start by talking to the person that hurt us. Second, if that doesn’t work, we are to take someone with us and try to talk with them again. Next, if that doesn’t work, we are to solicit help of the church. Then, if that doesn’t work, we are to walk away from our relationship with the offender.”⁷

Shepherds and sheep alike, please understand that the goal with each step in the process is resolution of the conflict and reconciliation of the offender. If the conflict between brethren reaches the point at which it warrants the church being involved, serious consideration much be given to disciplining the unrepentant. As brother Kyle Butt so rightly observed:

“If the influence of the congregation remains ineffective in eliciting the repentance of the wayward, he should be disciplined.”⁸

Whether we are shepherds or sheep, our response to conflict must have resolution and reconciliation as its ultimate goal. How we respond to conflict will not only speak volumes about our attitude to the conflict, it will also speak volumes about our ambition concerning the conflict. Finally, our response to conflict will either help those involved seek Scriptural resolution and reconciliation, or it will hinder them from achieving Scriptural resolution and reconciliation.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁸ Butt, Kyle, *That Their Souls Might Be Saved* (Montgomery, AL.: Peaceful House Publishing, 2008), p. 121.

THE RESOLUTION TO CONFLICT

When is a conflict among brethren resolved? Is it resolved at the point at which the conflict is known by others? Is conflict among brethren resolved at the point as which brethren avoid one another? Is conflict resolved when those involved pretend as though there is no conflict? Or, is the conflict resolved merely because time has passed since the conflict existed? Unfortunately, many of these are often perceived as the resolutions to conflict, but are, in reality, indications of unresolved conflict. While unresolved conflict may seem to be appropriate, the danger of it is that the relationship between brethren, and perhaps their relationship with God, remains broken, and the essentiality of repentance and reconciliation with one another and God remains.

With regard to the resolution of conflict, the text indicates three imperative components. First, there is the process toward the resolution to conflict. Jesus states, “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). Again, the process toward resolution is to tell the offender of their fault between thee and them alone. Winkler notes:

“We are to talk with each other, not about each other if want to be forgiving (forgiving the offender must be the aim of the one offended, JGB). When we do this, four words need to serve as guideposts: *Hear, Honest, Humble, and Helpful.*”⁹

Next, imperative to the resolution of conflict is the pursuit to resolution. The pursuit to resolution is something that is required of both the offender and the offended. Concerning the offended, Jesus reminds us, “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). On the part of the offender, Jesus declared, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23-24). Biblical resolution to conflict among brethren requires that both involved in the conflict are pursuing resolution, not standing by waiting for the other to pursue it.

Finally, imperative to the resolution of conflict is the purpose for resolution. Jesus declares, “...if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matt. 18:15). The purpose of both individuals going to one another is to be for the purpose of being reconciled (Matt. 5:24), or gaining thy brother (Matt. 18:15).

CONCLUSION

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes:

“Nothing is so cruel as the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin.”¹⁰

Shepherding the sheep through conflict may very well be one of the most difficult tasks of shepherding as it may mean the extent of the shepherds’ involvement is encouraging and exhorting those in conflict to resolve such conflict Scripturally. It may very well mean that the involvement of shepherds indicates that the conflict has reached a point at which it becomes a threat to the congregation, and as a threat to the congregation, if unresolved, this conflict can lead to division within the congregation. Sadly, shepherding the sheep through conflict may be among the most difficult tasks of shepherding, in that unresolved conflict can ultimately result in having to “withdraw from the unrepentant. Even if the conflict among sheep reaches this point, the goal is to ultimately bring about reconciliation, lest the one from whom fellowship had to be withdraw be eternally lost.

Shepherding The Sheep Through Conflict requires seeking Scriptural resolution and reconciliation to the conflict. Regardless of whether the conflict is between two sheep, or if it involves the whole flock, shepherds must “take heed unto themselves, and unto all the flock” (Acts 20:28).

⁹ Winkler, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Harper & Row, 1954), p. 107.



By Dewayne Bryant, Ph.D.

Who was Jesus? For billions around the world, Jesus lived as a Jewish man in first century Judea. Preaching a message of hope about God's kingdom that the religious elite found subversive and dangerous, Jesus eventually suffered execution at the hands of the Roman authorities. His opponents soothed their consciences by telling themselves the deed served the good of the nation. No less a figure than Caiaphas himself unwittingly prophesied as much (John 11:49-52; 18:30).

Views of Jesus differ widely. Christians regard him as the Son of God. Muslims believe he was a prophet second only to Muhammad. Most other major religions recognize him as a prophet or teacher of righteousness. Modern scholars understand him to be a historical figure, regardless of their chosen religion or lack thereof. In total, the majority of earth's population sees Jesus as one of the most important people who has ever lived. Jesus' question "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" is just as relevant today as when he first uttered it almost two thousand years ago (Matthew 16:13).

Who is Jesus now? This question is deceptively complex. Ours is a culture in which beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, and individual truth reigns supreme. How someone views Jesus often depends

upon that person's felt needs. Christians recognize Jesus as the living Lord in the present tense (Philippians 2:11), but others see him as something else. For some, he serves as a good teacher who informs their moral choices and helps them to become a better person. For others, he is their escape hatch from perdition. For others still, he is an irrelevant artifact from an ancient faith who deserves no place in the modern world.

The Plagiarized Pagan God

A popular charge made by critics today is that Jesus was not a historical person, but rather an invention of the early church. Drawing upon the examples of dying-and-rising gods in other religions, the first believers supposedly created Jesus by modeling him on these other figures. As explained, Jesus is nothing more than fictional creation based on mythological precedents. Although this position may be popular with the militant fringe of atheism, there is no real truth to find in this claim.

The alleged parallels between Christ and mythological saviors evaporate upon close inspection. It is important to note that these parallels exist only within the minds of those who refuse to subject both Christianity and ancient mythology to critical analysis. For instance, mythicists often claim that Jesus is just one of many crucified gods, yet they fail to cite any passages in my-



thology of other gods dying in this manner (there are none). Their omission is a tacit admission of falsifying the evidence.

Another problematic parallel is the claim that other gods resurrected from their tombs after three days. Some of the gods cited never die (e.g., Hermes, Horus, Mithras), making a resurrection impossible. Others die and never revive (e.g., Adonis, Attis). One dies but returns as a lord of the underworld (Osiris), meaning that he never truly returns to the land of the living. Clearly, mythicists devote little time or attention to examining the relevant texts. They cannot support the view that the early church created Jesus from mythological exemplars.

The Guru

Seeing Jesus as nothing more than a great teacher, wise man, or Jewish sage is a popular option. Some see him as an excellent moral example and an ethical person worthy of imitation but deny his divinity (and, therefore, his authority). Guru Jesus is little more than a spiritual chimera.

The very nature of Jesus' teachings indicates he was more than just a guru. We cannot consider this Jesus great because his teachings, if not true, are deceptive. C.S. Lewis once said,

I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left

that option open to us. He did not intend to.¹¹

Misunderstanding Jesus' nature is not a new phenomenon. Jesus' opponents failed to grasp his message (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8). His disciples wrestled with the issue, questioning the truth of Jesus' identity amongst themselves (Matthew 8:27). It should come as little surprise that moderns follow in the same footsteps. If Jesus is nothing more than a wise man or sage, then he is anything but good. He has duped hundreds of millions, making him the most successful charlatan who has ever lived.

The Liberal Activist

Theological and religious liberals often lament the positions of political and social conservatives who identify as Christians. It isn't hard to find articles online with self-professing liberal authors expressing astonishment at how so many conservatives could be wrong. For instance, these authors deride the military because Jesus advocated radical pacifism. They press for universal healthcare because "he never charged a co-pay" for healing others. They argue that Jesus must have been an environmentalist because he frequently went to pray in mountains and gardens.

The Liberal Activist Jesus serves as an example of poor theology based on felt needs. Those who appropriate Jesus and use him as a tool to affirm their social agenda (which may be overly conservative, as well as too liberal) use him as a mouthpiece for their own beliefs. Only someone stupendously uninformed could miss the fact that Jesus championed the value and dignity of women. But to say that Jesus was a feminist in the modern sense of the word is to display an equally lamentable level of ignorance of the Bible. The same holds true for other opinions such as health care, environmentalism, and social justice.

The same may be said of Jesus' view of homosexuality. Same-sex marriage advocates argue that Jesus never condemned homosexuality, yet fail to consider that homosexuality was so foreign — and the Mosaic law so explicit regarding its illegality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13) — Jesus should not have had to say anything about it. The apostle Paul does, however (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper Collins: 1952) 52-53.

Timothy 1:8-10). Although brief, Paul's references give an indication of the typical Jewish (not to mention biblical) response to homosexuality, which Christ himself shared.

Others want to prop up Jesus as a socialist or communist. In doing so, they project their views on Christ and read his teachings — as well as others of the New Testament (cf. Acts 2:44; 4:32) — as an endorsement of their political viewpoint. They use him as an authority figure for their own beliefs, without adequately examining the text to see what Jesus himself taught. Unfortunately, these attempts to hijack Jesus for a liberal agenda are not new, nor will they go away anytime soon.

The Money Man

One of the most bizarre readings of the Bible is one that paints Jesus as a wealthy man. “Prosperity gospel” preachers argue that the picture of Jesus as a poor, itinerant Jewish rabbi widely miss the mark. Instead, they claim Jesus wants his followers to enjoy worldly prosperity. False teachers twist and torture the biblical text to manufacture a Jesus who received lucrative gifts and traveled in luxury. His design for humanity, they claim, is for believers to follow in the footsteps of the wealthiest heroes of Scripture (e.g., Abraham and the patriarchs). In reality, Jesus' message contradicts the teachings of prosperity preachers.

The prosperity gospel — preached by such figures as the late Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, and the appropriately-named Creflo Dollar preach a message of health and wealth, missing the fact that Jesus came to minister to the poor. Luke has Jesus' treatment of the disadvantaged and downtrodden as a major feature of his Gospel. He claims that he has nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:58) and warns that a person cannot serve wealth if he is to serve God (Luke 16:13). The Synoptic Gospels all depict Jesus telling the rich young ruler to sell his belongings if he wants to become a disciple

(Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-23).

Elsewhere, Jesus claims that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter eternal life (Matthew 19:24). Although he was using a bit of hyperbole to make his point — the “Needle's Eye Gate” was a later fiction created after New Testament times¹² — he made his position clear: great wealth has the potential to pose an insurmountable obstacle to those caught in its grasp (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:8-10; cf. Proverbs 11:28).

Who is This Lord of Glory?

False portrayals begin with two problems. First, every invented Jesus looks positively human, complete with all of our foibles and failures. They have limits, poor personal qualities, and vested interests in controlling worldly affairs.

The other problem is that the search for Jesus all too often begins by failing to account for our desires.

We want to be rich, so we create a Jesus who offers fabulous wealth to his followers. We want spiritual advice, so we rework Jesus into an advisor rather than an authority figure. We look for a supporting voice for our political and social agendas, and thus the activist Jesus is born. These defective lords do not emerge from pages of Scripture,

but from within the faulty desires of our own hearts.

None of the false portraits of Jesus can survive an application of the biblical text. Any close reading of Scripture exposes these false Christs as perversions and distortions. They are less grand, more self-ish, and less noble than everything we find in God's Word.

¹² Some have claimed that Jesus was speaking of an entrance into Jerusalem that was called “the Needle's Eye” which required someone to enter on foot, and a camel could only make it through with great difficulty. As stated in the article above, this “explanation” was something concocted many years after the New Testament was completed, as such a gate with such a name never existed in the first century.—Editor.



The New Perspective

By John Krivak

If they turn at all, the wheels of theology turn very slowly. Doctrinal systems have built-in resistance to change. First, the starting point is that what we now believe is true. Therefore, any proposed changes would take us from truth to worse. Second, any paradigm-shift to something discovered to be more true has the effect of laying waste to an esteemed legacy. To change, we have to admit that yesterday's heroes were flawed, imperfect, and yes — wrong. Third, introducing a new truth is messy business in any organized collection of people. At least some will probably view attempts at change to be subversive. For such reasons, the “new perspective on Paul” (NPP for short) required nearly five centuries to bring corrective to an error that flows through church history!

So what is the “new perspective”? Scot McKnight (in a YouTube video¹³) suggests that the NPP is actually a “new perspective on Judaism.” It seems we have inherited a flawed understanding of the inner spirituality of Jewish people. We have been told that Judaism is a “legalistic” religion that relies on law-keeping to earn a reward from God. This legalism leads to an attitude that denies the need for grace. Why ask God for a freebie when we have already earned our rights? But what if this characterization of Judaism is false? This is the essential claim of the NPP.

So what is the big deal?

Well, it means that we must re-configure our thinking. Protestant evangelicalism has so dominated Christian thought since the 1500's that, to a significant extent, even the American Restoration Movement has come under its influence. The long shadow of Martin Luther has taken in our churches of Christ! Significantly, we have escaped this gravitational pull in one key doctrine: baptism. And we have paid dearly for it, because that distinc-

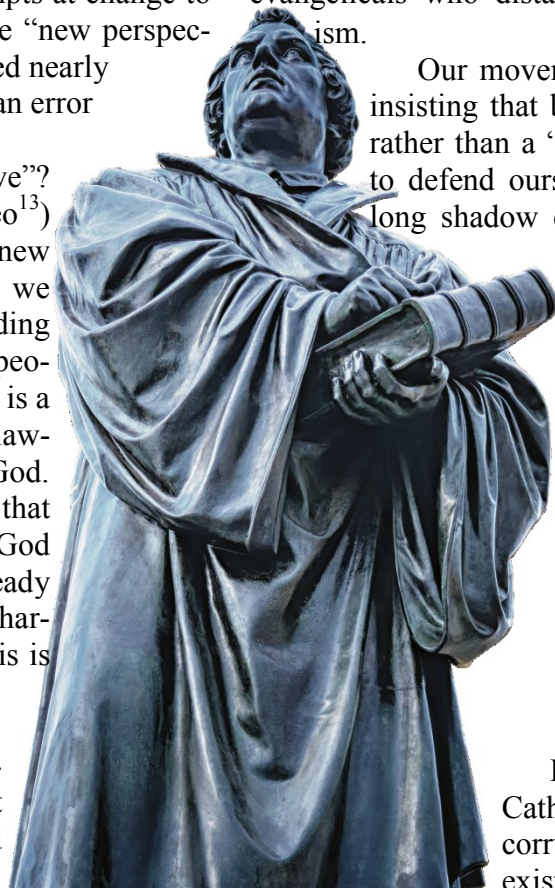
tion has led evangelicals to label us as “legalists”! We have been made to wear the stigma of self-righteousness just like Judaism. The NPP will insist that the characterization is actually slander, both as it applies to Judaism and to those of us who believe that one must be baptized in order to be saved.

At the heart of every **argument against** baptismal-conversion, or of every **argument for** “salvation by faith alone” (*sola fide*), is the assumption that legalistic self-righteousness is the grandest impediment to salvation in Christ. And yes—it is not just evangelicals who distance themselves from legalism.

Our movement often defends itself by insisting that baptism is a “work of faith” rather than a “legalistic work.” This effort to defend ourselves demonstrates that the long shadow of Martin Luther has fallen over us as well. The NPP insists that our defense is not even necessary because the charge against us has, at long last, been discovered to be based on a mistake. The NPP reveals the big mistake. And by doing so, it chops the ground out from those Protestants who oppose baptism for the remission of sins!

Martin Luther

Luther rose to fame as a Catholic monk who opposed corruption in Catholicism as it existed around 1500 AD. Luther struggled over sin-guilt within a sensitive conscience. The remedy being offered by his church was supply from a “treasury of merits” that had accumulated from Jesus, the Apostles, and Saints of all ages. Catholicism claimed authority from God to dispense such merit against any “demerit” of sin. The offer was made to those who performed religious deeds — acts of worship, pilgrimage to holy



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZawaneKE5w&t=496s>

sites, becoming a monk or nun, etc. The worst Catholic practice was selling “indulgences.” For a sum of money, the Church would apply merit to the accounts of deceased loved ones who were thought to be caught between Heaven and Hell in the region called Purgatory or Limbo. Or, one could purchase an indulgence and apply it against a future sin! One huckster named Tetzels used a marketing jingle: “*When the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from Purgatory springs!*” (the rhyme also works in German). Thus, for money one could tip the scales of God’s judgment. The whole system was built on human effort, religious performance, and yes—legalistic self-righteousness!

This obviously corrupt approach to Christian spirituality is crippling. As Luther tried Catholic remedies for his troubled conscience, he felt worse rather than better. Legalism was like a treadmill. Any confidence gained left one only with the haunting suspicion that maybe, just maybe, there was some further required effort to gain true and absolute security before God. The security it offered was only an illusion at the end of unceasing effort and striving. In desperation, Luther turned to the writings of Paul. Amazingly, Paul not only understood the folly of “salvation by works,” he knew of an alternative — grace through faith! With this discovery, the Protestant Reformation was born.

But Luther made a critical mistake that would leave its impact on church history for centuries to come. Luther, in reading Paul, thought that the apostle stood in opposition to precisely the sort of corruption that existed in the medieval Catholic Church! Luther thought that Paul also understood “works” as human efforts to earn salvation. And that meant that the enemies that Paul battled against must be of the same ilk as the opponents of Luther! In short, there seemed to be a “this-is-that equivalence” between Paul’s Jews and Luther’s Catholics. Both were self-righteous legalists.

E.P. Sanders

Sanders is famous for his 1977 book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. His aim in writing was to document from ancient Jewish writings the “legalism” that had confidently been assumed for centuries to lie at the heart of Jewish religion. His search came up empty! To the contrary, Sanders’ research showed that the Judaism at the time of Jesus and

Paul¹⁴ (called Second Temple Judaism) was actually a grace-based system. Salvation was not earned by “works”; God — by His grace — entered the Jews into a saving covenant-relationship. Then, those inside the saving sanctuary of the Covenant performed “works” to maintain this status. These “works” were not simply good works (positive moral achievements), or works of merit, or legalistic works. They were “works of the Law” — efforts at keeping God’s requirements as set forth by the legislation of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses.

The scholarly world was stunned (and remains so until the present day). Yes, there had been previous objectors against a legalistic portrayal of Judaism, such as George Foot Moore (1851-1931). Moore knew enough of the inner workings of Judaism to see that common portrayals in Protestantism were but a caricature. But he was seen as one of those oddballs outside of solid scholarly consensus. He, and a few other dissenters, were dismissed and ignored. E.P. Sanders, however, could not be set aside. His research left some gaps, Jewish writings that were somehow neglected. But the subsequent research, by other scholars, of the overlooked literature has largely supported Sanders’ findings. While it must be admitted that occasional evidence exists for Jewish legalism¹⁵, those rare examples are an anomaly that differs from the larger system of Judaism. Or, examples that merely “sound like” legalism (2 Baruch 14:12) are often misconstrued and can be better understood non-legalistically. Jesus encouraged good works as a means of storing up treasure in Heaven (Matt. 6:20), but He was no legalist! The credibility of the NPP stands or falls with the correction that replaces legalism with grace in the heart of Judaism.

