

This is Reality

Biblical Biography:  
Matthias

Q&A: Disfellowship

Jesus: King

Jesus: Judge of the  
Quick and the Dead

Jesus: Friend of Sinners

Jesus: The Great Physician

Jesus: Our Great High Priest

Jesus: The Bridegroom

Jesus: Prophet

Zombies at the Lord's Table

An Exercise in Futility

How Much of the  
Directions do You Want?

Experiences and  
Mistakes of J.D. Tant

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Future

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# THE *Quarterly*

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# The Quarterly

Volume 4 – Number 3 – July 2020

## UNDERSTANDING JESUS

Jesus Christ can't be easily (let alone completely) described or explained in a single sentence, paragraph, article, or even book. In fact, millions of pages have been written, and millions of sermons have been given, since His ascension, trying to help Christians better understand the roles that Jesus fills. To help us better appreciate what He did on our behalf, seven authors have kindly submitted articles on specific roles of Jesus, and attempt to show us why that role is important for us.

Included among those articles are two by new contributors to the *Quarterly*. Phil Sanders, long-time preacher and speaker of *In Search of the Lord's Way* ([www.SearchTV.org](http://www.SearchTV.org)), writes on the importance of Jesus as our Great High Priest. Chris Gardner, who likes to preach where it snows, writes on Jesus as the Judge of the quick and the dead. You will be benefitted by reading these, as well as the other five articles (Jesus as King, Friend of Sinners, the Bridegroom, Prophet, and the Great Physician), which will give you a fuller picture of the work and mission of Jesus Christ.

Additionally, in this issue, we bring back a feature from our first year of publication: Bible Q&A. Our question (or more accurately, group of questions) for this issue deals with disfellowshipping. It is a subject that is sadly ignored or minimized in the church today.

We also would be remiss if we didn't urge you to read the work of the late Jimmie Beller in this issue, giving us the history of our black brethren in Oklahoma. It comes from a book he was writing on the history of the church of Christ in that state. And if you want more Restoration Movement, check out "Experiences and Mistakes of J.D. Tant," written by Mr. Tant himself.

If you're a fan of poison ivy, or stories relating to it and Mt. Stupid, you'll want to read William Howard's article, "This is reality."

Add to these things Gerald Cowan's "Zombies at the Lord's Table," Jake Schotter's continued look at Hebrews 11, Mark McWhorter's "Tabernacle Shadows," and... well, honestly, you could just turn the page and read the table of contents to everything in this issue. They are all worth reading.

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

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(AKA: The Contents of the Quarterly)

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# How Much of the Directions Do You Want?

*An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb*

When we lived in Oklahoma, GPS on your phone was still a work in progress. I can distinctly remember driving down a road that had been there for years, but our handy-dandy GPS map didn't know it existed. According to it, we were driving in the middle of a field. It kept telling us to turn around and go back to the last intersection. Another time, we were on the interstate, and apparently they had re-routed it within the previous year or two, because the GPS kept telling us to turn left onto side streets—it had no idea the new interstate path was open (or even that it existed). While it meant well (if a machine can mean well), it was giving us faulty directions. And if we had followed those directions, (1) we wouldn't have gotten where we wanted to go, and (2) it could have proven fatal.

I remember, several years ago, having a Bible study with a man. He had a rough past with drugs, alcohol, money, and marriage. Ultimately, he obeyed the gospel, but later he stopped attending, moved with his family to another state, and died from a heart attack (he had gotten back on drugs, so that may have been the cause of it). But it was during that Bible study that the idea of directions came to mind.

I asked him if he believed the Bible was from God (I had to know where to start with him, after all). He said he did, but that he believed it had lots of mistakes in it. So I asked him to show me some of them, and he admitted that it was just something he had heard other people say, and assumed it was true. Next, I asked him if he knew what someone must do in order to be saved. He answered, "Ask Jesus into your heart." As I'm sure you know, dear readers, that command is never found in the Bible. Nowhere is someone told to "ask Jesus into their heart" in order to be a Christian. The closest thing to this concept is when Jesus tells *the church* (Christians!) in Laodicea that they had kicked Him out of their hearts, and He wanted back in.

So, what we did next was something that opened up his eyes. We started going through the New Testament (we had already established that no one can be told how to become a Christian from the Old Testament, because there were no Christians in the Old Testament), and we wrote down many things that it said saves us (or obviously equivalent terms). It is quite a list. (Note: there are many more verses that could be added to each point)

- God's love (John 3:16).
- God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- God's Son (Acts 4:10-12).
- Christ's blood (Acts 20:28).
- Christ's word (James 1:21).
- Christ's life (Romans 5:10).
- Hope (Romans 8:24).

- Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 10:9).
- Calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21).
- Confessing Jesus (Romans 10:9).
- Repenting of one's rebellion against God (Acts 2:36-38).
- Being baptized into Christ (1 Peter 3:21).

The above is not an exhaustive list, and doesn't include things expected by God for those who wish to *stay* in a right relationship with Him after obeying the gospel.

As we read each verse, I asked him, "What does this verse say saves us?" and I had him write it down, with the verse reference.

If you ask someone for directions to get from Knoxville, TN to Los Angeles, CA, they might say, "Take I-40." Someone else might tell you where the on-ramp is. Another person might tell you what exit to get off on, while yet another advises taking a bypass here or there. And of course, some wise guy might tell you that the first thing you need to do is get in your car and back out of your driveway.

You see, each of those directions are true—but you can't pick and choose which ones you want to follow and still make it to your destination. Just getting on I-40 won't get you to L.A. (especially if you end up going east instead of west). Backing out of your driveway isn't enough to get you there. It requires *all* of those directions put together to get you to your destination.

The same is true with salvation. A lot of folks in the religious world want to point to just one or two parts of the divine directions for salvation, and then leave the rest as optional. Some folks preach "grace alone" salvation—the idea that God decides to pour out His grace on someone to save them, and there's nothing that person can do to resist it. Others teach a "faith only" salvation, believing anything more than that would count as "works," and thus would be heresy. Still others, realizing that there's an issue with putting it wholly on God or wholly on man, say it is "by grace only through faith only." (As a side note, if it is by something "only," it can't include anything else.)

We can't pick and choose which we want to follow, and ignore or minimize the rest! If Scripture says something saves us, then that something saves us! But what are we to do with this list of things that save us? Friend, I hope the answer is obvious to you: *They are all part of God's divine directions for salvation.*

We went through the list, one by one, and I asked, "Can you be saved without God's love?" "Can you be saved without God's grace?" "Can you be saved without the blood of Jesus?" and so on. After he answered "No" to each question, it dawned on him: "Each one of those is just a different part of the directions. You've got to put them all together." I asked if he could leave out any of the directions and still make it to that destination of salvation, and he shook his head, "No."

It wasn't fifteen minutes later that he was baptized.

I've often thought about that Bible study, and the idea that each of those listed items comprises a part of the grand plan of salvation for mankind. It is something worth remembering, especially when trying to teach sincere religious folks about the importance of baptism in God's plan to save mankind. If they are familiar with their Bible at all, they might say, "If baptism is so important, why did Paul tell the jailor to believe and he would be saved?"

The answer to this question is simple: you have to look at where they are in their journey to salvation.

If you meet a man in Little Rock, who is on his way to L.A. from Knoxville, you don't have to tell him to get in his car, back out of his driveway, take whatever road leads to the on-ramp in Knoxville, and then travel east, and cross into Arkansas—he's already done that part. He just needs to know where to go from there.

You see this same thing throughout the book of Acts. Peter never told the folks in Jerusalem, during that first gospel sermon, that they needed to believe—because they already did (Acts 2:37). He started with "repent." Ananias didn't have to tell Saul of Tarsus to believe *or* repent—because he already did (Acts 9:5-6, 11). He started with "Arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16). The jailor, on the other hand, asked "What must I do to be saved?" and Paul had to start at the beginning with belief. These aren't different directions, different ways to salvation. It all depended on where they were when they asked for directions. And it is only when you put all these passages together that you get the whole picture of how to go from lost to saved.

Where are you on that path?

# RESTORATION MOVEMENT HISTORY:

# Our Black Brothers in Oklahoma

*Jimmie Beller*

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**NOTE: Jimmie Beller passed away in 2015 after a decade-long battle with cancer. He had done extensive work on a history of the church of Christ in Oklahoma, and compiled it into a 300-page book called *Oklahoma Dream Makers*, which he planned to have us publish when he made final tweaks. Unfortunately, he passed away before finishing. This article is one of the chapters in his book.**

---

YEAR	CHURCHES	MINISTERS <sup>1</sup>
1895	2	2
1896	2	1
1897	3	2
1898	3	2
1899	3	3
1900	4	4
1901	4	4
1902	8	6
1903	5	6

The history of the black man in Oklahoma is a story unlike any in the rest of United States. Black Americans initially came to this region on the “Trail of Tears” as Indian slaves. Later, they came as cowboys, settlers, gunfighters, outlaws, and farmers. By the time Oklahoma received statehood in 1907, they outnumbered the Indians. There were more all-black towns in Oklahoma than in the rest of the country put together. Men and women came together to create, occupy, and govern their own communities. From 1865 to 1920 black Americans established more than fifty towns and settlements in Oklahoma, some of short life and some still existing at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The black soldiers in the Civil War fought alongside their white counterparts for the first time during the Battle of Honey Springs, an engagement fought on July 17, 1863 on a small battlefield outside present-day Muskogee.

Because they had been neglected in the past, and because of the living conditions of the times, the

spread of Christianity among the blacks was difficult in Oklahoma.

In their 1851 report, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society states that the “Campbellites” owned 101,000 slaves.<sup>2</sup> Some of these slaves became Christians. Many of the Christians that owned slaves believed, even in those days, slaves should be taught the word of God. Many of the slaves were taught the gospel in the homes of their masters. Alexander Campbell worshipped with the slaves in his house. Many Christian masters were against the all-to-common inhumane treatment of slaves.

Because of racial prejudice on the part of both whites and blacks, some Christians pushed for worship segregation. In some places, slaves would meet together on the land of their owners. In other places, the slaves would attend services with their masters, but they had to sit in the gallery or in a certain separated location. When a slave obeyed the gospel in some congregations, the slave’s name would be under his master’s name as a possession on the church roll. Some congregations would help the black brothers to form “black congregations” in the area. Thus, terminology was born: “black churches” and “white churches.” In some places, both congregations were small and they should have worked together. Because of prejudice, they had little or no fellowship together. Some “white congregations” would spend money to send missionaries to foreign fields while the blacks in their own community were ignorant of the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> The ANNUAL REPORT of the Governors of Oklahoma Territory submitted to the Secretary of the Interior.

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<sup>2</sup> The accuracy of these numbers cannot be verified, as this society’s sole purpose could encourage them to give numbers larger than what really existed in order to bolster their case.



The origin of the black brothers in the Indian Territory was with the Five Civilized Tribes. They practiced slavery before they came to the Indian Territory during the Trail of Tears. Most people believe that the Trail of Tears just affected the Indians, but that was not the case.