Luther (along with many under his shadow) sees the Jewish opponents of Paul as prototypes of later Catholic corruption. If this is a big mistake as the NPP claims, then who were the opponents of Paul and what did they actually mean by “works”?

¹⁴ The literature reviewed by Sanders apparently included writings from somewhat later because they contain traditions that probably pertained in the earlier time that was the target of investigation.

¹⁵ Paul Pollard cites apocryphal Tobit 4:8-11 and 4 Ezra 6:5, *Romans: An Exegetical Study*, Eddie Cloer, ed., *Truth for Today Commentary* series (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2018), p. 80.

The Judaizers

Paul was the apostle most responsible for bringing Gentiles into Christian fellowship (Romans 11:13; Gal. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 2:7). Before this, only Jews were included and they strongly demanded that Gentiles seeking to enter the church should first be brought under the Law of the Old Covenant. We call those who believed this “Judaizers.” Against them, Paul insisted that Gentiles could enter straight into New Covenant salvation with God through the crucified Messiah without performing any “works of the Law.”

In short, the question driving the Judaizers was not, “*How can the Gentiles achieve legalistic security by earning their own reward?*” The question was about covenant! Paul said the New Covenant through Jesus was sufficient. The Judaizers saw Old Covenant compliance as a prerequisite to entering the New.¹⁶ ***Gentiles should not be forced to comply with the Law since they were never under the Old Covenant*** — and to require this implies that what Jesus did on the Cross was somehow deficient! None of this contention, however, had anything to do with any attempt at legalistic self-righteousness.

What then about “works”? Frequently Paul more frequently denotes “works of the Law” (Rom. 3:20, 27, 28; Gal. 2:16, 3:2, 5,10) — not works of merit, but Old Covenant requirements spelled out in the Torah, the Law of Moses. And what was their importance? A few centuries before Jesus and Paul, the Greek triumph of Alexander the Great led to the attempted Hellenization of all conquered nations around the Mediterranean. This aimed at homogenizing the various subcultures in law, language, and religion. Of course, Judaism resisted. To maintain distinctive Jewish identity, certain acts of obedience to Torah were emphasized: ***circumcision, kosher foods, and the keeping of Sabbath***. We can only imagine the importance of such “works” if we remember that Judaism survived terrible pressure to conform. The conflict generated both despised traitors and revered martyrs, who died rather than Hellenize. The “works” — circumcision, kosher, and

Sabbath — functioned as sociological badges or identifiers that distinguished “one of us” from all others (cf. the way beards and distinctive dress function in Amish culture). The Jews who came to Jesus in faith, understandably held to these traditions and Gentiles seeking conversion faced the same expectations. The NT discussions about “works,” therefore, typically arise in conflicts over circumcision, or over what foods can be eaten (and, with whom). The issue is always covenant — which covenant? — not legalism.

Baptism: “test case” for the NPP

Baptism was the hindrance preventing thorough and lasting unity between the early Restorationists (such as Stone, O’Kelley, the Campbells, etc.) and all the denominations representing “frontier Calvinism.” The same dividing-wall remains to this day. And the key driver to conflict over baptism is the OPP, the “old perspective on Paul”! Some refer to it as the Lutheran perspective. Logically, the NPP should erode the barrier until it is gone and nothing remains to hinder the Restoration dream of uniting a truly un-denominated Christian fellowship! We may be living in the days of fulfillment. As always, the “test case” will be baptism when all objections against it dissolve.

There may be 1,001 arguments against baptism’s role in salvation, but each one is energized when baptism is characterized as a “works salvation.” The most common of these arguments is based on the “thief on the cross,” and even he would not be called forth if the denominations were to abandon the “old perspective.”

If you don’t believe me, Google something. It was not only Alexander Campbell who held to a “salvific” role for baptism; there are quotes from both Martin Luther and John Calvin that fully accept baptism for remission of sins! Google search their names and baptism, and see for yourself! The two of them, compared to later Lutherans and Calvinists, sound like Campbellites!¹⁷ But follow history to the time of Campbell and something strange has come about. Although Campbell was on the same page with the two great Reformers on the meaning and purpose of baptism, Campbell draws ire and spite from his contemporary sons of the Protestant

¹⁶ This differentiated covenantal approach finds support in Alexander Campbell’s famous “Sermon on the Law.” However, noteworthy proponents of the NPP, such as James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright, seem to take an undifferentiated approach to the Old and New Covenants. This demonstrates that, properly speaking, there is actually a variety of “new perspectives” that are somewhat related, rather than a single NPP.

¹⁷ Of course, this would be anachronistic. Luther and Calvin lived three centuries earlier than Alexander Campbell!

Reformation three centuries later. In other words, Protestant views had changed to the point that modern evangelicals are frankly embarrassed at what Luther and Calvin said about baptism!

I am not a student of Protestant doctrinal history, but obviously their views underwent what I call a “hardening.” The fear of “salvation by works” (as the “old perspective” understood it) led to the absolute denial that a convert could make any effort, however slight, towards his own conversion and salvation. This was thought to be an affront against God, who was absolutely the sole Sovereign. Salvation was now seen as a sort of tug-o-war: God had to do all the work, because if a human tried to help or cooperate, well — he was obviously a legalist trying to work his way to Heaven! ***The result of this hardened perspective was the demand for a totally passive convert.*** This new Christian could do nothing more than believe the gospel (and credit for even this had to be given to the prevenient “quickening” by the Holy Ghost!¹⁸).

So for those who embraced this “old perspective,” any Campbellite preaching baptism for remitting sins had to be viewed as an outright heretic who must be fought tooth and nail! In contrast to “passive convert Protestantism” we accepted the Bible expectation for active converts. After all, Christianity is a relationship and salvation is a function of relationship — and any relationship requires two active partners who “work” for relational success. The Bible gives “covenant” as the form of this relationship — the “New” covenant.

I offered this Restorationist perspective on the NPP on *The Paul Page* website¹⁹, and concluded my remarks with this challenge:

¹⁸ Protestant thinking reversed the NT linkage that expected baptism first as prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8 and parallels; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38, 19:1-7, 1 Cor. 12:13; Titus 3:5). Protestants expected the “prevenient” Spirit to come first to initiate conversion of those chosen by God by causing faith to be generated. Protestants then understood salvation to be achieved at the instant of faith (quick—before any work of merit could be performed!) and “baptism” followed, stripped of all NT meaning. The entire corruption of this sequence owes itself to the Lutheran aversion to “legalistic works” that necessitate a passive convert.

¹⁹ John Krivak, “An Offstage Perspective on the NPP,” *The Paul Page*, <http://www.thepaulpage.com/new-perspective/around-the-web/articles-on-the-new-perspective/>, link added 10-26-2011.

It seems to me that baptism, ever the sticking point between us until now, offers a real test case for the NPP. The redefinition of “works salvation” from a Lutheran perspective to an authentically Pauline perspective obviates this. If we need no longer fear that our relational activity with God presents an affront to His sovereignty, is there any more hindrance to allowing the meanings for baptism that are presented even in a surface reading of the texts? Along with the leading Reformers of centuries ago, more than a few evangelical scholars have advocated a salvific role for baptism. The grounds for the primary objection have been removed.

From a Restorationist perspective, we have for long stretches of time endured charges against us, charges of legalism, self-righteousness, and merit-theology simply for insisting that converts be active in the salvation process. Harkening to the NPP, I now simply ask for those charges to be dropped.



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Why I Left Islam

By Emmanuel Essoun

While I was working in a Muslim mosque as an imam, as a parish priest, I preached in my parish that Jesus Christ is not God. For me, God was only Allah, and I believed Allah never got married, so no sons for Allah. So I preached there that Jesus is not God. Then somebody from the crowd asked me, “Who is Jesus?” Maybe a Muslim, but he asked me, “Who is Jesus?” I was preaching who he is not, but the question was who is he?

To know who is Jesus, I read the entire Koran once again: 114 chapters, 6666 verses in the Koran. When I read it, I found the name of prophet Muhammad in four places, but the name of Jesus I found in 25 places. There itself, I was a little confused. Why does the Koran give more preference to Jesus?

And second thing, I could not see any woman’s name in Koran: the Prophet Muhammad’s mother’s name, or wife’s name? No. In the Koran, there is only one woman’s name that I found: Mariam (or Mary), the mother of Jesus—no other woman’s name. And in the Koran chapter 3, the name of the chapter is “family of Mariam,” and Koran chapter 19, the name of the chapter itself is “MARIAM.” So I was very curious to know why does the Koran say all these things about MARIAM. Koran chapter 3, verse 34 onwards says that Mary was born without original sin, she never committed any sin in her life, she was ever virgin. Koran chapter 50 verse 23 say that she went to heaven with her physical body. Even the assumption is written in the Koran.

And then about Jesus. When I read chapter 3 verses 45 to 55, there are 10 points which the Koran makes about Jesus. The first thing Koran says is *kalimatulli*, the Arabic word which means “the of God.” Second thing is *ahimokuli* which means spirit of God. Third, *isa masi*, which means Jesus Christ. So Koran gives the name for Jesus WORD OF GOD, SPIRIT OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST.

And then Koran says that Jesus spoke when he was very small, like 2 days old. After his birth he



began to speak. Koran says that Jesus created a live bird with mud. He took some mud, he formed a bird; when breathed into it, it became a live bird. So I think Jesus can give life because he gave life to mud, clay, and then Koran says that Jesus cured a man born blind and a man with leprosy, etc.

Curiously, the Koran says that Jesus gave life to dead people; that Jesus went to heaven; that he is still alive and he will come again.

When I saw all these things in the Koran I thought of what the Koran says about Muhammad. According to the Koran, prophet Muhammad is not the word of God, not spirit of God, he never spoke when he was 2 days old, he never created any bird with mud, he never cured any sick people, he never raised any dead people, he himself died, and according to Islam he is not alive and he will not come back. So there is a lot of difference between these two prophets.

I didn’t call Jesus “God.” You know, my idea was “He is a prophet but he is a prophet greater than Muhammad.” So one day I went to my teacher, the one who taught me 10 years in Arabic college, and I asked him, “Teacher, how did God created the universe?” Then he said, “God created the universe through the word,” THROUGH THE WORD. Then my question: “Is the WORD the creator or the creation?” He must clear this, my question of whether the WORD of God is creator or creation. Koran says Jesus is WORD of God. If my teacher says word of God is creator, which means Jesus is the creator, then Muslims must become Christians. Suppose if he says the word is the creation he will be trapped. You know why? He said everything was created

through the word. Suppose if he said the word is creation, then how did God create the word?

He could not say that the word is the creator, or the creation, so he was quite angry. He pushed me out of his room and said, “The word is not God, not creator or the creation. You get out of here!”

The reason why Muslims don’t accept to be Christian is because they are blinded with the wrong teaching of their priest, Imam. They said that the word is creation; they try to prove it wrongly. They say the word is not creator, not the creation, but not God. And no creation also. They don’t see that the Word is equal with God; that is their whole problem.

I replied to my teacher, “The Word is not the creator or the creation? So, that is why Christian says the word is son of God?” Then he told me if there is son for God, I must show him the wife of God. That without wife there is no chance of having a son. Then I showed him a portion from the Koran. Quran says that God can see without eyes, God can talk without tongue, God can hear without ears. It is writing in the Koran. I said if that is the case, so God can have a child without a wife.

I took my Koran, I put it on my chest, and I said “Allah, tell me what I should do, because your Koran says Jesus is still alive, and Mohammad is no more. Tell me whom should I accept.” After my prayer I opened the Koran. When I opened Koran, I saw chapter 10 verse 94. You know what Koran says? It says if you have any doubt in this Koran which I give to you, go and read the Bible, or ask the people, those who read the Bible.

I beg all Muslim to give their life to Christ because he is the only way to the kingdom of God. Please don’t perish like other Muslims that are serving the god they do not know.

Mohammed wrote Quran by mixing his doctrine with the history of all the prophets of God from the Bible so that he can try to be equal with them—that is why he told Islam worshipers in Quran 10 vs 94 that if you have any doubt in this Quran they should go and read the Bible or ask anybody who read Bible.

Please don’t be ignorant of Muhammad’s deception and his idolatry practice. May God bless you.

A Brief Thought on ‘Sola Scriptura’

By Isaiah Caesar Bie

The Reformers applied sola scriptura to worship in a tenet they called the Regulative Principle. John Calvin was one of the first to articulate it succinctly:

“We may not adopt any device [in our worship] which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of Him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have Him approve our worship, this rule, which He everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. ... God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.” (John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* [Dallas: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995 reprint], 17-18.)

Calvin supported that principle with a number of biblical texts, including 1 Samuel 15:22: “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” And Matthew 15:9: “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

Now what the Reformers named as the Regulative Principle in worship is what churches of Christ actually are saying when they plead, “Speak where the Bible speak, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.”

Or as the nineteenth-century Scottish church historian William Cunningham put it: “It is unwarrantable and unlawful to introduce into the government and worship of the church anything which has not the positive sanction of Scripture.” (The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989 reprint], 27.)

No wonder, then, why Calvin and most of the early Reformers, as well as the Puritans, gave up the use of mechanical instruments of music in the church (along with priestly vestments, prayer beads, and other remnants of medieval Roman Catholic worship).

Protestant denominations today would do well to recover their spiritual ancestors’ confidence in sola Scriptura as it applies to worship and church leadership.

PHILIP

By Bradley S. Cobb

Philip the Disciple

Like Andrew, Philip is known by a Greek name, which means “Lover of Horses.”²⁰ Philip was a Jew,²¹ a native of the fishing village of Bethsaida like Andrew and Peter,²² which possibly means that these men were already acquainted with each other before they were called. He was one of the earliest disciples of Jesus, joining the band of followers just one day after Andrew and Peter.²³

That day, Jesus planned to go to Galilee, and He searched for Philip. The Greek word used by John

(from which we get our word *eureka*!) indicates that Jesus found him after searching for him.²⁴ When He found Philip, He said, “follow me.”²⁵ What kind of a man must Philip have been that Jesus would actively search him out to be one of His disciples! Since Philip was from the same city as Andrew and Peter, it’s quite possible that they were the ones who suggested that Jesus find him.²⁶ Given the quickness with which Philip followed Jesus, and the fact that he knew where He was from and who His earthly father was, it is possible that Philip already knew Jesus, or at least *knew of Him*.²⁷

Philip’s immediate response was two-fold. *First*, he accepted the call to be one of Jesus’ disciples. *Second*, he searched out his friend Nathanael²⁸ and told Him they had found “Him, of whom Moses in

²⁰ Philip was a common name both then and now. The popularity of the name likely originated with Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. As Alexander conquered cities and areas, new names were occasionally given, which led to the city called “Philippi” (in Macedonia), the city of Caesarea Philippi, etc. There were three men mentioned in the Bible who had this name: (1) Herod’s brother, whose wife had been stolen from him by Herod (Matthew 14:3-4); (2) Philip the evangelist, “one of the seven” who was chosen to assist the widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6; 8:5-40; 21:8), and (3) Philip the apostle, one of “the twelve” chosen by Jesus (Luke 6:13-16). As such, it is unlikely that we can gain any insight into the character of Philip or his family through the name he was given.

²¹ James Hastings, in his *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, states that Bethsaida had a mixed Greek population, and suggests that this is possibly Andrew’s background. While possible, such a background would almost certainly have been used as a reason by the Jews to reject the apostles, having a “half-breed” in their midst. Since there is no hint of such an objection, this theory is highly unlikely.

²² John 1:44. As seen in our article on Andrew in the last issue, this verse does not necessarily mean that he *still* lived in Bethsaida, but that it is where he originally came from. Andrew, according to Mark, lived in Capernaum with Peter, though John said they were from Bethsaida.

²³ John 1:40-43, especially verse 43. It seems probable that John, the son of Zebedee, was also called to follow Jesus the day before the Lord called Philip. See John 1:35-40, and remember that John never mentions himself by name in his gospel account; the unnamed disciple may be the author himself.

²⁴ Ευρισκει. See Thayer’s definition.

²⁵ John 1:43. Vincent’s *Word Studies* points out that this word is often used when Jesus was calling disciples after Him.

²⁶ A.T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures*, makes this suggestion. Herbert Lockyer, in his *All the Apostles of the Bible*, boldly jumps from suggestion to an all-out declaration, embellishing the gospel narrative by saying that Philip “owed his soul to Andrew...his father in the faith” (page 155).

²⁷ It is not outside of the realm of possibility that these two religiously-minded men (Jesus and Philip), both growing up in Galilee, would have met each other. If this is the case, then Philip would have known the impeccable character that Jesus had. It is also possible that Philip’s quick acceptance of Jesus as the promised Messiah had to do with Jesus’ choice of words (saying “follow me” as a disciple) and the presence of Peter and Andrew, whom he apparently already knew well, saying they had already become His disciples. If Philip was at all aware of the teachings of John the Baptizer, he would have been looking for the “greater” One that would come; and when Jesus called him to follow, he knew he’d found the One.

²⁸ Lockyer, in *All the Apostles of the Bible*, states that “There are those expositors who suggest that Philip and Nathanael, or Bartholomew, were brothers” (page 156), though he does not state who.

the Law and the Prophets did write.”²⁹ This shows that Philip had a very high regard for the inspired word of God, and that he was awaiting the advent of the Prophet like Moses.³⁰ After Nathanael expressed doubt because of Jesus’ hometown (“can anything good come out of Nazareth?”), Philip encouraged him to “come and see” for himself, showing that Philip had confidence in who Jesus was.³¹ Philip then led Nathanael to Jesus, where the Lord convinced the doubter with His greeting.³²

The day after he was called by Jesus, Philip accompanied Him to the wedding feast in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine, increasing his faith in Jesus as the Messiah.³³ Afterwards, Philip accompanied Jesus into Jerusalem, where the Lord overturned the tables in the temple, sending animals and greedy money-exchangers running.³⁴ Philip watched in awe as Jesus performed miracles on the Passover in Jerusalem.³⁵ Some time afterwards, they went out of Jerusalem, and Philip began to baptize many.³⁶

After returning with Jesus to Galilee, Philip apparently resumed his regular occupation while the Lord traveled around the area, preaching.³⁷ But after Jesus returned to Capernaum, calling Andrew, Peter, James, and John, Philip must have re-joined Him, for it is thereafter that Jesus and “His disciples” ate with a tax collector named Levi, causing consternation among the Pharisees and scribes.³⁸ Some time later, Philip and the other disciples walked with Jesus through some fields, picked some wheat, and ate

some of it — all on the Sabbath — again causing the Pharisees to be very upset.³⁹

Philip the Apostle

One night, the Lord spent hours alone with the Father in prayer; and afterwards, He called His disciples to Him. From among those disciples, He selected twelve men to be His apostles. Philip was certainly humbled and excited as he was selected to this important position.⁴⁰

Following Jesus next to the Sea of Galilee shortly before the Passover feast, Philip looked around at a crowd of thousands who were gathering around. Then Jesus looked at Philip and asked him a question in order to test him. “Where shall we buy bread so that these people may eat?” Philip, taking the Lord literally, answered, “Two hundred denarii of bread⁴¹ is not enough for them, that every one of them might take a little.”⁴² Philip trusted in his Lord, but didn’t realize that Jesus was testing his level of confidence in just how much power Jesus truly had. When Jesus asked “Where will we buy bread,” Philip’s response was basically, “Forget about where to buy the *bread*, where are we supposed to come up with that much *money*?” Andrew as well, bringing a boy with a very small amount of food, showed a similar lack of awareness of Jesus’ immense power.