The spring of 1838, the forced removal began. It was described in these words:

*The women and children were driven from their homes, sometimes with blows, and close on the heels of the retreating Indians came greedy whites to pillage the Indian's homes, drive off their cattle and horses, and they even rifled the graves for any jewelry, or other ornaments that might have been buried with the dead.*

*The Cherokees, after having been driven from their homes, were divided into detachments of nearly equal size, and late in October, 1838, the first detachment started, the others following one by one. The aged, sick and young children rode in the wagons, which carried provisions and bedding, while others went on foot. The trip was made in the dead of winter and many died from exposure from sleet and snow, and all who lived to make this trip, or had parents who made it, will long remember it, as a bitter memory<sup>3</sup>*

The gospel was preached to some of the Indians before the Trail of Tears by James J. Trott, Barton Stone, John Thomas, Rice Haggard and others.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that some of their slaves also heard the gospel during this time. By 1861, nearly five thousand Negroes lived in the land.<sup>5</sup>

James Trott was a missionary to all people. He wrote in 1858:

*The Cherokee Nation is only a part of a great missionary field in the far west. The whole Indian Territory west of Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas is inhabited by thousands and tens of thousands of the children of Shem, Ham and Japheth. A great number of whites and Negroes live in the Choctaw, Creek and Chero-*

*kee countries, the former by marriage or permit, and the latter as slaves.<sup>6</sup>*

In 1866, after the Civil war was over, freedom was secured for all blacks. Though the Five Civilized Tribes released their slaves and granted them citizenship in the tribe, the freed blacks were required to leave tribal communities and establish settlements of their own. They worked on the railroads, in the mines, farms, and ranches. After the Civil War, the Freedmen and other black settlers in Oklahoma could vote, study, and move about with relative freedom. Pamphlets distributed throughout the South urged “negroes” to join land runs in Indian Territory, to create black businesses, black cities, and perhaps even the first black state. Pamphlets promising a black paradise in Oklahoma lured tens of thousands of former slaves from the South. Eventually 27 black towns grew and encompassed 10 percent of the Indian Territory’s population. Today, many of Oklahoma’s original black towns and districts are gone.

A year after the Civil War ended in 1865, Congress passed a bill providing provisions for black troops of the 9th and 10th cavalry. The 10th went on to be headquartered at Fort Gibson; the 9th was stationed at Fort Sill. Black soldiers built Oklahoma forts, fought bandits, cattle thieves, and Mexican revolutionaries, and policed borders during the land runs. They also played a critical role in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s, earning the respect of Native Americans who gave them the name “Buffalo Soldiers.”

### ***“Black” Congregations in Oklahoma***

The first “black” congregation in the territory was at Springvale Township (Logan County) in the spring of 1892.<sup>7</sup>

While mission work among the blacks was occurring in the South, S.R. Cassius was leading another work in Oklahoma. When he was young, Cassius’s mother took him by the hand and led him to the White House to see President Abraham Lincoln, where he shook hands with the great emancipator. He always remembered, “I saw old, gray-haired men and women not only shake hands with President Lincoln, but also weep tears of joy as they

<sup>3</sup> A.B.C.F.M. Missionary Papers, Cherokees: Vol. IX, 1838-1845, Daniel Butrick’s Journal, February, 1838

<sup>4</sup> This is told in more detail in another chapter of Beller’s work.

<sup>5</sup> Harlow, Oklahoma History, p,183

<sup>6</sup> Trott, “Evangelizing in South Carolina,” Gospel Advocate 3 (April 1857), 112.

<sup>7</sup> West, The SEARCH FOR ANCIENT ORDER, p. 182

kissed his hand.”<sup>8</sup> Growing up amid hardship, Cassius expected to work hard and sacrifice when he began preaching in 1880. When he was in Oklahoma Territory in 1891, he was “a lone disciple, and began preaching the gospel under trying circumstances, but I thought I saw at that time a great field of labor that promised much for the cause of Christ.” In 1900, he moved to Tohee where there were fourteen disciples and where he operated the Tohee Industrial School.<sup>9</sup>

In 1893, L.J. Guest moved there from Texas and greatly assisted Cassius. The two began the Macedonia congregation; later Guest became their minister. By 1901, new recruits were coming to the area, and Cassius was now referring to Oklahoma Territory as the “Mecca of colored disciples.”<sup>10</sup>

The Bible condemned the attitudes between many of the black and white Christians. Attitudes from past caused many problems that affected the work in the new land. This mirrors the Jew-Gentile problems in the Bible: they too separated themselves.

Blacks before the Civil War became members of the churches of their masters. It was said

*In these early days, slaves drove their masters to the services, others living near came and stood on the outside, while several went in to assist with the children or to do any other kind of work assigned. Some of the slaves, being deeply impressed, sought spiritual guidance. They were already in Hades, and to hear a man of God tell them how they might secure peace and sit down at the welcome table pleased them very much. They did not choose to go to a torment greater than the one [they] already experienced.*

*It had [once] been hard to understand the preaching, but now this simple way of telling the old, old story appealed to most of them. Several were added to the church. Often these [new converts] went back and told the news to the other slaves. Many believed and were baptized. The masters and their families taught others. At the time, the most gifted among the slaves were trained and allowed to preach to*

*the rest. Occasionally slaves were gathered in separate buildings and were preached to by the evangelists either before or after the regular service.*<sup>11</sup>

After the Civil War some of the Black denounced “Old Massa’s” baptism and were baptized again by a black preacher.

### ***Separation of Races in the Church***

Most are unaware of the issues that have caused divisions between black and white Christians. Racial prejudice was prevalent on both sides. Some left congregations because of racial prejudice—some left the faith completely. These issues caused problems between white and black churches after the Civil War. Some of these issues still persist today, as is evident by having “white” congregations and “black” congregations—sometimes only blocks from each other.

After the war, black disciples were admitted membership into *some* white congregations. These black Christians were segregated in the auditorium or placed in a back room. As the number of black members began to grow, the whites would *encourage* them (sometimes not so nicely) to form their own congregation. After the black congregations were established in their own meeting houses, new problems arose. There were problems of education, evangelism, leaders, and money.

These problems caused Cassius’ attitude to change toward the white Christians. He wrote “The time has come when very few whites care what becomes of the Negro, just so he keeps out of the way.” He also wrote:

*I believe the time has come for colored disciples to form themselves in a class by themselves, because the white Christians have plainly shown that he is not wanted among them. For this reason, I think it is better for us both that we separate. In this way we will be saved from the sad spectacle of making believe that we love one another...*<sup>12</sup>

He was convinced that Oklahoma was the place where black Christians could thrive without the white man. He commented:

<sup>8</sup> S. R. Cassius, “The Race Problem,” Christian Leader 17 [10 March 1903], 9

<sup>9</sup> West, *The SEARCH FOR ANCIENT ORDER*, p. 183

<sup>10</sup> S. R. Cassius, “Apostolic Missions,” Christian Leader, xv, 14 May 1901, p.5)

<sup>11</sup> THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST, p.469

<sup>12</sup> S.R. Cassius, “The Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma Colored Disciples,” Christian Leader & The Way, XXII, 24 Aug 1909, 13

*Brethren, we might as well face the situation. Oklahoma is not a white man's country. The conditions are all wrong for the white man, but they will do for the red man and the Negro. All of the legislation in the world will not change these facts. A black man feels like he is in heaven in Oklahoma, and the white man feels the other way. For this reason my people keep coming and the white people keep going.*<sup>13</sup>

The Negro population of Oklahoma in 1904 was 20,000.

Because of his attitude and the love for the work he was doing, he assembled fifteen preachers and organized the "Mission Executive Board of the Colored Disciples in Oklahoma" In 1909. After a few years, he saw that the Missionary Board tended toward extremes. He persuaded himself to abandon the organization and returned back to the Bible way.

In 1915, he gave up the work in Oklahoma and left to Texas and work there until January 1925. He moved to the Los Angeles area with his family. After a few years he wrote to the Advocate, saying, "They tell me hell is paved with good interests, and I fear its walls are papered with good resolutions, and if we could gaze up at its ceiling, we would find it frescoed with standing committees."

### **R.N. Hogan**

There is not much information about the work afterwards among the black brothers in Oklahoma until Brother R.N. Hogan came. Brother Hogan wrote

*In 1882, My grandparents, Nathan and Frances Cathey, moved from the country near Columbia, Tennessee, to Monroe County, Arkansas. My mother was at that time about ten years old. The county was a wilderness, but my grandfather succeeded in clearing the land and building a home. Several years later, Willie Hogan moved from Hickman County, Tennessee, to Monroe County, Arkansas, and there he met Emma Cathey. They were married in 1894 or 95. In 1897, Edward Hogan was born to this union and was followed two years later by the birth of a sister who burned to death while yet a baby. On a Lord's morning, November 30, 1902, I was born into this family in a little two-room cabin just a short distance from where*

*my 65-year-old mother now resides. Five years after my birth, my father took sick and died. My Mother went to live with my grandparents, where she lived until her second marriage, this time to Joe S. Donley. She allowed me to remain with my grandparents who spared no pains in seeing that I received proper training. When I was fourteen, my people turned me over to Brother G.P. Bowser, who trained me in the way of the Lord. During the next three years, I was known as the "boy evangelist." I converted seventy or more people. Then two days before I was eighteen, I was married to a Christian girl, Maggie Bullock, of Maury County, Tennessee.*

*In 1933, we moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma, to work with the church there. From June to last of September I would hold meetings sponsored by white brethren. In 1934 we established four new churches: Wetumka, Oklahoma, 6 baptisms; Shawnee, 3 colored and 2 white people baptized; Okmulgee, 175 colored and 14 whites baptized including 5 preachers, and at Haskell we baptized 36, one a preacher-total for the year, 323. In 1935, we preached only for those churches already established, baptizing 215 more. In 1936, we established four congregations: Corinth, Texas, with 96 new members; Gladewater, with 26; Guthrie, Oklahoma, 70 colored and 10 white, with 16 colored and 17 more white people obeying as a result of the meeting. Then at Lanston, Oklahoma, we baptized 41 which included the Mayor, City Treasurer, Postmaster, Methodist preacher, Methodist steward, Principal for the school, and one of the University heads, total for 1936, 359. In 1937 at Guthrie, Oklahoma, he had 22 baptisms.*

*In 1938, at Oklahoma City, we baptized 103...5 preachers. In 1939, at Oklahoma City we baptized 86, 2 preachers, 4 restorations, 3 Christian Church. Then at Lawton the baptisms 34, 2 preachers.*

*He has held many meeting in Oklahoma since he moved from Oklahoma. Only eternity will tell all the good he has done for the brethren in Oklahoma.*<sup>14</sup>

One of the great works he started was a Preacher

<sup>13</sup> QUOTE?

<sup>14</sup> SERMONS BY HOGAN



school in Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1932.

### **Marshall Keeble**

Another great work among the black brethren was done by Marshall Keeble. He was responsible for starting many of the “black” congregations in Oklahoma that still exist today. A.M. Burton wrote the *Gospel Advocate* about the meeting with Brother Keeble:

*Muskogee, Okla,  
910 East Broadway,  
October 8, 1931.*

*Dear Brother Burton: Brother Keeble, knowing your interest in his work and how much you rejoice over his success, suggested that I write you about his greatest meeting, which he has just closed here. For three weeks he battled as hard as any man I have ever seen in the pulpit. He is as calm in the very midst of every kind of crossfire by his enemies as you or I would be at our desks. Nothing ever seems to confuse him; and if ever a man had enough to provoke him to anger and irritation, he certainly had it here. One of the preachers took an hour of his time one night trying to show that Keeble was wrong. He replied to all he had to say in about fifteen minutes and gave an exhortation and invitation and some twenty made the confessing. He seems as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove.*

*Hundreds of white people came to hear him that never would have heard a white preacher. Many of these are convicted. We have already baptized several, and will baptize many more as a result of his splendid work. There were two hundred and four baptized of his own race. We have baptized a Cherokee Indian as a result of his work also.*

Brother Keeble conducted a meeting in Clinton, Oklahoma in September 1933, and thirty-five responded including a Methodist and a Baptist preacher. Crowds ranging from between 500 to 3000 attended the meeting each night.