About a year later, just days before Jesus died, a group of Greeks approached Philip, and said, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” Why they came to Philip instead of one of the other apostles is a matter of

²⁹ John 1:45. John uses the same word for Philip’s “finding” of Nathanael as he does for Jesus’ “finding” of Philip.

³⁰ Deuteronomy 18:18.

³¹ John 1:45-46.

³² We will delve into this in more detail in an article on Nathanael/Bartholomew.

³³ John 2:11.

³⁴ John 2:13-17

³⁵ John 2:23

³⁶ John 3:22; 4:1-2. There is no telling how many people were baptized at this point, and no names are given. It has been suggested in the chapter on Andrew that it is perhaps at this time that Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and even Judas Iscariot were baptized and made disciples of Jesus.

³⁷ There is no mention of the disciples in the travels of Jesus from John 4:43 through the end of chapter five. It is after this preaching mission that He returned to Capernaum and called Peter, Andrew, James, and John—all of whom had resumed their fishing trade. It is, therefore, logical to conclude that Philip would have resumed his trade as well during this time.

³⁸ Luke 5:27-33.

³⁹ Luke 6:1 (KJV) says that these events took place on the “second Sabbath after the first.” The meaning of this phrase, and even its validity, is in question. Some have suggested that it is a reference to the Sabbath after that which is described in Luke 4:31-41. However, that ignores verse 44, which entails weeks, if not months of preaching after that event. Others have suggested that this took place on the Sabbath of Pentecost, which was the second most important day on the Jewish calendar, thus literally in Greek, Luke would be calling it the “second-first” Sabbath. Others relieve themselves of the difficulty by pointing to some of the ancient manuscripts which don’t contain the word at all, and simply record Luke saying “on a Sabbath.” In short, there’s nothing from this passage which will give us a more exact idea of when Philip rejoined Jesus.

⁴⁰ Luke 6:12-16.

⁴¹ This is the equivalent of 8 months’ wages.

⁴² John 6:5-7. Some have suggested that this is how much money Jesus and the apostles had on hand, though it is much more likely this was simply Philip’s way of saying to Jesus, “How are we supposed to get that much money?”

speculation,⁴³ but it might just be that they saw him, knowing he was one of Jesus disciples and went to him — just like they might have done regardless of which disciple it was. Philip probably remembered that Jesus had told the apostles not to go to the Gentiles, but only the house of Israel,⁴⁴ and that Jesus Himself was only sent “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,”⁴⁵ and was hesitant about bringing a group of Gentiles to Him. Instead, he conferred with Andrew, and the two of them together went to Jesus with the Greek’s request. In response, Jesus gave a prophecy of His impending death.⁴⁶

A few days later, after being with Jesus and the other apostles for the Last Supper, Philip heard Jesus again announce His departure (death). Peter and Thomas both were confused about where Jesus was going and how they were going to go to where He was;⁴⁷ and then Jesus responded with “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father except through me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know Him and have seen Him.”⁴⁸

It is at this point that Philip is confused. Jesus has just told the disciples that they’d already seen the Father, and Philip’s response is, “Lord, show us the Father, and we are content.”⁴⁹ In other words, “We’ve already seen the Father? When? Point Him

out for us so we don’t miss Him.” Some people have bad-mouthed Philip for being “ignorant” and “spiritually incapable”⁵⁰ for not grasping the truth Jesus was teaching. But how many among us can truly grasp the concept of the triune nature of the Godhead — three separate minds, yet still all one? How many among us truly can grasp the idea of a member of the Godhead emptying Himself to live as a human?

That evening, Philip, along with ten other men, ran out of fear for his life, abandoning Jesus as the Jewish leaders, led by Judas, arrested Him. After the resurrection of Jesus, Philip believed once more, repented of forsaking Jesus, and became a powerful force for the Kingdom of God.

The last time Philip’s name is mentioned is just before Pentecost, in Acts 1, where he was gathered with the rest of the apostles and disciples of Jesus. He preached and baptized many people on the Day of

Pentecost; was arrested and beaten some time later for preaching in the name of Jesus; and remained in Jerusalem during Saul’s rounds of persecution. After the gathering in Jerusalem to discuss the issue of circumcision among the Gentile converts, Philip completely disappears from the biblical narrative. But you can guarantee God knows what happened.

The Character of Philip

Though there is not much evidence to go by, what little we have paints for us a picture of a man who was well-versed in the Scriptures and who had a very strong belief in the inspired words of God. How else could Philip know that Jesus was the one “of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write”?

Philip was decisive. He became a fully-dedicated disciple after hearing Jesus say “follow me.” It’s probable that he asked Jesus some questions or sought more information (if he didn’t already know Jesus before that moment), but his decision was made the same day he was called. In fact,



⁴³ Some say they came to him because he was known as a Gentile sympathizer, others because he had a Greek name, while others suggest that he had a Greek haircut and wore Greek clothing (see College Press NIV Commentary, New Testament).

⁴⁴ Matthew 10:1-6.

⁴⁵ Matthew 15:24

⁴⁶ These events are recorded in John 12:20-33.

⁴⁷ John 13:36-38; 14:1-5. There are those (Lockyer, specifically) who want to accuse Philip of being “stupid” and “slow-witted” for his statement in 14:8, yet they won’t level the same charges against Peter and Thomas for their lack of understanding. If Philip was “stupid,” then so were the other apostles. The fact is, none of the apostles had complete knowledge until it was given to them from on high beginning at Pentecost.

⁴⁸ John 14:6-7.

⁴⁹ John 14:8.

⁵⁰ Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible*, page 160.

the decision was made quick enough that he had time to go search out his friend Nathanael and bring him to Jesus as well.⁵¹

Philip wasn't perfect. Jesus tested him, asking how they were going to feed the 5,000 men, and Philip basically told Jesus, "We can't afford to feed all these men." Philip didn't yet have the confidence and full knowledge of the power of Jesus. Later on, Philip told Jesus, "show us the Father, and it will suffice us," and was told by the Lord, "When you've seen me, you've seen the Father." Like the other apostles, their knowledge and understanding of Jesus was not complete until the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.⁵²

Philip was faithful. He endured persecution as an apostle, yet rejoiced in the face of it. Even years later, all the living apostles were held up by Paul as an example worthy of following. His name is indeed inscribed on the holy city of God, the church!⁵³

Philip According to Tradition

Clement of Alexandria, in passing, claims that Philip is the man who asked for time to go bury his dead father, and to whom Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead."⁵⁴

The Acts of Saint Philip the Apostle When He Went to Upper Hellas⁵⁵

This writing gives the tradition that Philip went around wearing the clothes "of a recluse" and that the philosophers of Athens thought he was one of them because of it. After hearing Philip preach, the

philosophers requested three days to research about this Jesus. Instead, they wrote a letter to the Jewish high priest Ananias, describing the miracles that Philip was doing, and asking for help. Ananias, enraged, took an army of five hundred men and went to Athens, joined with the philosophers, and went to kill Philip, whom they said was called "the son of thunder."⁵⁶

Ananias then gives a speech, saying that Jesus caused people to leave the Law of Moses, and so they crucified Him to keep His teaching from being fulfilled, after which the disciples stole the body and performed fake miracles, claiming it was by the power of the risen Jesus. As Ananias ran to grab Philip to scourge him, he was suddenly blinded and his hand withered. The five hundred soldiers were blinded as well. And after Philip uttered a prayer that these men might believe, Jesus descended from heaven, causing all the idols of Athens to fall to the ground, demons to cry out, and people to flee. Yet the high priest refused to recognize Jesus. Philip restored the high priest's sight, but still he refused to believe, so the 500 soldiers requested to be healed as well so they could "cut off this unbelieving high priest."⁵⁷

Instead, Philip caused the ground to open up and swallow the high priest to the knees, then the stomach, then the neck, each time giving him the opportunity to repent. Finally, when he refused, the ground swallowed him whole, leaving nothing but the high priest's garment.

It is then said that Philip founded a church there in Athens, where he remained for two years, appointing elders, before going to preach in Parthia.⁵⁸

The Journeyings of Philip the Apostle (aka "The Acts of Philip")

This writing places Philip in Hierapolis with Bartholomew (Nathanael), Stachys (possibly a ref-

⁵¹ Herbert Lockyer horribly besmirches the name of this inspired servant of God by calling him, among other things, "a slow-witted plodder," and "slow in arriving at a decision, reluctant to act on his own initiative" (*All the Apostles of the Bible*, page 157).

⁵² See their misunderstanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God in Acts 1, for instance.

⁵³ Revelation 21:14.

⁵⁴ Matthew 8:21-22. Clement of Alexandria, *Strata, or Miscellanies*, 3.4.25. Found in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Page 385. Note: The editors of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, for some reason, published book three (from which this information comes) in Latin instead of English (like the rest of the volumes). Translated, it reads: *If they quote the Lord's words to Philip, "Let the dead bury their dead, but you do follow me," they ought to consider that Philip's flesh is also formed in the same way; [the] body is not a polluted corpse.* This was written in opposition to the heresies of Marcion.

⁵⁵ Hellas was "the city of Athens" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, page 503).

⁵⁶ This name was given by Jesus to James and John, not to Philip. The *Journeyings of Philip the Apostle* also attributes this name to Philip.

⁵⁷ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, page 506.

⁵⁸ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, page 507. It is worth pointing out that the biblical record refutes the idea of Philip first bringing the gospel to Athens. The apostle Paul stated clearly in Romans 15:20 that he did not build on another man's foundation (that is, labor where another apostle had begun the work); yet Paul preached in Athens (Acts 18). Thus the "Acts of Saint Philip the Apostle when He went to Upper Hellas" is clearly a work of fiction.

erence to a man mentioned in Romans 16:9) and Philip's sister, Mariam.⁵⁹ The focus of his preaching there dealt with snake-worship that was prominent in that city.⁶⁰ After converting the wife of the proconsul, Philip and company were arrested, beaten, scourged, and then drug through the streets. The next day, the proconsul prepared to put Philip and Bartholomew to death. Philip, according to the story, was stripped of his clothing, and iron hooks were driven through his ankles and heels, and he was hung upside-down in a tree, while Bartholomew was stretched out and nailed to the gate of the temple of the serpent. Philip said to John, who had just then arrived, "I shall not endure it any longer; but I will accomplish upon them my threat, and will destroy them all [with fire from heaven]!"⁶¹

After Bartholomew, John, and Philip's sister begged him to remember Jesus' attitude on the cross, Philip responds by saying, "Go away and do not mollify [attempt to soothe] me; for I will not bear they that hanged me head-down and pierced my ankles and heels with irons. And John...Go away from me, and I will curse them, and they shall be destroyed utterly to a man." Then Philip utters a curse, "Let the great Hades open its mouth; let the great abyss swallow up these the ungodly, who have not been willing to receive the word of truth in this city." And then it happened, the ground opened up, and over 7,000 people fell into the abyss — alive. Then the people cried out to God, asking for forgiveness. It's then that Jesus appears.

Jesus chastises Philip for returning evil for evil, but Philip responds with "Why are you angry with me, Lord? Because I have cursed my enemies? For why do you not tread them underfoot, because they are yet alive in the abyss? And do you know, Lord, that because of you I came into this city, and in your name I have persecuted all the error of the idols, and all the demons? The dragons have withered away, and the serpents. And since these men have not received your light, therefore I have cursed them, and they have done down to Hades alive."

Jesus responds by saying that when Philip dies, he will have to spend 40 days outside of Paradise, in

terror under the flaming and turning sword before he will be allowed in. After Jesus returned the people up from the abyss, Philip gave them a final message before finally dying.⁶²

Other Traditions

Polycrates (AD 130-196), bishop in Ephesus, records as accepted fact that Philip died in Hierapolis,⁶³ and an inscription has been discovered there showing that their church building was dedicated to the memory "of the holy and glorious apostle and theologian Philip."⁶⁴

Hippolytus says, "Philip preached in Phrygia, and was crucified in Hierapolis with his head downward in the time of Domitian, and was buried there."⁶⁵

One ancient writing says that Philip was of the tribe of Zebulun.⁶⁶ Later writings mention Galatia (Gaul) as his area of mission work.

*Legends of a later origin record that Joseph [of Arimathea] was sent by Philip from Gaul to Britain along with 11 other disciples in 63 AD, and built an oratory at Glastonbury, that he brought the Holy Grail to England, and that he freed Ireland from snakes.*⁶⁷

⁶² The *Journeyings of Philip the Apostle* was apparently written by Christians in Hierapolis, possibly seeking to elevate their standing in the universal church by claiming apostolic origins. The book relates that Philip commanded a church building (which they call a "church," proving its late date of composition) to be built by Bartholomew on the site where Philip died. It is important to note that there are multiple sources (some earlier than this work) which place the death of Andrew in Hierapolis. This work also seems to argue that Christians must live in complete chastity.

⁶³ See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 773, 748. This information also appears in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.24. However, Clement of Alexandria appears to claim that Philip didn't die a martyr's death (see his *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, 4.9). It should be pointed out, though, Clement also views Levi and Matthew as two different people in this same sentence, when they are in fact the same man.

⁶⁴ Sir William Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, Vol. 1, part 2: *West and West-Central Phrygia*, pages 552-553. Ramsey gives the inscription in Greek.

⁶⁵ *Hippolytus on the Twelve Apostles*. See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, page 255.

⁶⁶ *Genealogies of the Twelve Apostles*, see Sir E.A. Wallis Budge's *Contendings of the Apostles*, Book 2, page 50. See also, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* entry: Philip.

⁶⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Joseph of Arimathea." See also *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, "Joseph," 9.

⁵⁹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, page 497. Philip's family is never discussed in the biblical record, so there's no way of knowing if he had a sister and what her name was.

⁶⁰ The *Journeyings of Philip the Apostle* says that Hierapolis was called "Ophioryma," which means "Serpent Town."

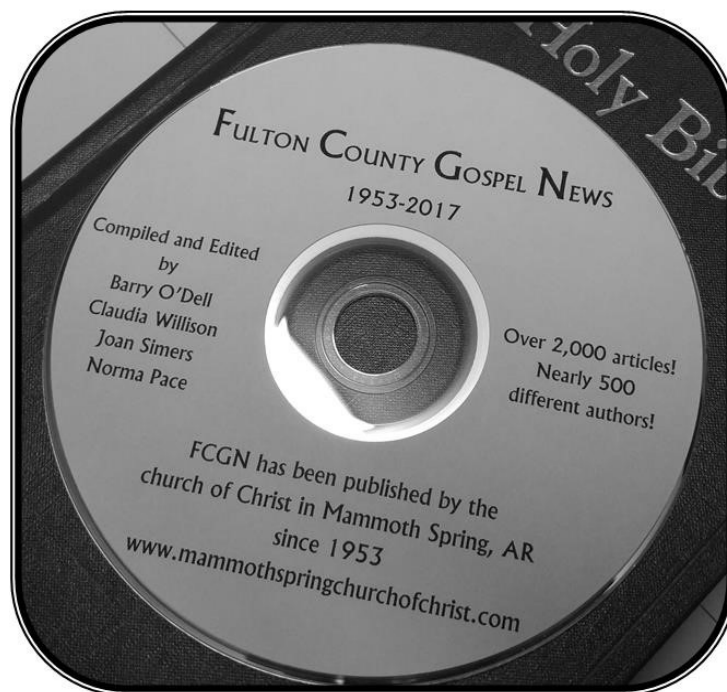
⁶¹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 499-500.

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Nimrod

By Mark McWhorter

Many writers and commentators see Nimrod as a righteous individual living in a proper relationship with God. He is seen as a great hunter and establisher of cities. This article will consider a possible different assessment of Nimrod.

It is stated that Nimrod was before the Lord. The word ‘before’ is the Hebrew word for face. It is at times translated as ‘presence.’ While it is true that all people are in the presence of God, it is also true that all those who worship God do so by bowing in the presence of God. There would seem to be a specific reason that this is stated about Nimrod. Was Nimrod so righteous that God pointed him out to tell us that he was righteous? If that is correct, then why is nothing else stated about him connected with righteous living?

Another possibility is that Nimrod is taking something to himself and doing so in revolt to the Lord. As might be said today, “In your face.” Nimrod is becoming mighty. But that word can imply a warrior or tyrant. Thus, his might may be from his taking on a warrior status. And, whatever he becomes is seen by God. God is watching. Perhaps Nimrod does not care that God is watching. [In Numbers 16:2, the word ‘before’ is used for those that rose against Moses.]

The Hebrew word used for ‘hunter’ means the chase. In most instances it does have reference to something eaten. But, in many ancient societies the term ‘hunter’ was also used for a conqueror. In essence, by conquering he was ‘eating their lunch.’ He was enjoying the game of pursuing and killing his prey. His prey may have been other people.

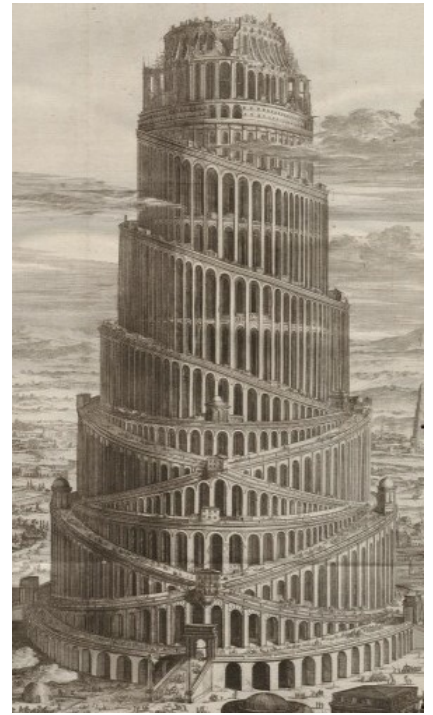
It is after conquering others that he builds his cities. And actually, scripture never says he built these cities of verse ten. It says these cities were the beginning of his kingdom. Thus, the cities could have been built by others and Nimrod conquered them as he began creating his own kingdom. It is after these conquests that he is said to build Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen [Some translations have As-

shur as a person. Others as a territory.] Resen is said to be a great city. The name means ‘bridle’ or ‘bit.’ Whether this tells that Nimrod had the people in figurative bridles or that he used horses in his conquest, there is power and dominion intimated in the name.

Babel means confusion. In Genesis 11, it is easy to understand the confusion the people had because of God’s judgment on them. A question would be whether the Babel of Genesis 10 is the same as Genesis 11, or are they separate cities? If separate, it would show that Nimrod either built or conquered a city named confusion. If the same, it would have Nimrod personally involved in the building of the Tower of Babel. This would tie in with his revolt away from God. [The historian Josephus wrote that Nimrod was the builder of Babel. Persian astrology tied Nimrod to the Constellation Orion, the giant. And Orion was connected to the Hebrew word ‘kesil’ which means fool or impious person, in the Septuagiant.]