Another meeting was held in Lawton in August 1934. The attendance was between 1200 and 5000. A Baptist moderator from Reno challenged Keeble to a debate. Brother Keeble said, “The second night the Baptist preacher took sick and had to be carried home. The truth was more than he could stand.” One person said, “The poor things would challenge

him for a debate because they didn’t know any better.” Many a person came out just to enjoy Keeble, and left determined to live the rest of his days as a Christian. Many lives have been changed because of the preaching of this man of God.

James O. Baird of Oklahoma Christian College said of him:

*Brother Keeble is as remarkable and astounding as ever. Four thousand people came to hear him in Oklahoma City. It was the largest gathering of Christian people under one roof at one meeting in the history of our state. Almost every Negro congregation in our state was either founded by Brother Keeble or reflects the imprint of his work through someone else. In this sense he is as much like Paul as any man among us.<sup>15</sup>*

Because of his effectiveness, and perhaps because they were unwilling to do it themselves, many white brethren sponsored his work among the black brethren.

### **Lack of Evangelists**

Because of the great work of these men and others, the number of “colored” Christians had grown in Oklahoma. By 1936 they had many outstanding evangelists among them, such as; Marshall Keeble, R.N. Hogan, Luke Miller, G.E. Steward, Levi Kennedy and John Vaughner. Some of these men called upon the “white churches” to support them in their work among the colored. As a result of their work, congregations were established quickly. The problem was that the congregations were being planted faster than preachers were being developed to care for them.

The religious periodicals, *The Christian Echo* and *Christian Counselor*, sometimes served as the only medium of contact between colored preachers and many colored congregations. Much of the teaching came from these journals.

Many of the congregations were not very strong, and because there was no capable leadership, some congregations quit meeting. Many congregations were left to carry on the work the best way they could. The members in these congregations were expected to work, and those who were willing did the best they knew how. However, some of them had just come out of denominations, and some of

<sup>15</sup> *Gospel Advocate*, 2 May 1968, Pg. 275

them still held to false doctrines, not having been taught any better on some issues. The majority of preachers among these congregations had very little education. Many had no schooling at all. Between 1930 and the end of the 1950s, only a few had graduated from high school.

Because of the times and the attitudes of the country, there was a lack of Christian schools for the colored members. This hindered the progress of the colored church. In February 1945, Brother G.E. Steward called attention to the need of Christian

Education for the colored people. As a result, some schools were established to train them, and some of the Christian colleges eventually opened their doors to all races.

Racial prejudices on both sides were wrong. Even today, the prejudice still exists, though we can hope it is to a much lesser extent. It is important to overcome all prejudice in this lifetime because if we don't, we may lose our souls.

There is no "white church" or "black church." There is only the Lord's church.

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# An Exercise in Futility

John Krivak

*"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope... (Romans 8:20, NASB)*

The 1993 movie *Groundhog Day* shows three guys swigging beer<sup>1</sup> in a bowling alley. A probing question is put forward by Phil Connors (Bill Murray): "What would you do—if you were stuck in one place, and every day was exactly the same, and nothing that you did mattered?" Back comes the answer: "That about sums it up for me." Amen, brother? Sister?

Futility!

Romans 8 may reach the absolute pinnacle of God's revelation; some say no Scripture reaches higher. Yet futility surfaces here right in the center (vs. 18-25)

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in*

*hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.*

Futility is "baked right in" within God's creation. Futility is pervasive in the experience of life. The natural progression is from better to worse. That new car smell begins to fade within the first week. Everything we put together and build up deteriorates with time—you can repair and repaint all you like, but everything keeps getting worse. We may get lured into denial by the one exception to the rule. Our bodies actually grow in greater strength and vitality—well, until about age 20 or 25. Then the downward drag, that gets everything else, gets us too. Futility—it's part of the created order. As Paul sees it in Romans 8, life is like a parking meter that is running out of time. While time endures, eve-

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<sup>1</sup> The present author understands God to disapprove human consumption of alcohol. That these three movie characters are drinking booze further highlights their experience of futility.

rything tends toward depreciation, decay, deterioration, decline, and break-down. The proper response is a hearty groan!

Pretty gloomy, huh? By the way, if you want to read more on this depressing subject, there is a Bible book all about the futility of life—Ecclesiastes (see my other article in this edition). At least the author (Qoheleth) is honest.

Now, who is the grand architect of the gross absurdity that relentlessly puts a drag on the created order? God is! *“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it....”* God built the ship of life and engineered into it a slow leak that no one can patch. Come to grips with it—this ship is sinking! Some, who do not know God, may be tempted to suspect a serious flaw in His character, in His motives, in His heart. Indeed, as some see it, God’s work as “creator” is defective! Do keep reading....

In his very next words, Paul declares that God did this: *“in hope”!* God subjected His creation to futility, and He did that *“in hope”!*—*“that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”* No malice or dirty tricks. The way I read that, God is sending the ship “down” so that all of us will be forced to look “up”—we need to find that our better prospects lie beyond this world. God wants to move us from worse to better: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

Both the creation itself and the “sons of God” (who inhabit the creation) track together, both now and in the future. Both suffer and groan under the drag of futility at the present time. And, later, both will together experience joyful liberation from corruption. Although both track together in these shared experiences, the “sons of God” get priority: *“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”* We are to be glorified by God, and the creation is on tiptoes to see what this will mean in hopes of sharing that glory! Under the corrupting power of futility, both Christians and creation “groan” under suffering.

One consolation and cause for hope, while we wait to be liberated, is that we have *“the first fruits of the Spirit.”* The Spirit—by gifting, sanctifying, empowering, and transforming—is God’s down-payment or “pledge” (2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:13-14) for

the promised blessings of final salvation. We cannot receive those ultimate blessings until the denouement of the grand plan of God! However, those “first fruit” blessings are to be enjoyed here and now. Likewise, *“the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings<sup>2</sup> too deep for words”* (Rom. 8:26). Hope is also linked to the Spirit in two other texts in Romans. First, in 5:5: *“...and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”* (indeed, 5:1ff. and 8:18ff. are clearly parallel in thought). Then towards the end of the epistle: *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:13). When Paul reflects on the Christian hope, the Spirit quickly comes to mind.

So, it is futility in the earthly realm now; and then hope for liberation in a far different realm at some future time—Jesus saw this before Paul (and Qoheleth earlier still): *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21). What apt descriptors for the pernicious agents of futility—moth, rust, thief! They are operative “on earth.” So make your “heart investments” in that future, heavenly realm where all risk has been abolished!

In keeping with this escapist strategy, listen to my paraphrase of the ancient Greek philosopher, Epictetus (50-135 AD): *“How then do people act? As might one returning home from a journey, who had taken up lodging for the night in a fair inn, should be so captivated by its comforts as to make the hotel his home! Friend, you clearly have forgotten your journey’s purpose! This was not supposed to*

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<sup>2</sup> The groanings here are those of Christians, inarticulate utterances emerging in prayer which are meaningfully interpreted by the Spirit. Philip Yancey, in *Where Is God When It Hurts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) p. 67, writes: “Somehow, pain and suffering multiplied on earth as a consequence of the abuse of human freedom. When man and woman chose against God, their free world was forever spoiled. As Paul sees it, since the Fall the planet and all its inhabitants have been emitting a constant stream of low-frequency distress signals. We now live on a ‘groaning’ planet.”



become your destination, but only a brief rest stop on your way home." Some will be trying with buckets to bail water from the sinking ship of earthly life right to the end. Their investments are all here, after all. The effort has kept them so busy that they fail to look up. This earthly hotel was never to be our final destination. Futility was meant to end in hope.

Futility shows up in one other place. Remember that Paul begins Romans by indicting universal humanity under sin, while completely justifying God. Before revealing the righteousness of God in the gospel, Paul feels required to reveal the outpoured wrath of God:

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their*

*speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools"* (Romans 1:18-22).

They became "futile" (cf. 2 Kings 17:15; Jer. 2:5; Eph. 4:17) in their speculations and in their foolish, darkened hearts! When finally things go crunch, those who will fail to make the survivalist transition out of the futility of this life are those who, foolishly, refuse to let God be God!

So, Paul presents two futilities in Romans. One is built into the created order. It causes enough pains to force much groaning, but it can be survived and escaped! God caused that futility in response to human sin—but He did that "in hope." The other futility is fatal. This futility is found in foolish hearts. It is energized when people anchor their existence in this creation while denying the Creator. This futility of the heart locks people inside the confines of that other futility that drags down this world. That atheism is truly an exercise in futility.

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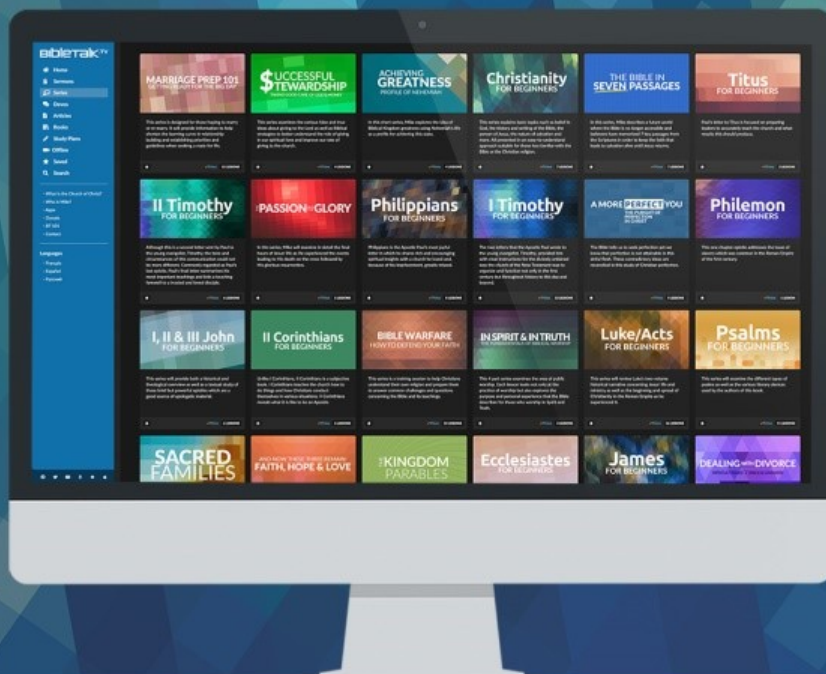
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# QOHELETH

John Krivak

*It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.*

*I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.*

*What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.”*

*Ecclesiastes 1:13-15 (NASB)*

What other Bible book pushes the reader into the depressing depths of the futility of life while tickling the funnybone with sardonic humor? The author of Ecclesiastes (I will call him Qoheleth) identifies himself as a sage (12:9)—someone proficient at deriving wisdom from writings such as proverbs and parables (*mashalim*).<sup>1</sup> However, he seems to relish taking straight-up traditional wisdom (such as we find in Proverbs) and standing it on its head. He has heard the wise sayings but finds them to sometimes collide with real-life experience (Job is similar about this). For example, many Proverbs extol the virtues of hard work. Compare these with Ecclesiastes 1:10-11—work here is meaningless and fruitless vanity—striving after the wind!

I take Qoheleth as the author’s self-designation or name. It derives from Hebrew, suggesting some role, occupation, or office within a community or assembly (*qahal*) of people. This is ambiguous, but our information is limited. The same applies to his identification as “king over Israel in Jerusalem” (1:12). Although Qoheleth’s description of extravagant building projects (2:2ff.) and possession of an extended harem (2:8) sound like Solomon, we really have insufficient data to identify them together. Solomon also was famous for wisdom and writing, like Qoheleth. But this could be merely an attempt by the author to invite an association with the fame of

Solomon. The name of Solomon nowhere appears within Ecclesiastes.