Of interest is that God is referenced as Jehovah in the context of Nimrod. Jehovah is the covenant name of God. It is used in Genesis 11 in the accounting of the Tower of Babel. Thus, it is not unreasonable to think that God was standing in judgment against Nimrod and those at Babel. They had revolted against his covenant with them. They were attempting to make a name for themselves rather than living for the Lord. They had no desire to have Jehovah’s name on them.

The name Nimrod means ‘a revolter’ or ‘rebellion.’ It would seem that Nimrod may very well have lived up to his name.



75 Summers

By Michael Shank

Before we begin, consider these one-liners about life:

If you woke up breathing, congratulations! You have another chance.

Live every day as if it were your last and then some day you'll be right.

You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it.

We cannot waste time. We can only waste ourselves. ~George M. Adams

Most of us spend our lives as if we had another one in the bank.

When your life flashes before your eyes, make sure you've got plenty to watch.

The word "now" is like a bomb through the window, and it ticks.

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die the world cries and you rejoice.

Whether it's the best of times or the worst of times, it's the only time we've got.

Men talk of killing time, while time quietly kills them.

Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans.

Warning: Dates in Calendar are closer than they appear.

Some years ago, a couple and I were standing out under the canopy of the church building, talking,

and one of them made the statement, "If we're lucky, we'll have about 75 summers!" He said, "Mike, that would be a good sermon topic!"

I agree.

75 summers – not many is it?

INTRODUCTION

James 4:14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away."

Don't confuse what James is teaching; he's not saying that your life does not have great value. He's simply saying how short it is. He's saying, "Listen...keep things in a Godly perspective, life is so short. It's like a vapor; a mist of water that appears for a time, then evaporates."

One illustration that has stayed with me for years involves a grain of sand. Picture yourself in a hot desert; you look out at the horizon, and you see nothing but an ocean of sand. You turn in a complete circle, looking at the horizon; nothing but sand as far as you can see in every direction. You bend down and pick up one handful of sand. It is estimated that there are 60k grains of sand in one handful. Consider that one grain represents 75 summers; 75 years of life per grain. You have approximately 60k grains in your hand; that means that you are holding 4.5 million years in one hand! Dump it all out except one grain...that 75 years is YOUR 75 years. Look at your one grain; you just held 4 ½ million years in one hand; how many years are in the ocean of sand you're looking at? Eternity... BUT WE EACH GET ONE GRAIN OF SAND

1 Chron. 29:15, "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

Why does God choose to remind us that our days on this earth are but a shadow...short? Well, for several good reasons;

Because it's the truth, but also to help us develop the proper perspective

We humans get our priorities out of whack from time to time. And sometimes it's not our faults; we have bills to pay and families to feed. Our kids and grandkids are involved in so many things and we taxi all over the place, and pretty soon, the parade of life is flying by. But sometimes, the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things enter in, choke out the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:19). The lust of other things; the desire of things other than the word, and the cause for which Christ died! In 75 summers, it's easy to develop a desire for things other than the word; there are so many distractions in this world today.

I knew of a Deacon...a young man with a wonderful family who was faithful; always dependable; knowledgeable of the Bible, able to teach as the word mandates for Deacons; and he wanted to further his education, so he went back to night school. Night school knocked out attending services on Wednesday evening. Pretty soon he stopped attending Sunday evening services, because he was worn out with both work and school. Then he stopped attending potluck fellowships, and other functions of the church. A year after he started night school, he stopped attending services altogether, and a short time after that, his lifestyle turned into that of a very worldly person. I don't know if that man ever repented, and was restored, but sometimes as you can see, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things enter in, choke out the word, and it becomes unfruitful – friend, be careful!

King Solomon wrote, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:13). This from a man who had great wealth, women, real-estate, and power. No doubt a

man who had experienced a life that wanted for nothing; and at the end of the day, this man came to the conclusion that our entire lives boil down to one important task: fear God and keep His commandments.

God reminds us that our days on earth are short so we will make preparations for that next step, the judgment

We just heard Solomon's conclusion for the purpose of life: to fear God, and keep his commandments; but look at the adjoining passage.

"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:14).

Heb 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Friend, when we realize that we don't have that long, it forces us to consider eternity, and our pending sentencing from God.

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge stands before the door" (James 5:9).

"He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you set at naught your brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).

We can put this out of our minds; we can ignore it; we can even reject the idea, but it still doesn't change the fact that our day is on the horizon.

Actor Brad Pitt was in Germany promoting his new film at the time. While there he gave an interview to BILD Magazine. Bild asked him, "Do you

*[I]t's easy to develop
a desire for things
other than the word;
there are so many
distractions in this
world today.*

believe in God?" Brad Pitt (smiling) said, "No, no, no!" BILD then asked, "Are you not spiritual?" Brad Pitt replied, "No, no! I'm probably 20 percent atheist and 80 percent agnostic. I don't think anyone really knows. You'll either find out or not when you get there. Until then, there's no point even thinking about it."

There's no point even thinking about it? Mr. Pitt's position on God and religion is clear. Listen to what Paul tells Mr. Pitt, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Friend, the world says, "Don't think about it," but God says, "You'd better prepare."

Jesus explained our need to prepare very well in the 25th chapter of Matthew.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know nei-

ther the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

75 Summers to prepare for that great day!

God reminds us that life is but a vapor so that we might seek out eternal salvation

How do we prepare for the Day of Judgment? How do we take our lamps filled with oil, ready to trim? How do you prepare for the day in which you stand at the judgment bar of God?

Your first concern should be whether or not you're in the soul-saving vessel.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

That is the name of Jesus Christ.

Are you in the vessel by which you can be saved? If you're not sure, then the answer is no.

Paul says that all of these that follow this divine scheme of redemption enjoy all spiritual blessing found in Christ, Eph. 1:3; that those of you who follow His divine plan of salvation are inside Christ, Gal. 3:26-27; literally covered in His blood.

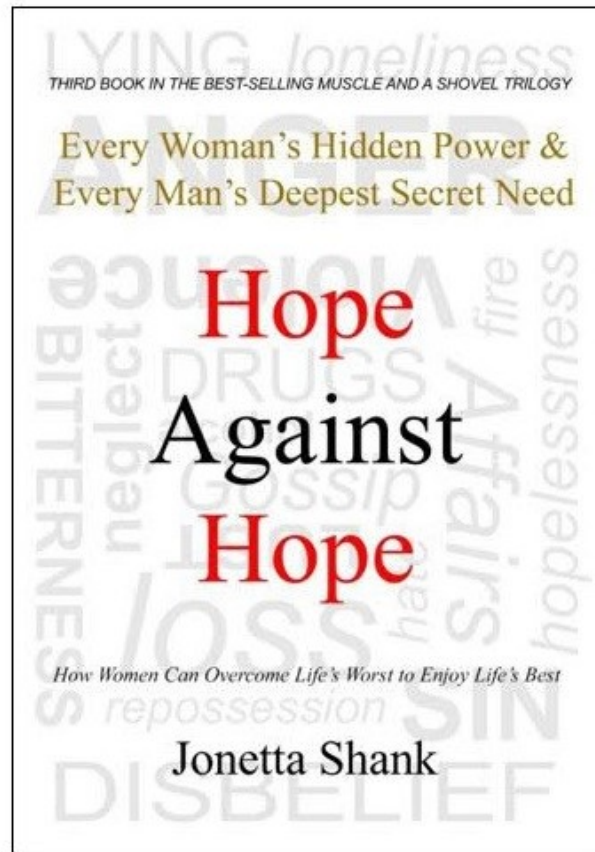
Friend, life is short. That is a truth that should help us develop the proper perspective; fear God and keep His commandments. Make preparation now, while it is still called today; take your lamps and fill them with oil; consider that judgment is coming. Seek out eternal salvation which is found only in Christ. Come to God on His terms; obey His program for redemption. Build upon your faith by following the teachings you find in the Record.

CONCLUSION

75 summers...how many do you have left?

You don't really know, do you?

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RESTORATION MOMENTS

Abner Jones Learns a Lesson about Giving

You have only a dollar to your name—and no food to feed your family. Then a man comes to your door, deeply in need, begging for help. What do you do? This tale comes from the *Memoirs of Abner Jones* (edited and compiled by his son, A.D. Jones). Prefacing this section, the younger Jones states: “How often I have heard the good old man relate this story, which, however, it might affect others, never failed to bring tears into his own eyes.” Now, without further ado, a lesson on giving.

On Saturday morning, as I was sitting in my study, pondering the poverty of my condition, my wife came in with her accustomed inquiry of “*Well, Mr. Jones, what shall we have for dinner?*” Adding, “*we have not a grain of meal,*” — flour was out of the question — “*nor a particle of meat of any kind in the house. Then the sugar is out, there is no butter, and in fact there is nothing to eat, and tomorrow is Sunday.*”

So saying, she quit the room, leaving me in such a state of mind as may well be conceived, when I say that a solitary one dollar bank note was the only money I had on earth, and no prospect whatsoever appeared of getting any until the accustomed weekly contribution should be put in my hands. And what would a single dollar do at the prevailing high prices, towards feeding seven hungry mouths for two whole days? I saw no way of escape, and in the ago-

ny of spirit which may well be guessed, I lifted up my heart in supplication to Him who feedeth the ravens when they cry. And a singular answer to my prayer I seemed speedily to attain.

I had just risen from my knees, when my wife again appeared at the door, all unconscious of the struggle which was going on within me, and ushered a gentleman into my study. His whole appearance was of that shabby genteel which betokens a broken-down gentleman. And from the first moment of beholding him, I took him to my confidence as unfortunate but not debased. “*Sir*” said he, “*I am a stranger to you, and you are utterly so to me, save that I once heard you preach in _____.*”

“*My home is in that place — if indeed I may now claim a home. I sailed from that port nearly a year since, with all my earthly possessions, and embarked in a promising adventure. My ship fell into the hands of the enemy and I became a prisoner, my property of course became lawful plunder. After suffering many hardships and much indignity, I effected my escape on board a vessel bound to St. John. From that place to this I have worked my way along with incredible fatigue and pain. I have suffered much from hunger, cold and wet, and have slept many a night in the open woods. And here I am, in one word, Sir, penniless, and altogether too much worn down to proceed further without aid. I have friends*

in _____, to whom I am pressing on as fast as I can, and who will relieve my necessities when I reach them. I am an utter stranger in your town, and you are the only person I ever knew or saw in the whole place. I cannot beg, and I feel entirely reluctant to ask a loan of an utter stranger.”

Here was a struggle. I was poor, *very poor*; but here was one poorer than I. I had a hungry family to feed — so had he. And even more, a heart-breaking fact, his family was even now mourning him as dead. I could hesitate no longer. I thrust my hand mechanically into my pocket, and pulling out my last dollar, which I pressed upon the unfortunate mariner — for he could hardly be persuaded to take it, when he knew how low my finances were, — I blessed him in God’s name, and he left me with no words of thanks; but I knew that, had I from a full purse bestowed a liberal sum, he could not have felt more grateful.

When he had gone, and absolute hunger for me and mine, stared me full in the face, I began to doubt the propriety of my act in taking the very bread from my children’s mouths to feed a stranger. But it was now too late to repent. The last dollar was gone and my children must go dinnerless and supperless to bed. For myself I cared nothing, but how would my family bear this unusual fasting? I seized my hat and cane and rushed into the street to escape from my own thoughts, which had become too painful to endure. I knew not — cared not whither I should bend my steps.

As I walked moodily and mechanically on, thinking o’er all the bitterness of my situation, sud-

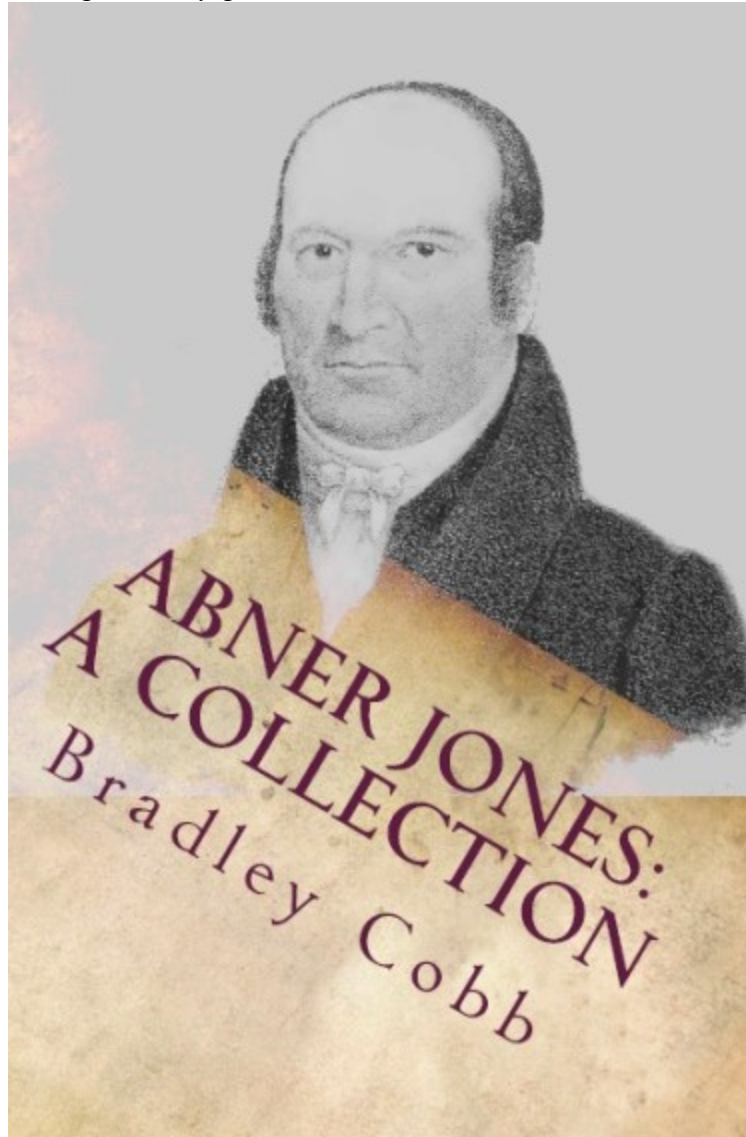
denly the thought came into my mind: — *why should I despond? Have I ever gone hungry, even for a day — me and mine? Has not the Lord provided hitherto? And will he not in time to come? — in the present time?* I had scarcely concluded this soliloquy, when one of my neighbors, whom I knew to be a Universalist, and whom I had occasionally seen

at our meetings — the members of his family came frequently — accosted me with, “*Good morning, Mr. Jones. I have been thinking for some time past that I ought to discharge a debt I owe you.*”

“I was not aware,” I replied, “that you had incurred such an obligation.”

“O, but I have,” said he, “my family goes occasionally to hear you preach, and once in a while I go myself. Now as the laborer is worthy of his hire, and as I wish no man to labor for me without pay, I beg you will accept this trifle as in part a liquidation of the debt.”

The “trifle,” was a five dollar note, which I received with feelings that I will not mock by attempting to describe. I returned to my house, and after again falling on my knees, humbled under a sense of my lack of confidence in God, and grateful for his goodness to me, all unworthy as I felt myself to be; I sallied forth to the market, and soon came back laden with the things necessary to our comfort.





A MATTER OF MAN

Psalm 139:14

BY GANTT CARTER

Do you have faith? What kind of faith do you have? Most often, that second question is the real question we must answer. As James notes, “Even the demons believe and shudder” (James 2:19). Is your faith just some type of mental assent to certain facts? Does your faith cause you to just shudder or does your faith motivate you to take actions that please God?

What about faith and reason? Can faith be reasonable? Is Biblical faith just some blind leap in the dark? Some suggest that faith and reason are at best not really related, and at worst, mutually exclusive. Many atheists make this claim about faith and reason, but even many Christians (or who at least claim to be) also make this same claim.

The Word of God never calls us to faith in the complete absence of any evidence or legitimate reason to hold such faith. Ultimately, proper faith is belief in God and then simply taking God at His word (see Acts 27:25; also, Hebrews 11 & Romans 4). Consider the inspired observations of the apostle Paul below:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their un-

righteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things (Romans 1:18-23).

The evidence of God’s reality is all around us in the universe. As the writer of Hebrews points out, “every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4). The existence of God is so obvious that the Bible never even argues for His reality. However, even when something should be as clear as day, some will still find ways to claim such isn’t true. Atheists claim that there is

no God. Skeptics are just highly skeptical about whether God is real. Agnostics are unwilling to commit either way, maintaining there just isn't enough evidence to know one way or the other. Theists affirm that God is real, and that He has revealed Himself to humanity. Let us now consider some aspects of life and humanity.

From Matter to Man?

What is the origin of life? Did life just somehow happen? The scientific law of Biogenesis upholds the idea that life cannot come from non-life. It is also clear that life within this world is not eternal (without a beginning point). For life to exist as it does now within the universe, a powerful living Mind outside this current system must have created life. To believe that a Mind (God) created the matter and mind of the universe is far from unreasonable.

For example, take a pile of rocks and do whatever you want to them, and then see if you can turn the lifeless matter into life. Even if you could somehow make life from non-living rocks, then that would only prove that an intelligent mind with great resources can turn non-life into life. But for the atheists to be correct, we would have to start with nothing—and there could be no outside force/intellect working. To add more, the problem is not how non-life produced just any category or level of life, but how did non-life (ultimately, nothing) lead to human life?

It is not just life, but more specially, where/how did consciousness originate? Scientists struggle to even define consciousness, and they have no real explanation for its origin (other than a conscious Creator). It is not logical to think that non-conscious dead matter produced conscious life.

How did the incredibly ordered and well-designed human being originate from non-intelligence, non-life, and/or mere accidents? Note with me just a few examples of the amazing design of the human body.

Humans not only possess consciousness, but they have the capability of amazing actions like self-examining and self-training. There exists computer tech that is “self-learning,” but who designed and made the computer? Of course, even the “self-learning” of a computer is far from the same as the abilities of human beings. The human brain is the most powerful and complex “supercomputer” ever.

While reading this article, how many times has your heart pumped blood throughout your complex blood vessel system? You had to think about your heart beats, right? How many times have you inhaled and exhaled today? You did not even think about any of that until just now, did you? There are many involuntary actions that our bodies perform 24/7. How did that design happen?

“The miracle of the mind is that it can transmute quantity into quality. This property of the mind is something given; it just is so. It cannot be explained; it can only be accepted” (Sir Julian Huxley).

“The complexity of living organisms is matched by the elegant efficiency of their apparent design. If anyone doesn't agree that this amount of complex design cries out for an explanation, I give up” (Richard Dawkins).

We are now beginning to design robots that are just able to perform some human-like tasks. However, these machines are still far from doing many of the simple tasks we do every day. It takes great intelligence to design such a complex system. No one would ever think that such a complicated design occurred by random accident.

What about DNA and RNA? Just contemplating the complexity and quantity of information contained within this genetic code is mind-blowing. Life could not continue without this genetic code and the code being passed on.

“By all rules of reason, could there be a code which carries a message without someone originating that code? It would seem self-evident that any such complex message system, which is seen to be wise and effective, **requires not only intelligence but a person** back of it. Who wrote the DNA code? Who is the author of this precise language? **There is no evolutionary explanation that even begins to be an adequate answer**” (Dr. James Coppedge, Director of Probability Research in biology).

Another essential for life is protein itself. Living organisms cannot exist without protein, but living creatures also produce protein. For the atheist to be right, there would have to have been a time when protein existed without life.

We could keep going and consider the origin of language, the trouble of a non-human somehow giving birth to a human, the incredibly complex function of the trillions of cells within the human body, and more. I hope these few examples are helpful in considering the wonderful design of life and humanity.

"I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well"
(Psalm 139:14).

Isaac Newton stated that, "In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence." Paul observed that "God arranged

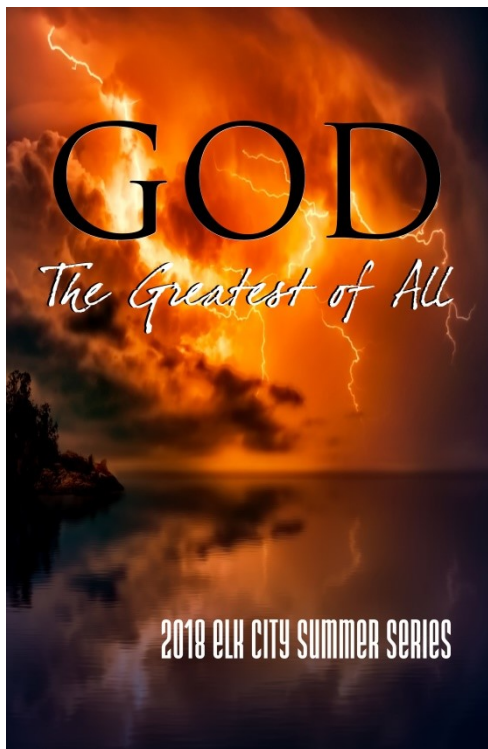
the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

A reasonable faith in God is (in part) founded on the abundant and amazing evidence of life and humanity. Is it reasonable or logical to conclude that life and humanity are the result of mere chance? Especially considering that chance cannot even "do" anything...?

If God wills, we will continue this discussion in the next edition by looking at two more questions: Why should it **matter** to **man**? Does **man matter**?

A Final Thought

All living organisms eventually die (they cease to be alive and their bodies decompose). But why? What is the origin and purpose of death? Death is necessary and even "good" within the evolutionary process. But with God, death is the result of human rebellion and is to be destroyed one day by God. God is life, and He is for life, even granting eternal life to penitent humanity.



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IN WHAT DO WE TRUST?

By David Dean



On July 30, 1956 President Eisenhower signed the law that would add four little words to our currency: “In God We Trust.” The phrase would begin appearing on paper money in the next year. Anyone that has ever taken the time to examine a dollar bill has seen the words, but I wonder if we have ever considered the irony of the entire situation. Do we really trust in God? Or do we place our trust in the green piece of paper that those words are printed upon instead? Trusting in God is something that many have difficulty with. Yet we have countless types of insurance, savings accounts, retirement funds, and other ‘rainy day’ savings. While being prepared for the unexpected is not bad in and of itself, we have come to depend on these preparations to the exclusion of turning to God and trusting Him. As the Proverb says, “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf” (Prov 11:28 ESV).

The Bible is full of examples of people who failed to trust in God. Abraham, an individual known for his faith (Romans 4:16; Hebrew 11:8-10, 17-19), is seen not once but twice allowing his fear to overcome his trust in God. When a famine struck the land, Abraham and Sarah traveled to Egypt. While on the journey Abraham tells Sarah, “I know

that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me, but they will let you live,” (Gen 12:11-12). As the text continues, it appears that Abraham’s concern was not completely without cause. After all, when Abraham arrived in Egypt he was treated with honor and gifted much wealth, while Sarah was rushed off to the Palace because of her beauty (Gen 12:14-16). Despite this apparent threat, God was always in control. He would have protected Abraham and did so despite His servant’s lack of trust. Later, in verse 17 we read how God sent a plague to the house of Pharaoh. Abraham did not have to take things into his own hands; all he had to do was trust in God.

Abraham would not make this mistake only once, but he would repeat it with Abimelech in the twentieth chapter of Genesis. Ultimately, Abraham would go on to grow and learn to trust in God; he would grow to the point that he wielded a knife, prepared to take his own son’s life, trusting that God would work everything out.

Changing our focus, we see that not every lesson of trusting in God is taught by man’s failure. For instance, the book of Judges contains an amazing series of ups and downs for the Israelite nation. Dur-

ing one of the more troubling periods we are introduced to Gideon. To understand the level of despair that the nation had reached, we need to see the words of Gideon: “Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us ... But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian,” (Judges 6:13). Gideon would continue to describe himself as the least and weakest of all Israel. Clearly, we see that Gideon in particular and the Israelites as a whole are at a low point, but God would soon teach them that trusting in Him is more important than feeling self-confident.

We fast-forward and see that Gideon has grown; he had become the leader of an army that was ready to remove the Midian problem from the borders of Israel. A force of 32,000 was gathered and ready, yet God declared, “the people with [Gideon] are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’” (Judges 7:2). God, determined that Israel would trust in Him, declared to Gideon that some of the people need to go. First, the number is reduced to 10,000 (Judges 7:3), but God insisted even that was too many people. Then, God established another test to reduce the number — leaving an army of only 300 men (Judges 7:7). With this small group of men, Gideon following the instructions of God, launched his attack and routed the army. After this, Gideon would continue to be victorious, causing the men of Israel to desire to meet with him. They attempted to make him King, but instead of accepting the role, Gideon showed that he had learned to trust in God. He tells the men, “I will not rule over you... the LORD will rule over you” (Judges 8:23).

Abraham and Gideon learned to trust in God, but what about the Son of God himself? Jesus, sometimes referred to as the ‘Suffering Savior,’ shows us the ultimate example of trust in God. While it is typically the cross that is associated with the suffering of Christ, a short survey of the gospels reveals that the life of Jesus is full of suffering. He was the prophet rejected in his own homeland (Matt 13:53-58). Even his own family would say, “He is out of his mind,” (Mark 3:21). While traveling the land, Jesus also expressed the reality that he had “nowhere to lay his head,” (Luke 9:58). Despite the hardships that Christ faced, he constantly taught a need to trust in God. In Matthew’s account of the

gospel, Jesus instructs his disciples not to worry. He reminds them that God looks after the birds, which are obviously of lesser value than the disciples. He goes on to state that being anxious for tomorrow cannot help, but to instead trust in God (Matt 6:25-34).

Like Christ, Paul also lived a difficult life. Christ expressed the need to not worry about the future, Paul expressed a similar thought, focusing on the here and now. While thanking the brethren in Philippi for the concern they have expressed over his wellbeing he says,

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:11-13).

It is important to remember that these impressive words are from one that would in a different epistle describe the various times his life was nearly cut short. Yet, despite it all, his trust in God was so complete he learned contentment in all situations.

Today so many place their trust in slips of green paper. Historically, it has been bits of precious metal, large armies, or even a “simple lie.” What has not changed is that in all these years, mankind has still failed to place its trust in God. Abraham and Gideon learned to trust in God; similarly, Jesus and Paul taught the need to place our trust in God. The Psalmist declared, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God” (Ps 20:7). Even Congress felt the need to remind the American people that we need to trust in God. Ironically, they chose to do so with the one thing that so many people choose over God! Take a dollar bill out of your pocket, examine it, read those words, and let us all learn to return our trust to where it belongs.

TWO STONES

By Bill Howard

Thinking back quite a few years, in the late 30's and early 40's, our Sunday morning bible study was called Sunday school. We had the classes divided by age as we do today, and at that time it was something we looked forward to with a great deal of anticipation. Times were a good bit different then compared to the present, and we generally were entertained by whatever means we could conjure up. So, while we were learning about Jesus and Bible teaching, we also were entertained by the stories from the Bible.

Our teacher, Sam Sorenson, was a carpenter and a dedicated Christian who loved to regale his students with the riveting stories of Bible characters.

It was fascinating to hear the story of Daniel who was carried from his home country to Babylon. Though a captive in a strange land he stayed true to God; received an education and rose to a position of power. He served as Chief Minister and was an interpreter of dreams for Kings such as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and was highly esteemed. However, because of his faith in God he was persecuted and even sentenced to death. During the reign of Darius evil men who disliked Daniel plotted against him and caused him to be thrown into a den of lions because of his prayers to God. But God stopped the mouths of the lions and Daniel was saved. Those who plotted against him were put to death. He was true to God and did what he could.

In the same book of Daniel we find three of Daniel's friends who were also sentenced to death because they refused to worship a false god. They maintained their faith in the true God. Because of this they were cast into a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual—but again God stepped in and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged from the furnace unharmed.

Along with those and other stories, one was particularly captivating. A young Hebrew shepherd by

the name of David chose to do battle with a Philistine giant by the name of Goliath. Goliath was nearly nine feet tall, was equipped with over three hundred pounds of armor and carried a sword five feet in length. Forty days this giant had taunted the Israelite army to send a champion to do battle with him. The soldiers of Saul were fearful but David was not. He made it known that he would do battle with the giant. Being told he was too young and inexperienced he was insistent. Refusing the armor of the king, David picked five stones from a brook and went forward to challenge Goliath. With his sling and stones as his weapon of choice, David defeated the giant. David had much more than his weapon of choice; he had his faith in God. He knew that God had delivered the Israelites from the Philistines once before and believed he would be with him as he went to battle. One sling, one stone; using what was available and depending on God. This was David doing what he could do and leaving the rest up to God.

While thinking on these accounts, the story of another stone comes to mind which is the reason for this writing. This one is found in the eleventh chapter of the gospel of John. Jesus was informed that his friend Lazarus of Bethany had died. Jesus was in Jerusalem and Bethany was a short distance away. The account says fifteen furlongs, which is approximately one and a half miles. Jesus delayed his departure for another two days. Arriving in Bethany he questioned: 'Where have ye laid him?' (v. 34). Shown the burial site where a large stone had been placed to cover the tomb, Jesus said to those who were gathered there: 'Take ye away the stone' (v.39). The stone was a hindrance to Jesus doing what he came to do and needed to be out of the way.

Have we ever questioned why Jesus told them to take the stone away? These were the words of our Lord who had healed the sick, caused the blind to

see, made the lame to walk, and brought the dead to life. Is not this the same Lord by whom all things were created? John said of Jesus: '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' (John 21:25). With nothing more than a thought Jesus could have removed the stone. With the flick of a finger he could have cast it into the sea. Just by touching it he could have reduced it to dust. Why, then, did he not do that? There is a simple answer to that question.

The mourners gathered there could not bring Lazarus forth from the tomb alive. Jesus could. However, those he asked to move the stone were capable of doing so. Jesus wanted them to do all they could do, and then he would do what he could do. Jesus expects us to take the initiative and do all

that we are able to do. Whatever our endeavor; if we dedicate ourselves to doing all that we are capable of doing, and trust in God, we will win. Just as David, with his sling and stone, did what he could with what he had, and trusting in God to make the difference, he was a winner.

God does not require more than we are able to do, but he does ask us to do all that we can. Paul called it 'your reasonable service' (Romans 12:1).

With these thoughts in mind, perhaps we need to look at our service, our dedication and determine if there are stones (hindrances) we need to remove. Each Christian should evaluate the level of dedication we put forth in service to God. The one true and living God who has given us all we have and holds forth the promise of eternal life in his presence. It is our choice to make.



The Story of Tolbert Fanning

By Kyle Frank

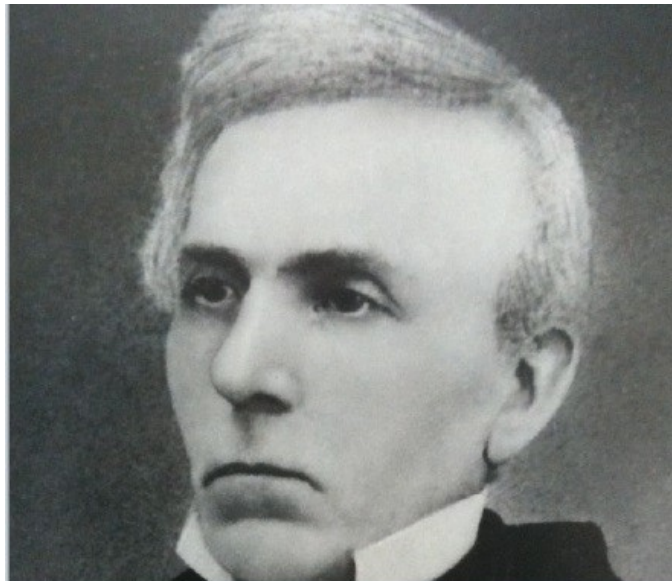
The story of Tolbert Fanning began at his birth on May 10, 1810. He was born in Cannon County, Tennessee in the wilderness. Settlers were still trying to dig, burn and hack their way out of the wilderness. The people of today do not realize that they stand on the shoulders of giants from the past. Tolbert Fanning was in truth one of those giants-in more ways than one. He was 6'6" in height and was stronger than an ox. He was criticized by several when he was a young and upcoming preacher. They suggested that he return to following a plow as he had for most of his young life. Well, many of the critics lived to see the day when Fanning could hold an audience in total and complete rapture for over three hours when he preached.

Tolbert Fanning's family moved to Alabama while he was still a youth. This was in the year 1816. Little else is known of his early life except that he did attend a school that was on Cypress Creek and that this school was held by the brother of the governor of Alabama. By 1824, the restoration movement was in this area of Cypress Creek and two preachers in particular-James E. Matthews and Ephraim D. Moore were leading the group. In 1826, B.F. Hall was in the area and was teaching a doctrine slightly different to that which they had heard previously. He taught that the gospel must be obeyed, and that when they were baptized, they would be relieved of the guilt of their sins. During one late September night, a young Tolbert Fanning

responded to the invitation and the following day, October first, he was baptized for the remission of his sins in Cypress Creek by James Matthews.

Tolbert Fanning spent a year in reading and studying the scriptures before he boldly ventured forth as a herald of the kingdom of God. In not too long of a time, Fanning was preaching in his neighborhood and on occasion, in different neighborhoods as well. He was a passionate youth that was deeply desirous of opportunities to share the gospel. His views got him in trouble on one occasion. He saw one brother selling one of his slaves who happened to be a brother as well. Fanning's personal views were in profound opposition to the "peculiar institution" of slavery. On his next opportunity to preach, he was preaching at the East Main St. church of Christ. His topic was the practice of slavery. This was met with great anger by the vast number of the congregation who were slave owners themselves. This was in the year 1830; thirty-one years before the Civil War was fought over this divisive

issue. Besides losing a place to preach, he also ended up with legal difficulties. The slave owner had Fanning arrested. Fanning's courage was evident, even at twenty-one years of age. When he saw something which he felt was unscriptural, he had to speak out against it. Fortunately for him, an attorney, Charles Reedy, saw his courage, came to his



A Life Richly Lived

The Story of Tolbert Fanning



rescue and won the case. He and Fanning, became life-long friends.

Fanning as a Preacher

Besides this incident, Fanning was to become an exceptional preacher who was known across the brotherhood. As a young preacher, he was encouraged to return to his previous career, which was farming. You might think that it was mentioned previously but this was a totally different incident to that one! Fanning received a good number of “encouragements” to be anything other than a gospel preacher. What these “helpers” did not know, or maybe could not know that they were trying to extinguish a fire by throwing gasoline on it! Each attempt to get Fanning to quit preaching God’s truth only made him more-much more-determined to be a good, rather, great proclaimer of the truth. He was always looking for opportunities to tell the old, old story to whomever was willing to hear him preach.

A good example of this attitude can be found in the story of the church in Russellville, Alabama. Fanning had been working very hard at the school and farms. He had an ability to do a tremendous amount of work. His ever-increasing ability as well as his sheer strength, both mental and physical, allowed him to accomplish tremendous amounts of work. He could teach in the morning and then come home to accomplish a great amount of hard, physical labor. After that, he was known to study, write, or edit until around 2:00 a.m. He would then rest until 5:30 a.m., when the process began all over. Such was the sheer power of the 6 foot, 6 inch, 240lb. man who was determined to do all the good that he could.

Returning to the church in Russellville; he was going to take a “break” by going on the road to preach a “few” sermons and have fellowship with his brethren. On an early morning the Fanning’s prepared their carriage to be drawn by Fanning’s favorite horse — a Morgan Stallion named “Jacob Faithful.” They headed south with a few small stops. Their goal was to meet his boyhood teacher, Ross Houston. They had come to Russellville, and he had preached to a small audience who gave him little hearing. They had decided to depart the next morning. The local roads were poor in the best of weather but it had been a very rainy season and the roads were so *muddy* that Jacob Faithful had a very hard time just pulling the carriage, much less through this

new sea of mud where the roads used to be. They had managed to go slightly less than a mile when one of the springs on the carriage broke. The trio were forced to return to Russellville to find a repair shop and had to wait several days while a part was sent from another city. Some things just never seem to change! Fanning announced that preaching would occur each night at candle lighting. His next business was to set out to visit the local farmers to discuss items that were near and dear to their collective hearts. Perhaps this endeared him to them, causing them to want to hear him speak; or more likely God was at work in the hearts of the locals making them desire to hear this new man who spoke their language so well. Either way, the Gospel sounded forth from this bold proclaimer and the seed soon sprouted forth manifold. By the time the carriage was repaired about 40 souls had been added to the church and Fanning knew that he could not leave. Within a month, there were over 100 new children of God. When the decision was made to finally continue the tour, he was able to leave a group where over two-thirds were the heads of the community. Fanning would never speculate on whether God had broken his spring but he thought a great deal of the circumstances behind the whole incident. How great things can rest on small details for God’s people!

The Fanning’s left Russellville headed for Columbus, Mississippi. News had travelled by mail and person about the wonderful happenings that had occurred in Russellville, and Columbus had an air of great anticipation. The excitement in Columbus wasn’t shared by those of the denominational world. They told their people definitely not to attend the meetings, but apparently these warnings went unheeded as there was a steady stream of people attending the meetings. At first there was no response but people were searching the scriptures to see if Mr. Fanning’s teachings were true. The first conversion soon came from the Presbyterians, then an infidel came. The denominational preachers were on high alert because of Fanning’s teachings. It led, ultimately to a debate between Mr. Fanning and a Mr. Lyons. Apparently, Mr. Lyons was full of sarcasm and people were soon comparing the two men’s temperaments. Fanning was calm and polite while Lyons got more sarcastic and hostile as he was losing. Soon, the courthouse where the debate was held, overflowed every night. Mr. Fanning was able to baptize between eighty and ninety persons.