But be warned about Ecclesiastes! One might quote from its writings and—because it is part of the Bible—might nonchalantly declare: “This is what the Bible teaches!” Even if the quote is word-for-word accurate, that may be not at all “what the Bible teaches”! My first experience of this was with a woman we met at a Bible study. Afterwards, we joined her at her home and she declared herself to have authority from God as a teacher. Upon that, she stated that the Bible teaches that death is better than life. In support, she read: “*So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun*” (4:2-3; cf. 6:3ff.; 7:1). Yes, the Bible says that. But what is the theological truth—is it what we hear from Qoheleth? Or, is truth found in those other Scriptures that joyfully regard life as supremely a gift from God and in those that rightly regard death as an enemy? Which is better—life or death? As we will see, there are good reasons not to seek the absolute answer in Ecclesiastes! And rightly understood, these Scriptures do not contradict and may be together understood.

## ***Qoheleth’s Experiment***

Much of what we read is the resulting observations which the author derives from a peculiar experiment. He uses the verb “to see” (46 times), usually not merely to indicate simply seeing, but in the sense of “critical observation.”<sup>2</sup> An experimental premise is set forth and then Qoheleth makes observations on that basis. Those observations only make sense within the experiment (but, abstracted from this, they cannot be taken at face value as plainly declarative Biblical truths).

His premise is this: let’s imagine God does not

<sup>1</sup> See introductory material by Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, in *Word Biblical Commentary 23A*, David A. Hubbard, Glen W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin, eds. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1992), pp. xix-xxi.

<sup>2</sup>Murphy, p. xxx.

exist! Then, let's observe life as it is, while asking critical questions: *Is life worthwhile? Is life even worth living? Does anything in life bring lasting value? Does the effort and hardship that one must endure, simply to live, ever pay a profit?* Keep in mind that our sage is testing such hypotheses only after removing God completely from the equation! Remember our earlier question of superiority between life and death? Well, under the experiment, death is better! Without God, life is not worth living: "'Vanity of vanities,' says [Qoheleth], 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'" (1:2).

The way God is sequestered off is by restricting observations to the realm "*under the sun*." I count the expression 29 times ("*under heaven*" three times). In a two-tiered cosmology, there is a lower realm (the earth, where people live) and the upper realm (the heavens, where God dwells): "*For God is in heaven and you are on the earth*" (5:2). Nothing above the lower realm is considered by the phrase "*under the sun*" (while God, presumably, is at the level above that). Qoheleth knows God exists, but—for the sake of experiment—he limits our shared field of vision so as to exclude God. What will life look like in that limited equation?

### ***Gloomy & Pessimistic Fatalism***

The experiment has begun: "*And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven*" (1:13). So, as you read, prepare for gloomy and pessimistic fatalism<sup>3</sup>—enough to fill several chapters.<sup>4</sup> No respectable sage would demean himself to explore madness and folly (as replacements for wisdom), but for the sake of the experiment, he submits (1:17). Keeping part of his mind in the role of "objective observer," he tests himself with whatever indulgence might bring pleasure (2:1-3)—booze, building projects, accumu-

lating wealth and possessions, music entertainment, sex with multiple partners: "*Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun*" (2:11).

What about the joys of nature? Even the delightful discussions of the cycles of nature (1:1-11)—so commonly read as paeans to the wonders of God's Creation—actually should be read like "*round and round they go, but they really get us nowhere!*" Although they are all the rage on cheery embroidery of counted cross-stitch, the same gloomy pallor falls over the beautifully poetic lines of 3:1ff.—"*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.*" Yep, there is time for everything in a meaningless existence. "*Futility of futilities—everything is absolutely futile!*" That is Qoheleth's summarizing refrain—and he's absolutely right (if there is no God in our evaluations).

Everything looks worse if there is no God. You might think wisdom would retain value—but now it only brings grief and pain (1:18). One might argue that wisdom has great value over folly—even so, both wise and foolish suffer the same fate. Both will be forgotten (2:12-15). What of enduring value comes of work and labor? Hard work brings pleasure, yet also vanity and chasing after the wind (2:11; 3:13). The experimenter comes to hate his achievements because he must leave them to another who never worked for them (2:18, 20). The best that may be offered in this experiment is to eat and drink and "*tell yourself*" (delude yourself?) that work is worthwhile (2:24). God gives "enjoyment"—but what He gives the righteous differs not from what sinners also get (2:26).<sup>5</sup> The work world is driven by strife and competition (4:4-6), so that Qoheleth reverses his earlier valuation and esteems peace as better than labor: "*One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind*" (4:6). And let it not be forgotten that a man—while in pursuit of work and gain—is missing out on pleasure (4:7-8). A solitary worker loses out, while relationship brings some fulfillment to a married worker. Finally, even justice loses value! Justice

<sup>3</sup> Murphy (p. lix) comments: "The desperate claim of 'vanity' is written up and down the entire book. There is not, Qoheleth avows, a single unspoiled value in this life. Riches, toil, wisdom, life itself—all these are examined and found wanting. His criteria are perhaps more extreme than one might care to apply. Others might settle for less; he does not. The underlying and pervasive criterion for his judgment is the fact of death; it casts a fatal shadow over all human existence."

<sup>4</sup> Not all material in Ecclesiastes can be organized under this experiment. There are stretches in later chapters where the author seems to set the project aside in order to simply lay down wisdom sayings.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Matthew 5:45 (NASB) "...of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."



fails, and although God will sort it all out, people—both good and bad—share the same fate as animals, creating equivalence (3:16ff.)! Witnessing the cruel oppression that powerless people suffer drives Qoheleth to despair of life (4:1-3). The only reasonable deduction is that death is better than life!

Religion “*under the sun*” fares no better. Religious activity brings no advantage to the righteous—and sinners suffer no penalty for neglecting to participate. The same fate awaits them both (9:1ff.).<sup>6</sup>

Although God has been factored out, Qoheleth gives God full credit (or rather, blame) as the ultimate source and cause of life as it is: “*What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted*” (1:15) and “*Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?*” (7:13). Life is tragically short (2:3) and after this experimentation, Qoheleth comes to hate life (2:17-18). Experiencing the futility of life drives to such fatalistic pessimism!

### **Time—Spiral or Linear?**

Without God, simple observation of life “*under the sun*” would suggest that time runs in spirals. Not in strict circles: like winter-spring-summer-fall in endless and identical repetition—because although that four-stage process will endlessly repeat, the winters of successive years will be somewhat different from one another. Each new cycle in the spiral brings variation—but not enough to mean anything, because new cycles will begin in endless succession: “*Is there anything of which one might say, ‘See this, it is new’? Already it has existed for ages which were before us*” (1:10). Few events will be remembered long (if at all). As with the spiraling seasons of the years, so with the endless generations of human reproduction: “*A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever*” (1:4). There may be a happy “survival of the species”—but that is of no real consolation to organisms facing brief lifespans as generations keep spiraling. Fallen generations are quickly forgotten. People with their few years are prevented—by the dizzying spirals—from finding any lasting meaning

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<sup>6</sup> Qoheleth adheres to the dimly developed view of after-life common to pre-Christian thought. Life ends in Sheol, the abode of the dead. Even so, his equating of outcome for faithful and for sinners seems to have a shocking edge that goes beyond normal expectations.

in life: “*All things are wearisome; man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing*” (1:8). Round and round it goes, and no one remembers what has past nor can see what lies ahead: “[God] *has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end*” (3:11).

By contrast, notice what happens if we end the experiment, and we again factor God in: time now takes on a “linear” quality—the purpose of God (with beginning, middle development, and final conclusion) runs right through the endless spirals. Humans may then derive meaning bound up in history. What happened in past times and past generations retains significance in the unfolding and unified plan that God ushers through time toward fulfillment. In this approach to time, wisdom and diligent labor and efforts to obtain justice are infused with enduring value. Life would again be worth living!

### **The Triumphant Return of God**

By book’s end, both Qoheleth and his readers find delight in restoring God to His uber-meaningful place. The experiment led them into some very dark places.<sup>7</sup> They recover a vantage that refuses any longer to view life shortsightedly—as though whatever happens “*under the sun*” were the end of any matter. If God exists, then the case for pessimistic fatalism collapses. The linear purpose of God infuses the entire experience of life “*under the sun*” with enduring value and enduring meaning. Moreover, restoring God to a place over life restores joy to the experience of life.

“*Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no delight in them’*” (12:1).

“*Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed...*” (12:6).

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<sup>7</sup> I once taught Ecclesiastes in church, which kept the dark cloud of “pessimistic fatalism” over us for an extended period of weeks. The psychological impact was very negative and palpable, with frequent requests that we “move on” to something more positive and uplifting! Qoheleth would chuckle—and I with him!

*“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (12:13-14).*

In closing, we should be glad that this experiment was tried. Although we all probably had some idea how truly bad life can be without God, Qoheleth has

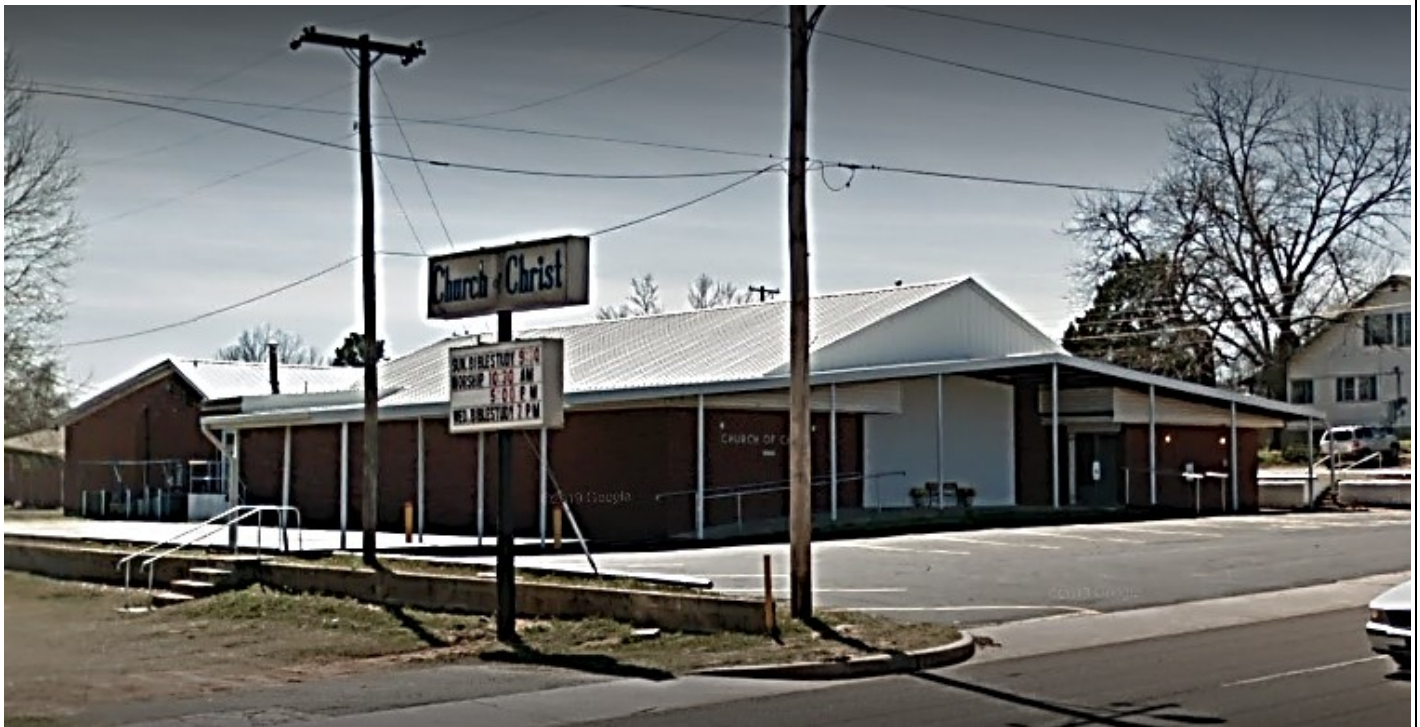
probably widened our eyes on the matter. He makes me all the more appreciative of God—that God is, that God is God! And all of us are prone to getting fixated on “life under the sun” while losing sight of the Divine level above that. Ecclesiastes challenges us to look at the bigger picture when everything around us seems nothing but vanity, and a striving after the wind.

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# THIS IS REALITY

*William Howard*

On this journey we shall travel from Mount Stupid to Mount Olympus and then amble through the universe and beyond. Then we will venture to a place seldom explored because it doesn't exist. We must stroll along with great philosophical snorting and ample snacking as we go. We shall also learn a little about railroad tracks and chess. I assure you we will do all this and be back by lunchtime Tuesday.

We will start with Jack, a boy older than me. Jack was in high school as I started elementary. He had a kinetic personality that appealed to six-year-old boys, but everyone else had to endure him. Jack's personality could boil without heat, bluff with no cards, dogmatize for its own sake, and drive off a cliff while lecturing and sermonizing to the very bottom. As a small boy I was overawed by his instant enthusiasm for whatever hit him at any moment. To me he was electric spontaneity and that was amusing. To take a quote from Du Bois, Jack was clay "unfit for any sort of moulding." I don't know what became of Jack, but he would have made a fantastic faith healer with tremendous comedic value. In those days there were numerous stories circulating about his antics. One of the funniest concerned poison ivy.

On a summer's day a group of teenage boys went to the woods. As they were passing through an area of thick undergrowth one of the boys recognized poison ivy and backed away, demanding another path. This boy had sense to know he did not want to get near the stuff. Jack stepped up. Jack let the boys

know he was perfectly immune to poison ivy. It could not bother him in the least. While everybody else may have a problem, he did not.

Before we go any further with Jack, we must ask some questions. How did Jack know he was immune to poison ivy? What made him certain? Why did he think it could do nothing to him when it affects so many others? Where did he get his information? The funny thing is: Jack never mentioned a word about poison ivy or immunity until that moment. This whole episode is nothing but impulsive bluster that sounded good to Jack. This leads us to the Dunning-Kruger effect.

Two psychologists, Dunning and Kruger, studied patients who had no ability to recognize personal limits of skill and knowledge. These subjects were convinced they hold utmost proficiency and expertise in things they know nothing about. Their tamper-proof confidence renders them incapable of seeing themselves for what they are: ignorant and incompetent. Drs. Dunning and Kruger wrote on their study and entitled it, "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments." They named this phenomenon the Dunning-Kruger Effect but it has been aptly nicknamed "*Mount Stupid*." I think this describes Jack. There is an ancient saying, "Let the cobbler not judge above the sandal." If that is the case, then Jack's judgment should be kept below ground level for his own safety. Should I then venture to say he is ultracrepidarian? Nah. Using that word only sends me to find the dictionary, and

let's face it, that has far too many syllables for the one-syllable simplicity that is Jack.

The main problem from sufferers of Dunning-Kruger is the inability to gauge themselves accurately. Each is an overstuffed fruitcake unwilling to reduce their "inflated self-assessment." For them there can be no problem. They are the authority at everything they have never known. They are proficient at anything they have never seen. They are violin virtuosos unaware that violins have strings and a bow. They cannot detect their ignorance and incompetence. Now, back to Jack.

Concerning poison ivy Jack knew nothing. This was a new subject altogether. While being perfectly ignorant on the matter, he was suddenly "Jack Superman: ever resistant to poison ivy." That would be impressive. While everyone else must avoid poison ivy, he was impervious to it. So, what does Jack do? He could have left it as a boast and moved on—but no. Jack had to prove his point. There is a difference between an unpredictable windbag and a golden idiot. Jack won both titles that day, and so young for such a career achievement. I guess some people have their own peculiar genius. He obtained his genius with a t-shirt at the Mount Stupid gift shop. A place visited often. He grabbed up leaves of poison ivy in each hand, and rubbed his face down thoroughly. Yep, Jack was a full-throttle kind of guy. He could do nothing small, but had to make a show. Did he believe his own words or was he hoping? Jack made an effortless dive headlong into what he didn't know, but everyone else did. Everyone made an accurate prediction on the outcome except Jack. He was the dumbest kid in the woods and played the part well. Jack drove himself heedlessly in every wrong direction available.

Jack could not have sensed the severity of poison ivy as it first came in contact with his face and hands, but let the fact be known, he was far from impervious. He was quite allergic. The influence of poison ivy does not manifest itself immediately but after a number of hours. For the afternoon it may have seemed as though Jack was correct. He was Superman after all. Perhaps he enjoyed the attention

and bragging rights for the day. And yes, he continued to brag even to very concerned adults. Was anyone impressed? Probably not, this was Jack after all. The next day Jack would come face to face with the reality of it. So, what occurred? He was subjected to a lesson that lasted for over two weeks. Whether Jack learned the lesson is unknown. Jack's face and hands were horribly disfigured. For days his eyes were swollen shut. Jack looked like a burn victim who had contracted leprosy and been cruelly beaten about the head. He was unrecognizable. I certainly didn't recognize him. No one had sympathy for Jack, least of all nature.

Nature did what nature does; there's no stopping that. Nature is not a willing participant in a braggart's game plan to impress the boys. Powerful laws have been in place from the beginning, so, why would they change for Jack? He may need protection from himself, but nature is not going to do it. It will stand silently by as it always does and let Jack do what he's going to do. Nature suffers no one. Perhaps learning should be involved. He was knocked down a few pegs and left to his bed for a few days. This was his own work, his own undoing. I was six at the time and this may have been my first lesson on poison ivy.

Years later I still laugh at the whole incident and that ridiculous character. He committed himself wholeheartedly to what he thought or hoped to be true. The result was Jack met the truth and the truth was unmercifully resistant to his swaggering stupidity. It would not go along with Jack's impulses or ignorance or audacity or notions or bravado or anything else. Truth simply wouldn't play along. Reality is not obligated to go easy and gentle on anyone. We can quickly learn the lessons that truth stands immovable and reality indifferent. The good news for Jack is it was only poison ivy and he got over it. What if it had been a death cap mushroom discovered on the trail? That would have ended everything for the reckless, arbitrary, bragging Jack.

There is more to consider about this episode. Jack certainly tested the truth with a hearty chug of self-confidence. It proved to be memorable, but also

*The result brought a conclusion so obvious that even we small children got it: "Don't mess with poison ivy, and never trust Jack." That's not a bad proverb, but there is another: "Reality does not march with fools."*



proved the inflexible quality of truth. It is utterly unyielding, unrelenting, unbreakable, and unapologetic. The result brought a conclusion so obvious that even we small children got it: “Don’t mess with poison ivy, and never trust Jack.” That’s not a bad proverb, but there is another: “Reality does not march with fools.” You can never successfully fashion, manipulate, or lead truth, for it does not partner with idiots. It is bound with reality. These are the teammates. Truth and reality may seem as though they are synonymous, but there is a difference between the two. They are tight coworkers. If you don’t like the truth, then reality will disappoint. Truth accurately describes reality and reality simply is. Reality simply shows the truth. This could be painful to the fool for he will be given the truth (even when it hurts) and will be shown to be the fool he is (and that hurts too). Reality allows everyone to see what the truth is, and that truth is correct. Truth is always correct.

We now shift to someone who actually did some thinking, an ancient philosopher who was one of the Seven Sages of Greece. His name was Thales of Miletus (c. 620-546 BC). He was a smart guy but suffered under the common beliefs of the day which carried a mountain load of gods, myths, and superstitions. The Greeks believed their list of gods ruled the earth and beyond. There were many stories about the gods which explained how things came to be. Why is there sea? Why is there land? Why is there sky? Why is there fortune and misfortune? Why is there anything? The Greeks (like so many others) either made or borrowed stories to answer the questions.

Thales observed the world around him and noted its evenness. While the world has its brief moments of catastrophe and storm these are rare events not daily occurrences. For the most part nature walks a path with a gentle curve. The seasons do not leap from one extreme to the another but rather by quiet gradation down a long path from winter to summer and back again. Nature saunters rather than charges. It is unhurried not berserk. Earth is more nurturing to man than adverse. It demonstrates the word moderation. It is more caring than killer. It is more for home and comfort than ill-fitted and forbidding. But there is more here than safety. Nature

has intricacy with obvious purpose.

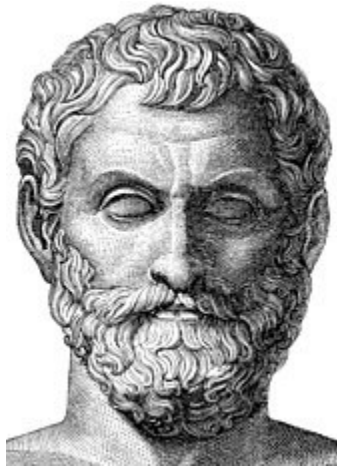
The earth resembles a cradle and not so much a chamber of doom. One could not look at a baby bed with the maker’s attention to accommodation and protection to think it was built with hostility or carelessness. In the same measure, one easily sees the earth as supplier for human needs (body and spirit) because it backs everything good. The system for survival is supplied, but it supports the family as a legitimate part of nature. It supports civility as if waiting on it, as if expecting it.

Thales noticed nature was choreographed, synchronized and harmonious with itself and, amazingly enough, accommodated mankind. The phases of the moon, sunrise, high tide, stars, harvest, and gravity were all unvarying and predictable. It sure looked like everything was regulated and governed by laws. These laws showed themselves firm, highly precise, and (here is the kicker) lending a kindly hand to man on the earth. There is something comforting about that, but also something beyond it worth looking into. It demands the recognition of Someone above our little realm of men. That Someone would have to be omnipotent and wise, neither trait found in Zeus. Wise omnipotence that made everything and watches everything is a sobering notion. Herman Melville wrote, “Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright.”

Let’s face it. Zeus cannot be serious about the well-being of mankind when he punishes Prometheus for giving fire to man and, as the story goes, the means for civilization. For that act of kind attention, he chains Prometheus to a rock where every day an eagle arrives and eats Prometheus’ liver. Presumably Prometheus is still chained to that rock today. I suppose he has really gotten to know that eagle. Zeus certainly has a shambling heap of cruelty toward anyone giving undo interest to men. Zeus can have no goodwill toward mankind.

He hates us. Why would the world have a different disposition and prefer us?

How could Zeus be in charge of a world tailor-made for man’s benefit? Clearly, he is not that interested in benefiting man. Fire helps mankind in no small measure, but when compared with everything else given to man it is only one card in a large deck:



wool, flax, wheat, fresh water, cattle, wood, stone, iron, oil, food, and air. The list is big. There are too many things complementing the essentials. We could go on to mention matters of beauty meant to be admired, enjoyed, and copied. This includes visual beauty and also literature, music, and my favorite – culinary arts. We have been given more than the necessities for survival. We have been given the means for enjoying life profoundly. I guess Zeus took no notice. If he was angry at Prometheus for the fire incident, he would be aghast at the rest of it.