They soon provided themselves with a meeting place and were a stand-alone group by the time the Fanning's left town. It is said that visitors who came to scoff were soon bowing in prayer and studying the Scriptures they had recently disavowed. A great change was seen in a large number of people as the seed was planted and grew rapidly. After two and a half months, the Fanning's left Columbus to continue their tour. Wherever they went, Christians and congregations were to be found in their track. In all, they were gone from home for six months and had personally witnessed about two hundred people obey the gospel. When Fanning finally arrived home, he was seriously ill and lingered near death for the next four months. The Fanning's preaching tours between semesters became very well-known and resulted in scores of congregations being planted. Like Paul would re-visit the congregations he planted, so Tolbert visited Russellville and Columbus, as well as the score of other churches that he had labored to start. Those who saw him fill the pulpit could only say that he approached the pulpit "as a giant filled with his theme." One man who had been converted during Fanning's "assault on the ramparts of hell" in Russellville could only say: "As a public speaker, his style was simply inimitable. His voice was strong, and his articulation was distinct. As a preacher, he was always logical and scriptural. He appealed to the common understanding of his audience, holding it spellbound to his subject."

Fanning's Agricultural Labors

Tolbert Fanning loved the country and country living. He was a farmer at heart; even while he lived in town. He was also the representative for his county at the farming organization. He attended a meeting where it was decided on whether there was to be a state agricultural organization or not. Among his other duties, he was editor of the newsletter called *The Agriculturalist*. He, being the editor of the new *Agriculturist*, was impressed with the number of businesses in Nashville. His farm was to be a model for others to imitate. It eventually amounted to nearly 300 acres. While looking at a cliff and springs around it, the name "Elm Crag" came to Fanning and it stuck. It was known as "Elm Crag" as long as Fanning owned the place. After his death and into the next century, the land eventually became a part of Nashville's airport. In the magazine, Fanning

sought to encourage others to start a farming school somewhere in the county. Eventually, the farming school was started at Elm Crag with 12 students in January of 1843. Fanning stated: "It is my object to teach the students everything necessary to the improvement of the land and the best modes of cultivating and saving of the crops. It could not be expected our operations in manual exercises would be profitable to the proprietor. Many students are city boys." Besides the schoolwork, Fanning traveled widely, always paying attention to what other farmers were doing. He would write about these changes as he saw them. All was documented in his paper. This became good practice for the religious papers he would produce over the years.

Early Editorial Pursuits

Fanning held a great respect for journalism from an early period. His second journal, which was launched on January 1, 1844, was named the *Christian Review*. It was, right from the start, a success. (This writer owns a copy of the paper and it is easy to read and very entertaining.) The editors of the paper were: Fanning, W.H. Wharton, H.T. Anderson, in addition to the "representative" editors, including Jacob Creath Jr. of Missouri, M. Winans of Ohio, W.W. Stevenson of Little Rock, John R. Howard of West Tennessee, and W.D. Carnes of East Tennessee. The first issues were full of news about the Campbell-Rice debate that had just occurred. Fanning had written the majority of information.

He also gave four reasons for conducting such a journal at such a time. First of all, because of the many papers were filled with confusing doctrines, it was hard to understand what the churches were actually teaching. Second, the editors did not believe that the opposing papers were practicing Christianity fully. Third, the "churches of Christ" were not as intelligent, spiritual, and zealous as they should be. Fourth, the editors who were spread all over the place could give a better, most accurate report of things due to the fact that they were there.

Fanning loved the power of the pen and often was in discussion with various others who were not in agreement with his views. Unlike most other editors, Fanning allowed those who opposed him the right to explain their views in the pages of his paper. This was a privilege not often seen nor extended by other papers. In his first issue, he stated, "We seek,

and invite investigation on every topic connected with man's salvation, and therefore, we say to Jews and Catholics, Protestants, and the world, our pages will always be open for discussion." This policy had the ability to wreck the journal but wise management held the chaos to a minimum.

Franklin College

Franklin College was a large part of Fanning's life and we will try our hardest to bring out the facts here. At Fanning's thirty-fifth birthday his greatest work lay ahead, along with the trials and temptations all earthly men must face. It was in January of 1844 that Fanning was able to actually put his dream into motion and begin what he called "Franklin College," in honor of that name so well-known for learning. Fanning had been dreaming of and planning for this wonderful school. He had been "silent as the tomb" about any religion, but it was his intention to teach the Bible in this new institution. When he had received the charter, the trustees and Fanning met back in the office where Fanning edited *The Agriculturist*. Here they planned the next step in Fanning's dream school. He planned on teaching the Bible, and the majority of professors were from the church of Christ, but it wasn't known as a religious school.

Before the school opened for students, much remained to do. Carpenters, plumbers, and tradesmen were all plying their trade. The school's floorplan was shaped like a large letter "L," and was three stories in height. It measured 120 feet long by 40 feet wide. Two years later Fanning added a large building for the Preparatory Department. This, along with Fanning's own residence, Elm Crag, made for a good number of buildings on the height of the large hill.

Fanning had been planning and saving up for a number of years and he planned on keeping the school as independent as he possibly could. He had invested his life's savings in the institution and still found himself short. He had traveled to every town and village within a short difference but found that he had only raised \$2,000. By the time the school was ready to open, Fanning and Embry had invested nearly \$15,000. There was still a desperate need for another four or five thousand dollars despite large amount just invested. When the school had been in operation for two and a half years, Fanning had spent \$24,000 and was another \$6,000 in debt for

the operation of the facility. He had taken up several different ways of raising funds. One was selling scholarships for \$1,000 each as well as selling stock in the operation to whomever was willing to invest in the future of the institution. There were a number of ways to raise the necessary cash and he was familiar with all of them. In regards to the courses offered at the school, there were three separate departments. The first was the Juvenile, which accepted boys from five to twelve years of age; Preparatory, which took boys above twelve years and readied them for entry into the college; and the college proper which was a four-year study. The Juvenile class was instructed in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, as well as geography, history, music, and a study of the Scriptures. The Preparatory class studied Latin, Greek, mathematics (algebra to quadratic equations), and history (history included "Sacred Literature"). At the sophomore year, the student began chemistry. And in his junior year he commenced his study of geology. By his senior year he began mineralogy as well as mental and moral philosophy (which included rhetoric, logic, political economy, and history). During each year the student studied Latin, Greek, and Mathematics.

There was a call for books and equipment. One of the big donors was Alexander Campbell who sent a number of the *Harbinger* and several copies of each of his books. This was a large donation.

When the second year (1845) came around, there were ninety students registered and Fanning, through *The Christian Review* warned all that there was no more room for students to come and be registered. By August there was a total of one hundred and thirty students registered. The number stayed like that for the next fifteen years.

In mentioning Franklin as being a boy's school, and half of the population being left out, it must be noted that Mrs. Fanning taught a girl's school. Her story now needs to be told as she was half of the Fanning story of success.

Charlotte (Fall) Fanning was born outside of London, England on April 10, 1809. Her family emigrated to America during her childhood and she lost her mother either during the journey or shortly afterwards. She then fell under the tuition of her older brother, Philip S. Fall. His name is also well known and beloved by the fact that he was a gospel preacher and also a teacher. The education that she received from him was very liberal and happened to

prepare her for an occupation as a teacher. It was here where she proved to be very, very good at her job. She taught at the Nashville Female Academy, which was known as the best institution of its kind in Nashville. Sometime during this teaching period, she became acquainted with a rising young preacher. This fellow was a graduate of the University of Nashville and of fine literary attainments. He was also a widower whose wife had only lived a short time and was considered to be available by those who were in the market for such as that. They both had a heart for educating young children and within a few months would open a school for children. This would be a part of the remainder of their lives.

In the year 1856, Fanning announced that he had plans to make a change in the administration of Franklin College. He desired to change the board of trustees to add several Franklin Alumni. The reason for this is that he felt that they would have a greater interest in the institution than would be expected from an outsider. Another change included the business department

When the next semester began in 1857, Fanning felt that it was at its peak of popularity in the brotherhood and most successful. Fanning also was glad that a great deal of responsibility which he had shouldered in previous years would now be borne by others. Being a professor was now the extent of his responsibilities. In 1859, the school became the property of Professors N.B. Smith and William Lipscomb. Like the board of trustees, these two were alumni of the institution.

There was a reason for shedding himself of these responsibilities. One of the main reasons had to do with a controversy that he had been involved in with Robert Richardson of Bethany College. This had been over “spiritual insight” which basically boiled down to a modern form of ancient gnosticism. This came down to, as Fanning would say, “Franklin versus Bethany, *Gospel Advocate* versus *Millennial Harbinger*.” Fanning became so depressed that he confessed sorrow for contact with either school or paper! It had never been intended to happen this way but that was how it ended. Fanning had been painted with the cruelest brush and he was simply tired of the whole thing.

Four long bloody years of war ended in April 1865. After a four-year suspension, Fanning reopened Franklin College on October 2, 1865. Few students were able to attend due to financial reasons

but some were able. Barely three weeks into the term, a lad was burning out the chimney in the dorm. The fire got out of control and the entire facility was gutted by fire. What the war had not done, one young lad was able to accomplish by an accident. The main building of the facility was burned to the ground with an estimated \$30,000-\$40,000 loss. Along with that loss was also around \$20,000 of equipment and books. W.D. Carnes’ priceless library was completely destroyed. **Nothing** was insured!

Later Life

Charlotte Fanning tells that her husband seemed to have his mind set upon some goal. She said: “He was anxious to fulfill his mission, seemed to feel there was not much time left — night would soon come in which no man can work.” Knowing of his legendary stamina, it was hard to imagine him thinking of death in any way.

In 1868 Fanning took his last trip to the south. The places he visited were Mississippi and Alabama. It was here that most of his childhood was spent, as well as years of his early maturity. He wasn’t traveling on Jacob Faithful with his carriage, but on a southbound train headed to Decatur, Alabama. Here, he saw the results of the war in the drought-blighted crops and poverty in society all around. As he traveled on, he was surprised to meet up with a young T.B. Larimore, who was also heading his way. Larimore had graduated from Franklin College a year earlier and had been evangelizing widely. After a day on the train, he arrived back at Memphis, where he spent two Lord’s Days preaching. He did not enjoy the success that had been his constant companion in earlier years. He blamed himself for the failure although it was most likely the result of the war and the Southern attitude after the defeat that they experienced.

Of special note was that several of the brethren thought that they could detect a loss of strength and a generalized change in his usual posture. This is of great interest when one takes into consideration Fanning’s great physical strength and legendary stamina. He no longer moved with great ease and energy for which he was widely known. One day in April, 1874, Fanning went out to the barn to look in on his livestock. He asked a farmhand to lead out a fine bull for him to examine. He expressed fear of the beast and Fanning, being impatient, went to

move the animal himself. The bull made a lunge toward Fanning and nearly killed him on the spot. Fanning was carried to the house and placed in bed. Here, he spent an impatient week. He, being never sick, struggled with staying in bed. April 30, a Thursday, he felt well enough to be up and about. He went out to the barn and upon returning to the house, he felt something inside of him tear as he started up the stairway. From this point on he was in agony on that side. After a few days, it was the Lord's day and Fanning told the doctor that this would be his last day. He called a number of friends to his room and asked that they worship with him. They partook of the supper and he asked them to sing but everyone was too broken up to sing. Fanning begged them to "Sing, sing." By the time they were able to start the song, he was too weak to join them. At this point, he died. His hands were then folded over his heart. It was May 3, 1874.

The funeral was conducted the following day by his friend, Philip S. Fall. Fall stated: "Two objects were near to his heart — first to restore the service of God to the order God gave in the New Testament; second, to place a good industrial and literary education within reach of every youth. He labored to these ends during his life and desired his property devoted

to them after his death." This epitaph was placed on the tombstone of Tolbert Fanning. When the property was acquired for the expansion of the Nashville airport, both Tolbert and Charlotte Fanning were moved to Mt. Olivet Cemetery. It is there where the tombstone may be seen to this day.

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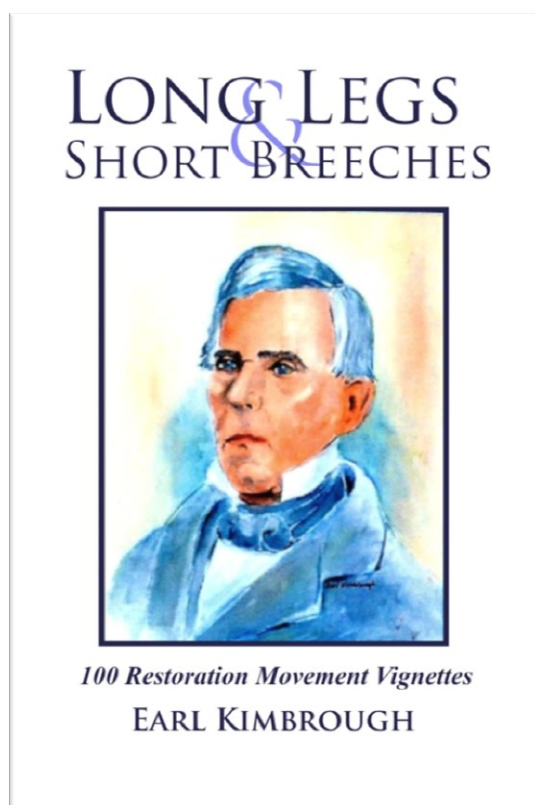
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An Examination of The Book

“A Cappella Music In The Public Worship Of The Church”

By Mark Tabata

One of the first things which visitors to churches of Christ notice is the absence of instrumental music in our worship assemblies.

Considering the entertainment-driven culture of religion found in many common-day churches and denominations, where bands and instruments of all kinds are used to energize and bring forth emotionally charged experiences, the simple order of a cappella music is quite the contrast!

When asked why New Testament Christians do not employ instrumental music in the worship of the church, we respond with the biblical injunction that everything which we practice and teach in the assembly of the saints must be authorized by the Lord (Colossians 3:17). Since only a cappella music is authorized by the Lord, this is the only type of music we employ in the assemblies of the saints (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). To go beyond this is to risk turning true worship (John 4:23-24) into empty worship (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7) or will-worship (Colossians 2:20-23).

While the subject of instrumental music in the church may not be a priority to many, those who are true worshippers of God will carefully consider these matters (John 4:23-24). We are called upon by God to give rational defenses of why we believe what we believe and why we practice what we do (1 Peter 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

It is in that spirit of honest investigation that I would like to share some observations with you (in this and the next two articles) about a book that carefully examines these subjects.

Years ago, brother Everett Ferguson wrote an excellent work entitled *A Capella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*.

Ferguson's book is an exploration of the history of the use of instrumental music in the public worship of the church (as the title suggests). It seeks to carefully examine the relevance of instrumental music in worship, paying special attention to the mention of instrumental music by early Christian writers. His volume is also extremely helpful in that it examines the history of instrumental music through

the Old Testament, as well as considering the use of instrumental music between the Testaments.

As to why such a study is beneficial, Ferguson has pointed out:

“One means of testing an interpretation of New Testament texts is by the background sources. ...Have we read the New Testament correctly? This can be checked in part by the interpretation of the New Testament in early Christian writings and by the practice of the post-New Testament church. Is it an accident that we have no clear reference to instrumental music in the church's worship in the New Testament? Was instrumental music actually used but not referred to? The answer of history is “no.” What is an inference from the New Testament evidence, and the presumption from the church's setting in the context of Judaism, is made explicit in the testimony from church history. When our conclusions about the New Testament evidence concerning the use of the instrument are checked by the writings of the early church, we once more find a negative result.” (Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music In The Public Worship Of The Church*, 860-870 (Kindle Edition); Abilene, TX; Desert Willow Publishing)

Just as Paul encourages Christians to learn from the important history of the Old Testament (Romans 15:4), so we can also learn from the study of church history.

An Interesting Beginning

Ferguson begins his study by mentioning a conversation he had with a friend a number of years ago:

“During my graduate study days at Harvard I lived in the same dormitory with a Greek Orthodox student who was a graduate of the University of Athens and a candidate for an advanced degree at Harvard. I asked him if it was correct that the Greek Orthodox churches did not use instrumental music in their public worship. He said, “Yes.” Then I inquired as to the reasons why. His reply was most interesting to me: “We do not use instrumental music because it is not in the New Testament and it is contrary to the nature of Christian worship.” By this he stated my case exactly for unaccompanied church music. Other Orthodox would add that the tradition of the church is against the practice. A special contribution of this book is to demonstrate the historical evidence of the early Christian centuries.” (pages 85-89)

Three-Fold Outline Of Study

The author goes on to explain that his investigation of a cappella music in the public worship of the church will involve a three-fold study.

First, Ferguson believes a detailed and careful examination of the New Testament Scriptures which discusses music in the worship of the church should (of course) be of primary importance.

Second, he proposes a careful examination of the writings of the post-apostolic Christians (who are often referred to as the church fathers) to determine whether or not they held the same basic views regarding a cappella and instrumental music in the public worship of the church.

Finally, Ferguson would encourage an investigation of other theological or doctrinal subjects to determine whether or not instrumental music should be rejected in the worship of the church.

This article will focus on Ferguson’s investigation of the New Testament Scriptures regarding these topics (and future articles will examine the other two steps in Ferguson’s outline).

The Absence Of Instrumental Music In The New Testament Scriptures

The author quickly points out that the New Testament clearly authorizes a cappella music in the worship of the church, but is also very silent regarding instrumental music in such:

“According to the New Testament evidence, instrumental music was not present in the worship of the early church. Singing incontestably was present in the corporate life of the early Christians (1 Corinthians 14:15, 26; Colossians 3:15 ff.; Ephesians 5:18 ff.), and this was rooted in the practice of Jesus with his disciples (Mark 14:26). But there is no clear reference to instrumental music in Christian worship in any New Testament text.” (pages 95-100)

Brother Ferguson then engages in a detailed study of the Greek word *psallo* (usually translated as psalm).

Psallo

Through the years, advocates of instrumental music in the church have argued that the word *psallo* authorizes the use of the instrument, since the word sometimes meant to pluck (like on an instrument) in the Old Testament era.

Ferguson demonstrates quite convincingly that by the time of the first century, the word *psallo* had come to mean simply to “sing.” Words change over time, and the word *psallo* had likewise evolved to carry the idea of a cappella music.

Our author cites a common English example to demonstrate how such a change can occur over time. The word “lyric” had originally come from a word that had reference to the “lyre,” a stringed instrument; yet now, it simply means the words of a song.

In studying the history of the word *psallo*, Ferguson observations:

“The main controversy has in the past concerned the Greek word *psallo*, which in the history of its usage has referred to both instrumental and vocal music. Consequently, it would seem, no one has been able to estab-

lish with finality that the word necessarily includes or excludes instrumental music. From an earlier classical (500-300 B.C.) meaning “to play,” the word came to mean in Byzantine (after A.D. 300) and modern Greek “to sing” or “to chant.” This transition in meaning was apparently effected by Jewish and early Christian usage. The real question is how the word is used in the specific New Testament texts (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Jas. 5:13). Personally, I am convinced that later ecclesiastical usage and Jewish usage before and contemporary with the New Testament confirm a reference to vocal music exclusively in the New Testament texts.” (pages 100-106)

In describing the specific definitions and etymology of the word, we are told:

“The root meaning of *psallo*, as defined by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, is “pluck,” and so most frequently “to play a stringed instrument.” In this limited sense the word referred to playing an instrument plucked with the fingers. (In a broader sense the word could be used of making music in other ways.) This was the meaning of the word in classical Greek. The Greek language has other words for “to play on an instrument,” such as *kitharizo* (“to play the kithara,” a lyre or harp) and *auleo* (“to play the aulos,” or pipe) in 1 Corinthians 14:7, and *kreko* (“play”). Words meaning just “to sing” were *ado* (compare the noun “ode”) and *humneo* (“to hymn” or “to praise”). On the other hand, E.A. Sophocles’ Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (From B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100) defines *psallo* as “chant, sing religious hymns.” The word thus later completely lost any connotation of an instrument and so in modern Greek (shaped by ecclesiastical usage)

means simply “to sing.” (pages 111-117)

The difficulty lies, as Ferguson explains, in trying to determine exactly when the word *psallo* underwent this change from instrumental to a cappella. There is evidence, for example, that this change took place long before the first century, for there are several Jewish works from the first century B.C. which use *psallo* in reference to a cappella music:

“Conversely, *psallo* with the simple meaning “sing” or “sing praise” (“sing the psalms”) is well attested before New Testament times. Such is the usage of the Psalms of Solomon, Jewish hymns from the first century B.C. usually ascribed to the Pharisees but thoroughly representative of Palestinian religious piety shortly before the time of the New Testament.” (page 143)

Two hundred years earlier, in the third century B.C., the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures were translated into the Greek language. This translation, known as the Septuagint, has some very interesting lessons for us regarding the etymological history of the word *psallo*.

When the scholars who translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek came upon the Hebrew word *nagan*, they used the Greek word *psallo*. This clearly referred to instrumental music in some passages (1 Samuel 16:16-18, 23; 18:10; 19:9).

However, it is when *psallo* is used to translate the Hebrew word *zamar* that things really start getting interesting:

“*Psallo* occurs most frequently in the Septuagint as a translation of *zamar*, a Hebrew word with a similar etymology and development to its Greek translation. It is defined as “make music” in praise of God, and the lexicon cites many instances of “singing,” in a few of which instrumental accompaniment is mentioned in the context (but not included in the word itself), and several instances “of playing musical instruments.” In a few instances where *psallo* translates *za-*

mar, the mention of an instrument with the word shows that the idea is “to play” (Ps. 33:2; 71:22; 98:5; 144:9; 147:7; 149:3). Each of these references is cited by Brown, Driver, and Briggs for “making melody on an instrument” as a definition of *zamar*. The Greek construction in each instance is *psallo* followed by the preposition *en* (“with” or “on”) and the name of the instrument intended by the word *psallo*. Thus Psalms 47:6, 7 concludes in the Septuagint, “Sing [*psalate*] intelligibly.” Psalms 71:23f., “My lips will rejoice when I sing [*psallo*] to you... and my tongue will be concerned with your righteousness all day.” Psalms 105:2, “Sing to him and make melody [*psalate*] to him; narrate all his marvels.” A large number of the occurrences of *psallo* in the Psalms are in passages where the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry is employed. In nearly every case the Septuagint translators have paired *psallo* with a word for vocal praise....The Hebrew word in these verses is defined as “sing” or “sing praise,” and we can assume that the Greek translators understood the Hebrew and sought to convey the same idea by *psallo*. Thus modern translators too have rendered “sing” or “make melody.” Other occurrences of *psallo* in the Septuagint, all once more apparently meant to express singing in praise to God as *zamar* did, are Psalms 7:17; 9:2; 9:11; 30:12; 61:8; 66:2, 4; 75:9; 98:4; 108:3.” (pages 157-195)

Why does this matter?

“If the precise meaning of certain verses may be in doubt, what is clear is that an instrument did not inhere in the word *psallo* in the Septuagint. *Psallo* could translate a word meaning “play” (*nagan*), or a general word (*zamar*). The meaning which would cover all occurrences is “make melo-

dy.” This could include making melody on an instrument, the classical use of the word, but in the preponderance of occurrences it clearly refers to making melody with the voice.” (pages 195-201)

After examining several other ancient authorities and references, Ferguson explains when the basic shift of the word *psallo* began to take place:

“Regardless of the conclusion to be drawn from Philo’s silence, linguistic evidence would seem to indicate that it was in Jewish religious language that we find the shift in usage for *psallo* from instrumental to vocal music (Septuagint, Psalms of Solomon, etc.). Where the instrumental idea was present, it was treated metaphorically (Philo, perhaps the Dead Sea Scrolls). This linguistic development will be seen to correspond to the developments in regard to the music of Jewish worship, which will furnish a further clarification of the background to worship in the early church.” (pages 325-330)

Ferguson goes on to explain the importance of the Jewish synagogue in the years before Christ’s birth in this investigation, and how these were used for teaching and worship among the Hebrews. Interestingly enough, the case may be argued that it was the influence of the Jewish synagogues themselves that brought about the change of the word *psallo* from instrumental to a cappella music:

“There remains no evidence that instrumental music was used in the synagogue service; indeed this holds true until comparatively recent times. ...Since a special vocal use of *psallo* is first and most clearly attested in Jewish religious literature, and since the Psalms were recited without instrumental accompaniment in the synagogue services, a reasonable hypothesis may be suggested for the change in the usage of the word. The change in practice in the synagogue,

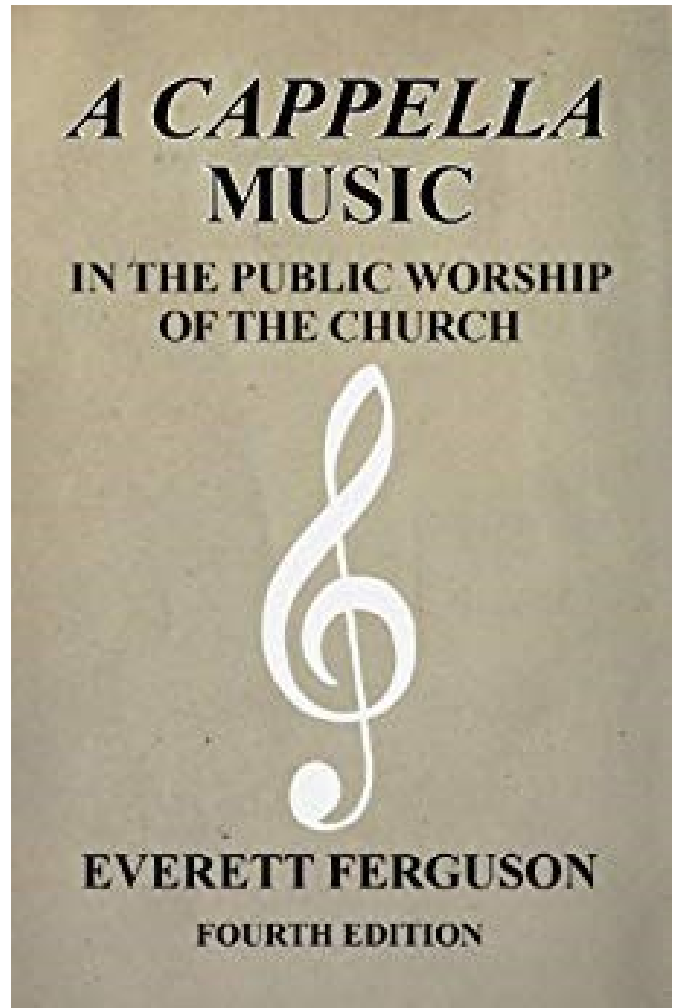
so that the Psalms were used without the instrumental accompaniment that had characterized their use in the Temple, produced a change of meaning in the word so that it meant “to sing the Psalms.” The difference in the way the Psalms were used changed the meaning of *psallo* which was employed to describe this use. Christians derived their use of the word from the Jewish circles in which the church began, not from classical Greek usage. Moreover, Christian worship in many of its practices seems to have followed the worship of the synagogue.” (pages 732-742)

The evidence is therefore very strong that the word *psallo* (by the time of the first century) had come to have reference to a cappella music, and that any inherent quality of the word authorizing instrumental music had been lost long before the dawn of the Christian Age.

Ferguson concludes section one of his book by noting:

“The conclusion drawn from the New Testament texts and from linguistic evidence was that instrumental music was not present in the worship of the New Testament church. This conclusion has further support in the contextual setting of New Testament times. Jewish practices and attitudes (both Rabbinic and Hellenistic) furnish strong presumption against the presence of instrumental music in the early church. The next chapter will test this conclusion by the testimony of church history. Before leaving the New Testament references, we may note in passing that the New Testament gives no negative judgment on instrumental music per se. It makes neutral references to playing on instruments (Matthew 11:17 and parallels), uses instruments as illustrations (1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:7f., with unfavorable connotations it may be noted), and compares the heavenly wor-

ship to the sound of instruments (Revelation 14:2f., probably under the influence of Old Testament and Temple practice). A parallel to the last reference may be seen in Revelation 5:8 with its figurative use of incense from the temple worship. The situation is simply that instruments are not referred to in the church’s worship.” (pages 838-848)



(EDITOR’S NOTE: At the time this issue of *The Quarterly* went to press, brother Ferguson’s book was available on Amazon.com in paperback for \$7.99, and in Kindle format for \$2.99.)

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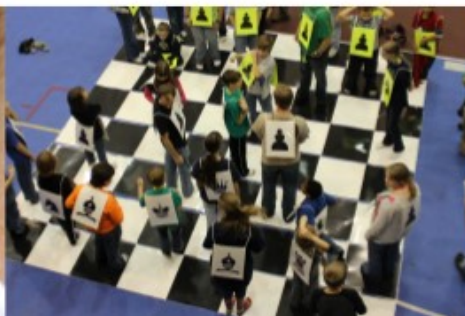
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Paul Darst:

A Novel

By D.R. Lucas

Chapter Twenty-One: Science and the Bible

We left our friends in Dr. Van Buren's office engaged in discussion. Henry had returned to the subject, and began to file his objections to the inspiration of the Bible. We will listen for a short time again.

HENRY — "My great objection to the Bible is that it contradicts the teachings of science."

LOVE — "Select the greatest contradiction you can find and let us try it."

HENRY — "Joshua commanded the sun to stand still to lengthen a day, and science has clearly demonstrated that it is the earth that moves."

LOVE — "Very true, but did the people understand that in Joshua's day?"

HENRY — "Of course not."

LOVE — "Suppose that Joshua had commanded the earth to stand still instead of the sun, would the people have understood it?"

HENRY — "Not without a revelation on astronomy."

LOVE — "That is it exactly, and the very purpose declared in revelation would have been destroyed, which is simply to teach man those things which he cannot learn otherwise."

HENRY — "Well, why not make a revelation on that subject?"

LOVE — "For a good reason. All progress is the result of development, and knowledge must be the result of human endeavor. If knowledge cost a man no effort, mind would deteriorate instead of progressing."

HENRY — "That is one truth you have stated, but the logical consequences will destroy all revela-

tion. If you say that God has given us no revelation on geology, astronomy, or any other science, because man can learn those himself, where is the necessity for a revelation at all?"

LOVE — "Paul clearly states it, 2nd Tim. 3:15, 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.' This wisdom is beyond the power of human endeavor, consequently God reveals it. But in so doing he accommodates himself to the scientific language of the people in the age when he speaks, concerned, not about the question of science, but that his power as a Savior and deliverer shall be known."

HENRY — "But my point is this: Admitting that God has made a revelation on the subject of immortality and a future life or salvation as you call it, that knowledge has come to man without effort on his part, and consequently he cannot be benefited by it, on your own principle."

LOVE — "But God takes care of that in making the revelation, he makes it in such a way that it requires study and effort on the part of man to gain the knowledge though it be by revelation. He makes the revelation gradually through four thousand years, in promises, types, and shadows, and at last by a demonstration, making the Bible of fragments gathered here and there along the way."

HENRY — "Then ignorant men cannot understand it, and the learned have the advantage."

LOVE — "No. The first lessons in faith and duty are so plain that the humblest mind can grasp them, while there are questions of Providence, Divine Condescension, and Eternity, that the loftiest mind can study and grow forever."

DARST — “That explains one thing that has troubled me, why the Bible is composed of history, prophecy, miracles, law, and commandments.”

LOVE — “Just like science exactly. The ignorant man opens his eyes to the sun and beholds the day. He sees that it is adapted to benefit him, and it does, though he may even think the sun moves and the earth stands still. So an ignorant man may have a desire for immortality, to live beyond the grave. The demonstration of immortality in the death and resurrection of Jesus meets a want in his nature, he embraces it and is benefited by it, though he may not comprehend or understand all about the origin of the universe or the development of God’s government.”

HENRY — “Well, you make the best explanation of it I ever heard, but still the earth moves and not the sun.”

LOVE — “Yes. But because I say the ‘sun rises,’ and the ‘sun sets,’ when I speak to a man who knows nothing about astronomy, it does not follow that I am contradicting science, for I use an accommodated language, and when God talks to an ignorant people and accommodates his language to their capacities, who but a tyro in logic would think he was contradicting science.”

JOB — “Well, my unregenerated friend, if that objection ain’t answered then I am a ignoramus certain.”

HENRY — “No one will doubt the last part of your statement, Job, whatever they may think of the former.”

The laugh was on Job this time and he enjoyed it as well as the rest.

Chapter Twenty-Two:

The Return of Rose

When Rose received her father’s letter she was overwhelmed with sorrow, it was so different from what she anticipated. It seemed to her the change wrought in her own mind was so complete and perfect, that when the facts were presented to her father he must certainly acquiesce in her obedience for herself, even if he was not convinced that she was right. She had forgotten that the mere statement of the facts she had elicited and the conclusions she had reached, did not fall upon an ear as ready to hear and a heart as unprejudiced as her own. The first impression was that she would return and marry Paul and give up religion entirely, but the words of Jesus, “He that loveth father or mother, husband or wife, or

houses and lands, more than me, is not worthy of me,” dispelled the unworthy thought so soon that it was only a momentary impulse. The next thought was one of some bitterness, so varying are the passions of the human soul. It was the disgust that is so near akin to disappointment. The person is a true philosopher, indeed, that can bear a cruel disappointment with perfect equanimity, where it is the result of an exercise of the will and not a stoical indifference. From her infancy she had been taught that it was a felicitous and delectable arrangement, there were so many different creeds and churches in the world, so everyone could have a right to his choice. They could take the one they thought nearest the Bible, and most in harmony with their convictions, and thus all be satisfactory. She had always heretofore accepted the creed of her father without question; but now, when she proposed to exercise the choice she had heard preached from her childhood, to be told that her father had settled the matter before she was old enough to think for herself, roused her to an appreciation of the hypocrisy there was in the plea. Thousands of persons make it honestly and sincerely, no doubt, from a feeling of liberality, little thinking as they do so that if true, an absolute standard of right and wrong, good and evil, is an utter impossibility. If Christ instituted or established a church, and it is certain that he did, and gave it a law, a rule of action, a standard of duty, then all the possible volition, or choice any person can have is to obey or disobey. Rose had inherited something of the spirit of her father, toned down by a more loving and loveable quality of deferences in her disposition. She sat down and made the following reply:

DEAR FATHER: — Your letter surprised me as greatly as mine could have astonished you. I regret exceedingly that my duty seems to lead me away from my father and contrary to his wishes, but I have made up my mind that it is my duty to be immersed, and I must follow the leading of duty, go where it may. In everything else I hope I shall be an obedient daughter, but when it comes to a conscientious conviction of religious duty, I cannot submit. It were idle for me to write farther when the decision has been deliberately reached in my own heart.

Tonight, I shall obey my Master in being immersed, and on Monday shall return home, as you seem to be dissatisfied with my coming here. In everything but the surrender of my religious convictions, I am Your obedient daughter,

ROSE LEYDEN.

At the close of the services that evening, Rose made the confession of her faith in Jesus, according to the ancient practice, and was buried with him by baptism. Mr. Linn, having learned something of the sorrows through which she was passing, prayed earnestly for the blessing of God upon her, that she might ever honor the cause of Christ, be faithful unto death, and receive the crown of life.

“Are prayers ever answered?” asks Prof. Tyndal. Let us hope that one will be at least.

Many of the brethren and sisters had noticed her sweet, though saddened countenance in the congregation, and on the Lord’s day gave her a cordial greeting, whispering words of courage and sympathy into the heart that strengthened her greatly. Sympathy is an element of power to the submissive soul, yet the sweetest manna to an earnest human heart is the consciousness of duty faithfully performed. We retain that much of the image of our Creator.

The next day she bade a kind adieu to her friends and started for home, alas, would it be home to her any longer? A full realization of her situation would bring tears to her eyes in spite of all her efforts to repress her feelings. Though the car in which she took passage was full, yet she seemed alone. To be in a large crowd of strangers is sometimes the saddest of loneliness. A woman sat near her whose dress and appearance betokened deep sorrow, and

Rose, with heart ever full of sympathy, began to wonder what her life had been. The lady noticed her look of interest and they soon fell into conversation. Rose thought her trials great, but when her companion told her story — how three years before she had left her father’s house, a happy bride, with a husband worthy of her purest affection which she had

so lavishly bestowed upon him, how a sweet babe had come as a pledge of their hallowed love, like an angel to their home, how every hour passed in sweetest hope, then how she had watched the struggle of life and death over the cradle of their child, until the reaper death took the little flower away, how they laid the little form in the tomb, the cold damp earth, like many others, for,

*“There are tiny
mounds where the
hopes of earth,
Are laid ‘neath the
tear wet mould,”*

how her husband had sickened and died, breathing out his life on her bosom,

until she held alone the unconscious clay, how her heart stood still as she laid down the head, from whose eyes the soul would look no more, how they buried him by the side of the little one, and how, sad, desolate, and lonely, she was going back to the old home — Rose forgot her sorrow and said she would never complain of her lot again.

It is by comparison that we may augment or lessen our sorrows, and it is this trait in the character of Jesus that places him in the human heart above all mere logical deductions, and before Jesus of Nazareth can be dethroned from the hearts of men, sorrow must be removed from the earth. “Jesus wept” is a sermon no infidel can answer while men must weep. “He was bruised for our iniquities” is greater than any shibboleth of cold materialism, while men are bruised by sin. “He was a man of sorrows” outweighs all metaphysical philosophy with those who



are journeying in the valley and shadow of the sorrowed mountains. "I am the resurrection, and the life" is better than honor, wealth, riches, or fame, to a soul in the deep swellings of the river of death, or in its contemplation, since men must die. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," has done more to plant the image of fraternal love in the unfathomable fountains of the human soul, to quiet the storm of raging passion, to soothe the spirit of wrath, to make sweet thoughts, like angelic visitors, draw near, than all the stoicism of Socrates, the epics of Homer, the "unknowable" philosophy of Herbert Spencer, or the martial form of Bonaparte.

*"Jesus wept, behold his tears!
In them all his love appears,
Jesus wept."*

Chapter Twenty-Three: Character of Miracles

Paul Darst and Mr. Love met one evening when the following colloquy ensued:

DARST. — "The view that you present of the Bible, I must confess, makes it a different book to me. I have read the infidel theory of miracles, and conversed so often with Henry, who talks much of their absurdity, that I cannot fully understand their purpose."

LOVE. — "The purpose of every miracle is to be found in the surroundings; for God always accommodates himself in their performance to the necessities of the case. The miracle is always adapted to the purpose for which it is wrought."