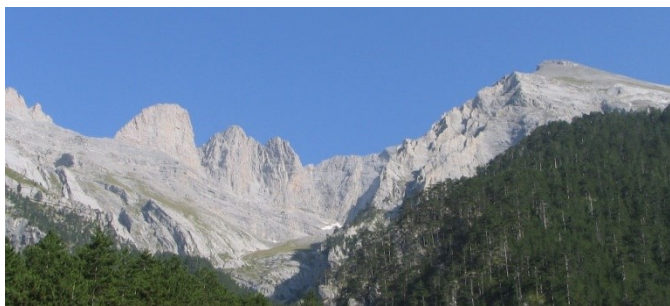
The other Greek gods were no better. With these in charge the world should be void of generosity or care toward mankind. There is a powerful love shown in nature that should not exist because the Greek gods never possessed that level of love. There is an obvious difference of opinion between Zeus (and friends) and the earth. So, who is responsible for this? Whoever it was took a lot of thought and trouble into the care and love for humanity. To Thales it was obvious that the nature of creation did not match the nature of the Greek gods. The assumed gods lacked concern, but also aptitude. Reality keeps pointing in another direction.

Thales began to suspect something. If the assumed suspects (Greek gods) were in control of the earth, how is it that the earth doesn't behave like it? It must have risen above its creators and managers because it doesn't reflect them in the least. Zeus and the gang lacked all organizational skills and any sense of cooperation and coordination. They were perpetually at cross purposes, bickering and fighting. They could never form anything except mischief and tantrums. They were nothing more than actors in a soap opera. By casting a casual glance at what is real, one could begin to question the notion. Did these gods do any of this? Are they capable? The world is too orderly, complex, and hospitable for their lot. It is beyond their ability. They are simply not that good – at anything. It is like being told the New York City power grid was built by Mrs. Millson's kindergarten class. Watch the kids running, coloring, yelling and crying and then examine the power grid. The dots don't connect. In fact, Mount Olympus was exactly like Mrs. Millson's kindergarten class with its bickering,

power struggles, selfish obsessions, fickle friendships, and standing in corners. This takes us to Mount Olympus and Thales observing reality.

If Mount Olympus is the center and seat of power for the Greek gods, then Olympus should be the most raucous place on earth. Does the mountain as described in the stories match the mountain seen every day in Greece? If it were home to the gods, it should confirm what the stories tell us of the inhabitants on the mountain. Olympus would resemble the problem neighbor who can't get through a weekend without a visit from the police. I can only imagine everyone leaving the vicinity of Olympus to get some peace. But the real Olympus isn't a noisy ruckus. It sits quietly against the sky year after year. Reality was presenting the truth.

Thales doubted their ability to manage the earth. Since they couldn't manage anything else how could they hold it together for the earth? That was uncharacteristic for them and an unrealistic expectation from everyone else. Any world they were in charge of would be moody, unpredictable, and used selfishly (that does sound like Mrs. Millson's kindergarten class). What was Thales conclusion? Reality told him the Greek gods couldn't do it. Reality told him they can't exist.



*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).*

The observation of Thales confirmed Romans chapter 1. It is correct. Creation does its job well. It demonstrates the abilities of the Creator. The limitless intricacies, the power of its laws, the overwhelming beauty, and its singular purpose prove a God who is powerful, intelligent, and good. The truth is shouted aloud by what is real.

For every subject there is the truth of it. Is Jack immune to poison ivy? Jack Superman said yes. Reality said something else. His bragging point was flattened. Was the world created as described in Greek stories? Reality chimed in on that one as well. Thales listened.

Let's turn another thought by asking the question: What is reality? As the word implies, reality is all

that is real. It is the vast collection of everything that exists with everything that has existed through time. To add to that, reality is the net result or the amassed lingering effects of every fact which happened in the past. In this respect reality stands as a record of itself. It has a history even when we, as part of reality, can only know a small fraction of that history. That record is more than the events of man or even the observations of men. It is the result of everything: birds, volcanoes, and atomic particles. One thing (small or great) affects another. These actions (or even non-actions) are fact. They are real, but reality is not located only in this material universe.

Reality includes the supernatural realm far beyond the visible. God is part of reality. So too are angels, demons, Heaven, Hell, Hades, and Tartarus. God set everything in motion. He is the original Cause and Creator. At His command came the universe. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth** (Genesis 1:1). God is the cause; the heavens and the earth are the effect. If this is true, then all else in reality falls in line with it. He created time, space and matter and everything required to govern them. They all have substance. They all function as intended. They all follow in the motion of unbreakable laws. These laws govern everything and set a background or base for reality in the material realm. They form the limits and boundaries by which something is possible or impossible. Here unimaginable forces hold the expanse in balance and these forces are kept in place by something bigger still. Genesis 1:1 explains how that is. The universe, with all its contents strange, great, and wonderful, traces its existence to the truth of God.

Some atheists admit God is a possibility, but deny He is actual. But He is more than possible; He is reality and atheists hate that fact above all facts. God is the greatest part of reality as the author of it. He is the first fact and the only eternal fact. He stands as the greatest truth: God is. The verb “is” denotes existence, presence, and current state of being. The word “is” will never be more powerful than when it stands next to the word “God.” If there is reality, if anyone exists, if there is anything factual it is God. When God tells Moses in Exodus 3:14 “I AM WHO I AM,” God is stating the greatest and most obvious truth. All reality points to Him. All that exists or has existed or will exist is because of Him. He is the cause. Everything else is the effect of

that cause rolling through time (time is also His creation). He created Heaven, Earth, Hades, Tartarus, and Hell. He is the beginning of all creatures in this realm and all others. The moral choices and actions made in any of these places rests on the creatures that may inhabit them – man, angel, devil. God made everything before them, and they walked their own moral path where they willed.

The words, “I AM WHO I AM,” are shockingly complex. So much so they answer a question Moses didn’t ask. “I AM WHO I AM,” means Jehovah is the Self-Existent One, the One without cause. Everything else has a time in which it came into being. Everything else has a cause which brought it forth from nothing. But “I AM,” is eternal, without cause and without beginning. We are a generation following untold generations brought into being before us. This is the eternal reality and we now exist in it, now part of it. We live in a reality which starts with God. To put it another way: we exist in God’s reality and there is no other. This is it.

If present reality is the culmination and record of past events, then we know the present cannot appear out of nothing. Hence, we come to history. History is the record of reality. It is not limited to what man has done (building cities and battering them down), but what God has done. Also, in this are the actions of angels and demons. Reality is the record of cause and effect, the consequence of everything to everything else. This is evident in Genesis 3 with those present (God, mankind, Satan, angel) and the resulting future of everything. So, what happened? The law of God is twisted by Satan and mankind falls for the deception. Mankind sins and faces repercussions. The earth is changed, a Cherubim guards the tree of life. Death enters the world. Satan is cursed and the Christ must now fulfill his duty to save mankind. With a few lies scripted by Satan and offered to Adam and Eve, the future of everything is affected. This includes all generations of mankind and the Godhead.

We all have the potential of following and fabricating lies. If Satan can make them up so can we. They’re easy. We can even lie to ourselves. Reality is affected by lies only when someone creates them, believes them, and follows them. From that arises a burden of consequence for following the lie. This happens as reality argues in favor of the truth. By way of illustration, let us say you’re going camping. Where are you going to set up camp? You don’t

know, but someone convinced you the best campsites are always on railroad tracks or train trestles because snakes and bears will never go near them. If you follow that lie you will find truth somewhere on the railroad track. Camping on the tracks may be pleasant for hours. There may not be a snake or bear in view. But eventually the person believing the lie is run over by reality. It always points to the truth and anyone who cares to pay attention can follow the instruction. Reality offers no burden for following its lessons. There is no punishment offered by nature or reality for knowing, believing, and responding to the truth: sleeping on the railroad tracks will kill you. Anyone avoiding the railroad track can manage through the night train-free. There is no consequence from the truth.

Truth is never a problem. It may bring bad news, but you can react to it wisely. Truth is where you find that rare quality of wisdom: it never exists in a lie. Deception never brings wisdom just as a lie never reveals the truth. You cannot act wisely while under the influence of a lie. The only wisdom would come by distrusting the lie. Let's take this to a chess board.

Suppose you are playing chess, but your opponent's pieces are indistinguishable. They are impossible to tell apart. The queen, a pawn, a bishop, a rook, a knight, the king—all look identical. You can know who's who from the initial position on the board, but as soon as they scramble about, a problem will occur. Which chessman is which? A piece moving forward one square could be the king, a pawn, a rook, or the queen. Who knows? In progressing the deceit all your enemy's pieces could be easily changed at his whim. There is no way to verify anything. Suddenly there seems to be multiple queens on your opponents' side. This would be an impossible game to win since it is dishonest. There are too many lies to figure the next move. If you cannot know what is real, then you are lost. Brilliance in the game lends nothing when all you get is false information leading to faulty judgment. I think even I could eke out a little victory against the world chess champion if I could cheat like this. Right decisions can only be had in the presence of

truth.

Avoiding the truth may be pleasant for hours or even years. But eventually the person believing a lie will be run over by reality. Lies are the problem. Now for the final swing through our journey, heading to a place that has never existed. We will not stay long. It's boring.

God does not lie any more than reality. God is absolute. Truth is absolute. Reality is absolute. If there is no God, then there is nothing. Reality would be void and there would be one truth existing in that void. It would be a truth that could never be known (except in our game of *hypothetically speaking*).

The one truth would be, "there is nothing." That one and only truth would never be met by a mind of any sort to consider it. Nothing can be quite lonely. So, in the effort of grinding philosophical gears we now back our thinking out of the garage and into the neighbor's house. Here we go. If a void is nothing then it has no time, space, laws, or properties inside it, nor can it be described except to say it is nothing. Since it is nothing, no one could be there to describe it as nothing, so what's the point? Since a void is nothing, then it doesn't exist. Okay, all that to say, "If truth is not absolute then there is nothing." If there is no truth and all is nothing, then how am I writing this and how are you reading this? A true void has never existed. There has never been a time where there was nothing. There has always been God. Now back to our real world.

It is on absolutes where we can set up camp. Nature adheres to and is controlled by the logic permeating creation. It is without contradiction and follows a logical path. Rationality and reason are functions and outpourings of nature. The laws of logic and reason are not the inventions of men any more than the laws of mass and gravity. They are operations of reality. We are taught them and can easily learn them. It is then a matter of our willingness to listen and learn.

So, we have come to the end of our long wanderings and are back by lunchtime Tuesday. And, by the way, I doubt snakes and bears are frightened of railroad tracks.

*Deception never brings  
wisdom just as a lie  
never reveals the truth.  
You cannot act wisely  
while under the  
influence of a lie.*



# Jesus: King

Adam B. Cozort

Throughout the New Testament, the call goes out that Jesus is the King of Kings. Nathanael calls him the King of Israel (John 1:49). Matthew proclaims that Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy that, "the king is coming to you" (Mat. 21:4-5; Zech. 9:9). Jesus affirms before Pilate his kingship, though of a kingdom not of this world (John 18:33-37). Pilate in turn affixes the title to his cross (John 19:19-21). In John's Revelation the Lamb is described as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings (Rev. 17:14). In these, and numerous other passages, Jesus is lauded as the ultimate king.

In the United States of America, we do not want kings. We have elected representatives. Our presidents are chosen by the people of the several states through the electoral college. The people are the decision-makers as to who their elected leaders will be, whether governors or city council members, by means of a democratic process.

The reality of this situation is seen in the way we approach our government today. If we do not like a law, we change it. If we do not like an appointee to an office, we remove them (or at least make the attempt). If things are not going the way we desire, we challenge the ruling, law, or edict in court to try to overturn it. We expect our point of view to be heard and considered on a level playing field with the opinions and thoughts of all others out there because we are all equal.

Because of the society in which we live, the thought of being ruled by a king is foreign to the core of who we are as Americans. Thus, as Christians in the United States of America, we may often speak, read, or sing about Jesus as our king, but I am not convinced we truly have the mindset of comprehending all that entails in our relationship with our Savior.