DARST. — "I have read Voltaire and others, and they speak contemptuously of them, especially the miracles in Egypt, such as troubling the people with vermin, and, under the personal ministry of Christ, such as withering the fig tree."

LOVE. — "That is simply because they do not look at the surroundings. If they would look at the circumstances and remember that the Israelites had imbibed some of their idolatry, and that the Egyptians were idolaters, and that God must show his power over the gods of Egypt, and his love for Israel, before they would be willing to follow the lead of Moses, or the Egyptians to let them go, it would be perfectly plain. Moses must show that the God he worships is greater than all the gods of Egypt (Exodus 14:17), and Jesus must show that he is the Son

of God (John 20:30), and that is the purpose of their miracles."

DARST. — "As you have studied the question, I wish you would give me the purpose of each miracle."

LOVE. — "I will do so, and, in order to get the matter clear, you name the plagues or miracles in order, and I will give the purpose in as few words as possible."

DARST. — "I will. Why was the Nile turned to blood?"

LOVE. — "It was the great source of Egyptian prosperity, as it irrigated and watered the country, and they worshipped it. When God turned the Nile to blood they were convinced that the God of Moses was greater than the Nile. Was there any other miracle that would have accomplished this?"

DARST. — "None. That was just the one to do it. Why did God create the frogs?"

LOVE. — "The Egyptians regarded the frog as a sacred reptile, because it dwelt in the Nile. God would show them that they were not worthy of worship, for he could create just such gods."

DARST. — "Why did God create the lice to trouble the people?"

LOVE. — "According to the laws of their mythology, no Egyptian priest could make an offering to any of their gods with one of these vermin upon him, and their idolatrous worship must cease. Much cavil has been made at this miracle, but it shows the divine wisdom of the God of Moses, for it was the only miracle that would contaminate the priesthood."

DARST. — "Why did God create the flies?"

LOVE. — "To break down the insect worship, by showing that he could make such gods as they worshiped."

DARST. — "Why did he send a murrain to destroy the cattle?"

LOVE. — "To stop the sacred cattle worship."

DARST. — "Why did he create locusts?"

LOVE. — "They worshiped various vegetables, and God would show them that he could create locusts to eat them up."

DARST. — "Why did God send the hail?"

LOVE. — "The Egyptians worshiped the clouds, and God would teach them that he was above and greater than the clouds, for he could make them destructive by hail instead of blessing by rain. This would stop their cloud worship."

DARST. — “Why was the great darkness over the earth for three days?”

LOVE. — “They worshiped the sun, moon, and stars and God would teach them that he was greater than these gods, for he had the power to stop their light when it pleased him.”

The Egyptians would reason from all these miracles that the God of Moses was greater than all the gods of Egypt, and let the children of Israel go.

DARST. — “But there is one miracle yet, the death of the firstborn.”

LOVE. — “Yes: all the gods of Egypt have been overcome, but the priesthood still remains, and the firstborn in that land are the priests. To utterly destroy their idolatry and test the faith of the Children of Israel in him, God institutes the passover and sprinkling of blood upon the doorposts. The death angel passes over the land, and all the Egyptian priests are dead, while God, having saved the firstborn of the Israelites, claims them for his priesthood, for whom, afterward, the tribe of Levi is substituted. Every step is on the basis of a reasonable education of the people.”

DARST. — “But why did God take them across the Red Sea. I can see no reason or necessity for that?”

LOVE. — “The Israelites, seeing the mighty wonders of God in Egypt, recognized his power, but did not know whether to trust it or not. They feared God, but did not know whether to love him or not. Hence God leads them into a place where there is no escape, except through the sea, to show them that he loved them and that they should love him as a deliverer. We love those who treat us kindly and save us from danger. I am told that you once saved a young lady from drowning. Is it so?”

DARST. — “Yes: and the look of gratitude and love she gave me will go with me to the last day of my life.”

LOVE. — “That is natural. So when the Israelites crossed the sea as by dry land and were delivered, while the Egyptians were drowned, it was such a signal mark of God’s favor and love that all the people rejoiced, Moses and the people rejoiced, and Miriam and the women took their timbrels and sang, ‘The Lord hath triumphed gloriously, the rider and his horse he hath thrown into the sea.’ (Ex. 15:1). As the poet Moore so grandly says:

‘Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea;

Jehovah has triumphed — his people are free,

*Sing — for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave;
How vain was their boasting, the Lord hath but
spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.*

*Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea:
Jehovah has triumphed — his people are free.’”*

DARST. — “That opens a new field of thought, indeed. Surely there must be something of divine wisdom and power in all this.”

Chapter Twenty-Four:

Miracles of Jesus

After a short pause, in which both seemed to be in deep meditation, the conversation was resumed.

DARST. — “But about the miracles of Jesus. Why did Jesus turn water into wine?”

LOVE. — “To show his absolute power over the elements. If his claim to be the Son of God is to be admitted, he must show his God-like power. The reason he turned water into wine was because it demonstrated his power to change one element into another, and the circumstances were such that the proof could be made patent and plain to all.”

DARST. — “Why was the fig-tree withered? Henry says he got mad at the fig-tree because it was not time for figs, and withered it, to show his anger.”

LOVE. — “Henry shows himself thereby to be a very shallow thinker. God has the power to cause all things to grow, and if Jesus is the Son of God, he must show that he has the same power, and how better can it be done than by causing a fig-tree to wither away. Instead of showing anger he does it to show that all the trees in the world grow by his power, and that he could cause them all to wither away at the bidding of his will.”

DARST. — “Why did Jesus feed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fish?”

LOVE. — “He knew when the people were following him that they had nothing to eat, but he would teach them that he had power to create food, if necessary, to supply them. The withering of the fig-tree teaches the lesson of negative dependence, while the feeding of the five thousand shows a posi-

tive power to create bread, to lead men to trust his beneficent power.”

DARST. — “Why did he heal the sick?”

LOVE. — “In a general sense, to show his power over disease, one of the consequences of sin. In some cases other specific lessons are taught.”

DARST. — “Give me an instance.”

LOVE. — “Healing the man with the palsy. He asked if it were easier to heal the palsy than to forgive sins. Those who stood by admitted there could be no difference in the power, hence he says: ‘That ye may know the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto the sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed and walk.’ And he arose, took up his bed and walked.”

DARST. — “That has often been quoted to me when I was seeking religion.”

LOVE. — “Yes; this miracle is often abused in that way. It is simply to prove the power of Christ to forgive sins, but does not teach the terms on which he will forgive. That is to be learned from the apostles, under the commission ‘to preach the gospel to every creature; to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ Luke 24:44.

DARST. — “Why did Jesus heal the dumb, etc.?”

LOVE. — “To inculcate the idea that ‘he that hath ears to hear, let him hear,’ in token of the fact that ‘faith comes by hearing.’ He cast out evil spirits to show his power over the unseen world — to show that ‘even the demons are subject unto him,’ as he calmed the sea to show that ‘even the winds and the sea obey him.’”

DARST. — “What is the lesson of the transfiguration?”

LOVE. — “Peter, James, and John were there as representatives of the present state; Moses, whose body was buried on Mount Nebo, as a representative of the intermediate state, between death and the resurrection; and Elijah, who was taken to heaven without death, as a representative of the eternal state. The voice of God from the cloud acknowledged Jesus as his beloved Son, and said, ‘hear ye him,’ to teach us that Jesus is Lord of the present, intermediate, and eternal states, that he is ‘Lord of all.’”

DARST. — “Why have we a record of the raising to life of Jarius’ daughter, the widow of Nain’s son, and Lazarus?”

LOVE. — “Primarily to show his power over the grave, at the same time to show that in the resurrection there will be no distinction, the nobleman’s daughter and a poor widow’s son, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the proud and the humble, the king and the beggar, will all be raised, while as he loved Lazarus, it teaches that those who love and honor Jesus will enjoy the better resurrection. In these, and in his own resurrection, we have the demonstration that he is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ with power over death and the grave.”

DARST. — “I see now that Jesus pursued the only course possible to demonstrate that he was the Son of God with power, but how does he show his love?”

LOVE. — “You have only to read a few passages of Scripture to see that clearly. ‘For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’ Rom. 5:7.”

DARST. — “Am I to believe that as a matter of fact?”

LOVE. — “Certainly, it is a fact that Jesus died to show God’s love and rose again to show God’s power.”

DARST. — “That has always been a mystery to me. How can we say that ‘Christ died for us,’ — how his blood can take away sin?”

LOVE. — “It is very plain. Mankind have transgressed the law of God and are therefore sinners. The law or justice says they must suffer. Jesus takes upon himself the nature of man and keeps the law, never commits a sin, and when the law takes his life it sheds innocent blood — blood that it has no right to shed. Mercy and love step in and say to justice and law, as you have taken what does not belong to you, the blood of an innocent person, you cannot complain if we save the guilty; hence, ‘God can be just and justify him that believeth in Jesus.’”

DARST. — “Surely, I can say ‘Thou almost persuaded me to be a Christian.’”

THE CONVERSION OF *Paul Darst*

By D.R. Lucas



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Why Don't Some People Believe in the 1,000-Year Reign of Jesus?

Question: A man was talking to me today about the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, and he said that some people don't believe it will happen. Why would people ignore such a clear Bible doctrine? — Jack T., Oklahoma.

The main reason some people (like myself) deny the doctrine of a thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth is because it's not in the Bible.

I'll wait a second for you to calm back down before I continue.

There are several problems with the idea of a “1,000-year reign,” and we'll only be able to deal with them briefly. The primary issue with each of them is that people have started assuming things that aren't actually in the text, and then they've made them into doctrine.

The only place that mentions a thousand-year reign is in Revelation 20, and so it is to there we must go for our answers.

1. Jesus isn't the one reigning for 1,000 years.

Let's look at the text:

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and **they** lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).*

The subject of this verse is not Jesus. The subjects of this verse are those who had been martyred for the cause of Christ. It is **they**, not Jesus, who are said to reign a thousand years.

I'm sure that right now, you think I'm grasping at straws here, but let's prove this assertion by way of an illustration.

Imagine you have lost your job and you need a place to live. So, I invite you to come live in my house. Now, let's say you live there for almost three years (let's say 1,000 days). I would say that you lived **with** me in my house for 1,000 days. Does this information tell you how long **I** lived in my house? No, it doesn't. It only tells you how long **you** lived in my house with me.

Revelation 20:4 says nothing about how long **Christ** reigns. It only tells how long the martyred saints reigned **with** Him. The fact is, The Bible states that Jesus began reigning in the first century (Acts 2:32-33; Revelation 1:9; Colossians 1:13).

2. This verse is not literal.

How can you say that? Of course it's literal! There's nothing in the verse to make us think otherwise!!!

If this verse is to be taken literally (as is claimed by many well-meaning believers), then you have a really sticky problem:

Jesus has to die again.

Most people focus on the *reigning* part of this verse, and tend to ignore the *living* part. If the thousand years is literal, then that means Christ ceases to reign at the end of the thousand years — but more than that, Christ must also cease *living*.

Let's also look at another problem this verse presents, if we are to take it literally. The only ones who are allowed to live and reign with Christ are the ones who have no head, and who were killed for the faith. That means that if you died a natural death, you can't live or reign with Christ. This also means that if you were killed for the faith, but by some way other than beheading, you cannot live or reign with Christ.

And one more problem presented by taking this verse literally: the only ones allowed to live and reign with Christ are the ones who had *already* been beheaded for the faith when John wrote this down. This is written in past tense, speaking of something that had already happened.

So, if we take this verse literally, no one today (or for the past 1900 years) has any hope of living and reigning with Christ — and Christ has to die again. These conclusions are demanded if we take this verse literally. And these conclusions contradict other passages of the New Testament.

Therefore this verse is not meant to be taken literally.

3. This reigning is not on earth.

Go ahead and read all of chapter twenty. Nowhere in that chapter does it place Jesus Christ on earth, let alone Jerusalem. With so many doctrines existing about Jesus reigning on a literal throne in literal Jerusalem on the literal earth, you'd think those items would be mentioned here — but they're not.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ existed during the first century. The apostle John said he was a part of it *while he was alive* in the first century (Revelation 1:9). The apostle Paul said that Christians had been (past tense) translated into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). There can be no kingdom without a king. Since Jesus' kingdom existed in the first century, Jesus was already a king in the first century.

Since Jesus was already a king 2,000 years ago, that means He's been reigning over His kingdom for close to 2,000 years already. And He's been doing it from the throne in heaven (Acts 2:32-33).

4. Revelation isn't about things which haven't happened.

The most common assertion about Revelation is that it is describing something that hasn't happened yet. But that view contradicts what the Bible says about the book of Revelation.

God makes it extremely obvious that the things which are in Revelation are things that were “at hand” and “shortly come to pass” **when John wrote it** — *in the first century!* The book opens with those statements (1:1, 3). The book closes with those statements (22:6, 10). It is the bold man indeed who calls God a liar by saying the things in Revelation are about things that were 2,000+ years away from the lifetime of the original readers.

Conclusion:

Jack, I do hope this helps you understand the topic better. The reason why some people (including myself) deny that there will be a literal reign of Jesus Christ on earth for a literal thousand years is that ***the Bible doesn't teach it***. Christ has been reigning from His throne in heaven for almost 2,000 years already. And the verses that people go to in order to “prove” the thousand-year reign don't actually say what they claim.

About the Authors

Travis Anderson grew up in Southwest Missouri until moving to Bedford, TX to attend the BTSOP at age 25. Upon graduation in 2014, he and his family moved to minister to the Northside Church of Christ in Bismarck, IL, where he currently preaches. He is the father of two wonderful children and recently became engaged. He enjoys both playing and coaching softball and baseball and occasionally finds time for a video game or two when he's not spending time with his family or doing the work of a minister.

Jamie Beller has been a preacher in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and South Carolina. He presently works with the church of Christ in Prague, Oklahoma, while also working full-time at Tinker Air Force Base. He loves discussing the Bible with friends and strangers alike.

Isaiah Caesar Bie says: I am Isaiah Ceasar Bie, 20, from the Philippines. I preach for the San Felipe church of Christ in the City of Ilagan, Province of Isabela, while finishing my bachelor's degree in Law. By God's grace, I am what I am.

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 is married to the former Julie Johnson. They have two young children and reside in Elk City, OK. Preaching for about a decade, he is currently the preaching servant for the 2nd & Adams congregation in Elk City. He enjoys fishing, martial arts, and spending time with his family and friends. His greatest desire is to glorify God with his life and to encourage others to do the same.

Gerald Cowan has been preaching the gospel for over 50 years. In addition to many mission trips to Albania, he has also taught in the British Bible School, and has spent the past 2 ½ decades working for the Lord in Southern Illinois. He has an email publication (Gerald Cowan's Personal Periodical) that he sends out for free to all who are interested.

David Dean lives in Purcell, Oklahoma with his wife, Catherine, daughter, Liliana, and two cats. Currently, David is a student with WVBS with hopes to start working towards his English Degree at the University of Oklahoma later this year. When he is not studying the Word of God, he can be found at home reading comics and fantasy novels.

Emmanuel Essoun is a former Muslim Imam, who since converted to Christianity. He spends his time trying to convince Muslims about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Kyle Frank is a Christian, Restoration Movement enthusiast, and book lover. His writings have appeared in *Gospel Light* as well as *Faith and Facts Quarterly*. He edited a three-volume set of the Life and Letters of Jacob Creath Jr., two volumes on Elder Benjamin Franklin, the autobiography of Daniel Sommer, as well as compiling *The Lost Sermons of H. Leo Boles*. His latest book is *A Life Richly Lived: The Life and Writings of Tolbert Fanning*.

Perry Hall has been preaching over 30 years, and has degrees in History and Philosophy. He has been married since 1984. When not having back surgery, he enjoys riding motorcycles and adopting children. He can be found online at PerryDox.com.

Bill Howard has served the Lord for more than half a century, preaching in small congregations, and recently retired as an elder in Dale, Oklaho-

ma. His latest book for growing Christians, *Father I have Sinned*, was released last summer. A former restaurateur who still loves to cook, he also writes detective novels and books for new converts.

William Howard lives in a house with people who actually tolerate him. How that happened no one really knows. It is a very accommodative arrangement for the likes of him. Should you have any interest here are three facts about William. (1) As a child William was confused by sock monkeys. Though he wears socks and finds monkeys intrinsically funny, combining the two seems like the fallout of a GMO misadventure. (2) William once drove a truck around the parking lot of a Hindu temple with twenty pounds of ground beef in a cooler. Though that was not his goal that is what he managed to do. Karma has yet to find him. (3) William attempted standup comedy in front of a large international audience. Most of them possessing low levels of English comprehension. While in the middle of the set he noticed everyone had the universal expression of uneasy bafflement. If laughter and delight were the targets, then he missed. He feels pretty good about it though since he survived. The audience was far more confused than angry. William left quietly and realized this is what it was like to work a comedy club in Babel. Sometimes humor can be a lost cause and there's nothing to be done but walk away quickly, which is exactly what the comedians did in Babel. Aside from all that, William is currently enjoying the peace and pleasant things about him. And still they let him preach on Sunday.

John Krivak John Krivak has been a Restoration Movement enthusiast since the baptismal waters flooded over him, and has a special appreciation for Alexander Campbell. His studies of the Bible at Harding University emphasized Biblical Languages, and his favorite professor was Dr. Paul Pollard. Contact him at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Daniel R. Lucas has been dead for 110 years, so there's really nothing new going on in his life.

Mark McWhorter is a former medical professional, a research fanatic, history nut, missionary, book-seller (with his wife, Teah), and he's recent-

ly taken an interest in real estate. He has written for several brotherhood papers, spoken on several lectureships, presented Restoration Movement seminars, and was integral in starting Roundhouse, an annual gathering of members of the church who homeschool. He also has, from time to time, gone dumpster diving.

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 currently attends West Valley church of Christ and is planning to attend Freed-Hardeman University this fall.

Michael Shank is a former office equipment guru who later ran his own electrical business. Between those two jobs, he became a preacher and wrote some book called *Muscle and a Shovel*. If you've not read it (hundreds of thousands have), you should. Then read the sequel, *When Shovels Break*. And when you finish those two, you might check out his western novel, *Revel Knox*.

Mark Tabata is a man from whom the editor completely forgot to ask for a bio until it was past the deadline. So, while he's a fine person who enjoys reading brotherhood books on the Kindle, he wasn't able to give a more extensive description of himself before we went to press. (EDIT: He responded just in time, to make your editor look good: He has been preaching full time for twenty years, and is currently working with the Couchtown church of Christ. He's a fan of Robert Jordan's 'The Wheel Of Time' series.)

Bradley Cobb shouldn't be permitted near power tools with blades on them. At least, that's what the E.R. doctor seemed to imply as he was stitching up the finger that Bradley tried to cut off with an electric hedge trimmer. He probably would have said something about the knee injury caused by the chainsaw, but Bradley wouldn't let him. Rumor has it that shortly after leaving the E.R., Bradley borrowed someone's chop saw. If no issue of the Quarterly arrives in October, you should probably assume it has to do with another injury. In his spare time, he loads packages ranging from 1 to 147 pounds on the back of various brown trucks, trucks which have the yellow letters "UPS" on the side of them.