With the above mindset as the common *modus operandi*, it is, in many ways, understandable why

much the same interaction is utilized by men in their approach to the words, declarations, and position of Jesus. If the words do not match the desire, change them. If the commands do not match the desired actions, ignore them. If the leader is no longer moving the direction preferred, set him aside. It is this type of mentality I have seen utilized time and again, by those in and out of the body of Christ, as they approach their king.

What does it mean for Jesus to be our king? How does his kingship affect the choices and allegiances I, and every other Christian, make in life? Ultimately, it all comes down to one word: authority.

The term "authority" is defined in multiple dictionaries as the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. It carries with it the ability of the one with authority to issue judgments and determinations.

When we speak of authority, it is about more than someone being influenced, declaring allegiance, or accepting suggestions from another. It is the undeniable recognition that someone else can tell us what to do.

Within the New Testament, the arguments for the authority of Jesus as our king are manifold. Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28:18). Paul also affirmed the authority of Jesus in several places:

*Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right*

*hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).*

*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:24-26).*

Additionally, not only does Jesus have the power to reign, He has the authority to judge as well. Consider the following: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30), and “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:9-10). These passages illustrate the authority placed before the Son of God in judgment.

While Jesus unequivocally stated, “the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48), it is also beyond doubt that the one who will bear the banner of judgment at His return will be none other than the speaker of the words himself.

Jesus is the authority, the King over all kings. His word reigns supreme over every law, edict, statute, thought, and representation man conjures. His authority and ability to judge is absolute; no man will be able to stand before the King and say He does not have the authority to render judgment toward him. In fact, only one being in existence is exempted from the authority of Jesus – the one who placed him in that position (1 Cor. 15:27-28, Phil. 2:9-11).

Again, that brings us back to the question of what it means for us to have Jesus as our king. In the grand scheme of things, it means that the one to whom we owe our allegiance and service is the one who shed His blood for our salvation. It means that the one to whom we will ultimately answer for our

actions will not be a jury of our peers, but a King who is without peer. It means that the orders we obey for our lives cannot be changed by our desires, whims, or personal proclivities, for they are given by a superior whose authority we cannot replace.

It is unfortunate and disturbing that many try to compartmentalize the authority of our King to the spiritual interactions of the worship service. It is as though the only place Jesus has authority is the building in which we meet. Many have turned that into His domain, and outside of that domain, authority reverts to personal preference and national dictates.

However, Paul wrote in regard to the authority of Jesus over his life, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul affirms that his authority over his own life died at his conversion. His personal wants, wishes, and goals were put to death for Christ. He continues by stating the life which he lives in the flesh (physical presence), he lives by faith in the Son of God. In other words, everything he does in his life now is guided by his faith in the Son of God who gave His life for him.

We must understand that under the authority of King Jesus, we are not free to make our own rules, or set our own laws for what is or is not acceptable conduct. Is there ability for governments to make their own rules, ordinances, and procedures? Of course, Romans 13 makes that abundantly clear. However, all of those who make those governmental rules and ordinances will equally answer in eternity for the choices they have made and the direction they pointed their people.

Under King Jesus, Christians must recognize that what is legal or illegal by physical government standards is not the final say on whether something is right, moral, or acceptable before the King. His Word is the final say. Regardless of what our physical leaders, preachers, celebrities, and others promote – the ultimate answer to whether something is the correct action or choice is whether it stands within the boundaries of the covenant of Christ.

It is easy for American Christians to perceive the Constitution as the ultimate law of the land. I have seen many over the years who act as though God himself penned the declarations and amendments found therein. He did not. As beneficial and im-

portant as the American Constitution is, it is not the highest law in the land; that position goes to the Law of Christ.

When we say we have Jesus as our King, we better know what we are proclaiming. We are admitting He is in charge. We are stating that our freedom to live, act, and worship as we please only goes as far as the declarations of the King allow it to go. We are declaring our understanding that we will ultimately answer to the King in judgment, far above the powers and authorities of this world. We are stating our full, faithful, and final allegiance is to the King of

Kings and the Lord of Lords.

When we utterly understand, accept, and live our lives in the service of our King, we can with one voice proclaim the words penned by James Rowe:

“He’s my (precious) King,  
and O I dearly love Him;  
He’s my (glorious) King,  
no other is above Him;  
All day long enraptured praise I sing,  
He’s my (blessed) Savior, He’s my King!”

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# Jesus: Friend of Sinners

*Jeremie Beller*

The Pharisees meant it as criticism against Jesus: “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19). The gospel writers viewed it differently. Yes, Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners; that’s the point! He attended dinner at Matthew’s house, along with a guest list that read, “tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 9:9-11). Luke says Jesus invited himself to the house of Zacheus, another tax collector (Luke 19:1-10). If not for Jesus’ penchant for eating with tax collectors and sinners, we may never have heard of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).

It’s how Jesus did ministry. To put it in John’s words, Jesus, “dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He spent time with people, especially the people avoided by the religious elite. His first miracle in Cana happened at a wedding party (John 2). His parables envision banquets with attendees described as the “good and bad” (Matthew 22:10). Jesus’ ministry unfolded outside of the office and right in the middle of people’s



lives with all of their issues and imperfections.

The Pharisees couldn’t be pleased. John dressed and spoke like an Old Testament prophet, wondering out of his wilderness isolation to announce the Kingdom of heaven. He came “neither eating nor drinking” and he was accused of having a demon. Jesus took a different approach. He came “eating

and drinking” and they labeled him “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19). Their words were more than an insult, they were an indictment. A “stubborn and rebellious son,” was supposed to be carried outside of town and stoned (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

I assume the Pharisees offered familiar arguments against Jesus’ approach. “You’re condoning their lifestyle.” “Birds of a feather...” “They might invite you once, but if you really taught the truth, they wouldn’t invite you back.” None of it mattered to Jesus. Like a physician, he continued treating the sick.

We rightfully teach our children to be careful about the company they keep. “Evil companions corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33) is in scripture. So is the father’s wisdom to his son: “a companion of gluttons shames his father” (Proverbs 28:7). Did Jesus simply not read those verses? Of course he did! So how could he choose to be “a friend of tax collectors and sinners?”

Jesus knew exactly who he was (John 13:1). His identity was not dependent on the company he kept. Relationships are often used to define us, or we choose relationships on the identity we desire. The father’s wisdom of Proverbs warned against making friends of hotheads (22:24-25), sinners (1:10), gluttons and drunks (23:19-21), and gossipers (20:19). His warning stemmed in part from the concern that his son might, “learn his ways, and entangle yourself in a snare” (22:25). If we do not know who we are, we will easily be defined by people around us. If we firmly plant our identity in Christ we will be better friends.

Jesus’ friendship with sinners was rooted in the inherent dignity of all people. He never conditioned his genuine love and concern upon their acceptance of truth. He fed the 5,000, knowing most would walk away (Jn. 6:66). He healed the blind man before he even knew if Jesus was a sinner (Jn. 9:25). Jesus knew Judas’ plans to betray him, yet still washed his feet and broke bread with him (John 13:1-30).

Neither did Jesus ever condition his friendship on anyone’s cultural heritage or social standing. Could there possibly be a greater divide than the one between Nicodemus, the pharisaic leader, and the 5 time discovered Samaritan woman (John 4:7-29)? Yet, Jesus received them both with the same level of love and compassion. Can we say the same of our

relationships?

Jesus used friendship to speak truth into the lives of his friends. He did not withhold truth simply to maintain relationships. Rather, he formed genuine relationships that allowed people to trust his words and open the door and share the gospel. He was clear with Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:3). He told the Samaritan woman, “You have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband” (John 4:18). He even rebuked Peter, one of his closest friends (Mark 8:33).

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons’ book *Un-Christian* tells the story of a thirty-four-year-old man named Steven. Steven recounted the story of a guy who approached him, seemed friendly, exchanged numbers and offered to hang out sometime. Whenever the friendly guy invited Steven to a Bible study, Steven kindly said “no thanks.” He never heard from the guy again. The story illustrates the perception among non-believers that “Christians are insincere and concerned only with converting others,” rather than cultivating “relationships and environments where others can be deeply transformed by God” (Kinnaman and Lyons, 2008, p. 67). Genuine relationships in and of themselves embody an essential part of the gospel story, even if the person on the other side never accepts the truth. After all, “the word became flesh” and entered a world that rejected him.

Yes, Jesus was “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19). That’s the point! It was the very reason he came; to be a physician to the sick. As the body of Christ, charged with continuing the work of Jesus, may the same thing be said of us.

*But God displayed his love  
for us in that, while we  
were yet sinners, Christ  
died on our behalf*

*(Romans 5:8, McCord Translation).*



# JESUS: JUDGE OF THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Chris Gardner

*And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead (Acts 10:42, KJV).*

In the tenth chapter of Acts we read of when Peter was sent to the home of Cornelius and the door was opened to the Gentiles to receive salvation. In Peter's proclamation of who Jesus was, he says the Lord had commanded the apostles to go out and preach to the world about who Jesus was—that He was not only their Lord and Savior, but also one day will serve as judge of the quick [the living] and the dead.

Because of what Jesus has done for all men, dying for our sins, He has earned the right to be the Judge of all people: past, present, and future. Just as this truth needed to be proclaimed to the Gentiles of the world then, the same is true today. As followers of Christ, we have also been commissioned like the apostles to go and preach to the world that not only is Jesus our Lord and Savior (Mark 16:15), but that He will also become our Judge (2 Tim. 4:1).

Later in the book of Acts we read of Paul before the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens. In his sermon, he uttered these words to this diverse group:

*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).*

Realizing this truth, it is important that Christ's disciples live in fear of the coming judgment, while also doing all we can to sway those of the world to hear and obey the blessed gospel of our Lord so they too can avoid the coming wrath of God. Paul also wrote this same truth in Second Corinthians.

*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of*

*Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).*

No one should want to or have to face Jesus on that day without at least being warned of what can happen to them. At the end of life as we know it on this physical plain, all people from all times, races, gender, backgrounds, and cultures are going to have to stand before Jesus Christ and give an account of their lives, to which He will then render His verdict on where we all are going to spend eternity. In that day, we are told from God's Word, the nations will be judged (2 Cor. 5:10). In this day nothing will be hidden from the Lord (Rom. 2:16). All our sins which we thought were private and that we never acknowledged as sin will be revealed, and we will have to answer for them before the very One who died for our sins (Rom 5:8).

It is at this time when all men who have neglected the saving grace of the Lamb are going to have to stand before Him, and explain why they refused to repent to the one who died for their sins.

I personally don't see Jesus standing there, lord-ing over us in His greatness when He has every right to do such. But, rather, what I envision is a slain Lamb of God with tears in His eyes and with a heavy heart asking us "Why?" Jesus did all He could to prevent all people from being lost, from having to suffer in misery and torment for eternity. He gave up heaven and being in the presence of His Father to lower Himself even below the status of the angels to become flesh and experience life as we experience it—including being tempted as we are. He willingly gave Himself up as a free-will offering to die and pay for the sins that we committed (1 Cor. 15:3).

Jesus endured the pain and anguish of the Roman cross, still recognized as one of if not the most excruciating way for a person to die. He even to this very hour stands in heaven as our advocate, defend-

ing us against all accusers before God the Father (1 John 2:1).

When we read how we all will one day have to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, we probably envision some grand court room with Jesus sitting in front of us behind a podium rendering His judgment to an endless line of souls. For this is what we know and are familiar with from our current court system. Most of us have seen a court case on TV. A person is charged of some crime, there is the trial with the prosecuting attorney bringing forth evidence to prove the person committed the crime, and then there is the defense who tries to refute the charges and prove his client's innocence. Then at the end of the trial a verdict is given by the judge. Some of you might even remember way back in the eighties when the TV show *The People's Court* was first on in the afternoons with the honorable Judge Joseph Wapner presiding over the TV court room. I remember as a child watching the show and all those over-the-top cases that made the show so appealing. I also remember from the eighties a time when *Saturday Night Live* did a spoof on the *People's Court*, with the devil taking a woman to court because she refused to give him her soul, all because the devil (played by Jon Lovitz wearing a devil costume) hadn't lived up to his promises. While being a rather funny episode, the lesson we learn from it is no laughing matter.

In the day when Christ comes and judges the nations, there won't be any TV cameras or scripts to be followed. The devil may very well be there complaining about all the souls that have escaped the wrath he is going to suffer, but he won't be wearing a funny outfit made of spandex. It is at this time when God, showing no partiality, will give His final decision on whether we will be rewarded the gift of heaven or be cast away into the eternal abyss. The judge that will be presiding over all cases will be the honorable Lord Christ Jesus, who spoke creation into existence, and who isn't there to get laughs. And possibly the scariest part of this judgment is that it will be final. There will be no appeals, no hung juries, no mistrials—just the impartial Son of God embodying truth, giving out His verdict on where countless souls are going to spend eternity.

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*Let the reader understand this: the time to prepare for eternal life, whether in heaven or hell, is during one's earthly life.*

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We can know this as to be true, not because I say so, but because the Bible does. In the twenty fifth chapter of the gospel of Matthew, we read of the Lord Jesus teaching about this coming day. It is in this section (verses 32-46) that we read how the dead will be separated into two groups: the sheep on His right and goats of His left. Based on each individual's actions and whether or not they are in Him and His church (Col 1:18), they will be given one of

two fates: eternal life or everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46). Let's quickly focus on the two words: "eternal" and "everlasting."

The word "eternal" is translated from the Greek word αἰώνιος (aiōnios), defined by Strong's Greek Dictionary to mean: "perpetual or forever." The word "everlasting," interestingly enough, is translated over from the same term "aiōnios."

So both words (everlasting and eternal) while translated as different words in English are the same word in the Greek, meaning a perpetual state. So whichever way Jesus judges, due to the word use of "aiōnios," we can understand that His judgment is final. It's not like in hundred years people who are sent to Hell are going to be given a retrial and allowed into heaven due to good behavior. Let the reader understand this: the time to prepare for eternal life, whether in heaven or hell, is during one's earthly life. Far too many people have bought into this Hollywood idea that only the worst of the worse will be sent to hell, and if you didn't do right by God the first time during your life you're going to get a another shot after death. Nothing could be more unbiblical and a lie. Neither Jesus nor the Bible ever teaches that.

Paul wrote in the sixth chapter of Romans that being in Christ is the only way to escape the coming wrath of God.

*For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being*

*alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:10-13).*

As Paul clearly lays out, only those who are found alive in Christ, having rejected and repented of sin, will be separated as sheep on the day when Jesus returns. But one has to first be in Christ, which can only be achieved by hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel.

Knowing that Jesus will be man's final judge and that His judgment is final, all is not lost—for thankfully our final judge is one of compassion and a just judge.

*But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth (Psalm 86:15).*

*God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11).*

As I referenced in the beginning of this article the apostle Paul said it best in Acts 17:30-31: *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*

Friends if you have read this article then you too are no longer ignorant of what is to come, and why it is so important for you to recognize the sin in your life. Repent (Luke 13:3) and be placed into Christ (Gal 3:27) and then dedicate yourself to living a holy life for God.

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# JESUS: PROPHET

*Richard Mansel*

## ***Introduction***

Jesus fills many roles in God's kingdom such as Messiah, High Priest, Savior, Lord and a host of others. Each of His roles needs to be studied in depth because they allow the student to see the larger picture of salvation. Incomplete understanding can lead us to Biblical ignorance and a vulnerability to being led away by false teachers.

Each role is distinct but interwoven throughout the entire fabric of redemption. An apt pupil will determine to become well-versed in each of them.

It's important that we grasp all of the responsibilities of the Son of God. It's His role as prophet that is under consideration in this study.

## ***Building on Moses***

Moses was a great man and leader called by God from the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). God had seen the oppression of the people and had decided to “deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians” (Exodus 3:8).<sup>1</sup> Moses would lead the people from bondage (Exodus 3:10-12).

It took some convincing but eventually Moses accepted his mission with his brother Aaron (Exodus 3-4). They go to Pharaoh and present God's case (Exodus 5:1-3). Pharaoh refuses and makes things worse for Israel (Exodus 5).

Moses pleaded with God to be released from the responsibility (Exodus 6:28-30). God appoints Aaron as Moses' prophet (Exodus 7:1). They go before Pharaoh with miracles. Yet, Pharaoh still refused and God brought the ten plagues on Egypt. God spoke to Moses and told him what to say to Aaron—and then the plagues happened (Exodus 8:5).

In time, Moses acts to begin the plagues. As he gains faith and confidence, he becomes a stronger leader. “Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's

servants and in the sight of the people” (Exodus 11:3).

When Israel leaves, the people begin complaining and Moses stands strong. “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Exodus 14:13). Moses leads the people and God saves them (Exodus 14:30).

For decades Moses stands at the forefront of the nation and delivers the messages of God to a recalcitrant people. He becomes a great leader and helps the nation of Israel through one of the most difficult periods of their history. His story is one of the centerpieces in the Old Testament and his leadership stands as a model for all who follow him.

As Moses grows old, he delivers a prophecy of power and promise. “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” (Deuteronomy 18:15). This prophet will deliver the words of God and will be obedient (Deuteronomy 18:18).

When Moses dies, it is recorded, “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Moses had a very special relationship with God, so the new Prophet would have to, as well. He proclaimed visions and spoke to the Lord “face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings” (Numbers 12:8). Not just anyone could fill this role.

## ***Finding the Prophet***

Generations pass and a man named John is drawing masses of people to him. “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5-6).

John was a man with a unique lifestyle, and his reputation was growing quickly (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6). The word of the Lord came to him (Luke 3:2) and he began preaching a “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:3).

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture references are from the New King James Version (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 1992).

In time, the Jews sent priests and Levites to inquire as to who John was (John 1:19). They asked if John was the Christ or Elijah? He confirmed that he was neither. Then they asked if he was the Prophet and once again he said no (John 1:20-21).

John told them that he was the messenger to prepare the way of the Lord (John 1:23), as prophesied by Isaiah and Malachi (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1).

As the forerunner, he pointed towards someone who had not yet come. In Matthew 3:13, Jesus comes to John to be baptized and John pleads inadequacy (Matthew 3:14). But Jesus let him know that he needed to do so to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

When John baptized Him, a dove alighted on Jesus and a voice from heaven identified Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 3:16-17).

Someone significant had arrived. Not just anyone needed a forerunner to prepare the world for them.

Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Then His public ministry begins.

Prophets were commissioned to deliver God's word to the people of Israel (2 Kings 17:13). Jesus was able to rise far above that standard. He is the very embodiment of the Word (John 1:1-5). Jesus was the Word in the flesh (John 1:14). His words were truth (John 17:17).

His disciples asked to see the Father and Jesus told them:

*“Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves” (John 14:9-11).*

The prophets of God were human and subject to human frailties. Jesus, on the other hand, was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21). So Jesus was at level that no mere human could attain. He was the greatest prophet, as a result.

God always had a plan to begin a new covenant where the Messiah would build His church (Hebrews 8:6; Matthew 16:18). The church would be Christ's body (Ephesians 1:22-23). So the Law of

Moses and the age of the prophets was working towards something.

*“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2).*

Jesus was the culmination of God's plan. He was “wisdom from God” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Yet, He came to fulfill, not destroy the work of the prophets or the Law (Matthew 5:17). He spoke with authority from God (John 12:49-50).

Moses gave the people manna from the hand of God (Exodus 16:3). Yet, Jesus was able to give mankind “living bread” (John 6:48-50).

There are many instances in the Bible where Christ is referred to as a prophet (Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 9:17; Acts 3:20-23). There are many more where He gave prophecies (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 24; 25:31-34; 26:64; Mark 13:1-2; John 7:37-40).

Jesus said, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:46-47).

The prophets under the Law of Moses were human and Jesus is eternal (Zechariah 1:5; cf. Matthew 28:20).

## **Conclusion**

Jesus has a part in everything God does, which makes Him uniquely qualified for any role in the overall plan of salvation. All of Jesus' existence is focused on the singular goal of saving souls.

Building the scheme of redemption to fulfill that mission completes the Lord and His work. The Lord's consummate goodness and love is directed at mankind and the souls He cherishes.

We can be comforted by that focus and extraordinary love. Come to Jesus and follow him every day as His mission unfolds from the right hand of God. Directing man away from sin and to salvation brings Him immense satisfaction and joy.

Listen to His Word and live it daily.

# Jesus: Our Great High Priest

*Phil Sanders*

From the earliest times we can read of offerings sacrificed to God. We can see it in the history of the Old Testament from Cain and Abel's sacrifices (Genesis 4:3-4), Noah's (Genesis 8:20), and Abraham's covenant (Genesis 15:9-18) to the elaborate services of the Levitical priesthood. The Old Testament reveals how the Levite sacrifices that first took place in the tabernacle in the wilderness later took place in Solomon's temple and the rebuilt temple after the exile.

When Christ appeared, the conception of priesthood had thus grown in the consciousness of the Jews, as the necessary instrument of mediation between man and God. Priestly acts were performed on behalf of the worshipper. The priest was to secure for man the Divine favor. This could only be gained by an act of expiation and propitiation. Something must be done in order to set forth the sin of man, his acknowledgment of guilt, the satisfaction of the law, and the assurance of the Divine forgiveness, the restored favor of God, and finally the unity of man and God.

Expiation relates to sins, and propitiation to God. Expiation is an act which allows for the removal of the consequences of sin, and propitiation is an act which enables God to receive the sinner. Expiation opens the way for the needed propitiation. Propitiation refers to the appeasing of God's wrath through the sacrifice of blood. No one can earn salvation. Sinners cannot pay back, bribe, or impress God with lavish gifts. It took a sacrifice of blood to appease the wrath of God for sin and atone for those sins. In 1 John 2:2; 4:10, Christ Himself is called the "propitiation for our sins." Christ is "the propitiation," because by his assuming our obligations he expiated

our guilt, covered it, by the vicarious punishment which he endured.

## ***Christ's Sacrifice in the Four Gospels***

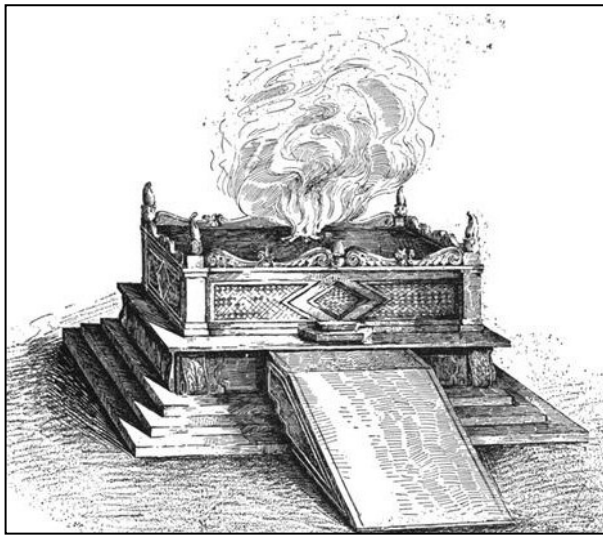
The first four books in speaking of the life of Christ reveal His bearing our sins and saving us. He was called "Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Salvation from sin, in the mind of the Jews, must most clearly take place in the sacrifices in the temple. Thus, in the very name which our Lord received, His priesthood is suggested. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus revealed that "the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The Lord frequently spoke of bearing His cross, which our Lord associates with the thought of finding life by losing it (Matthew 16:24-25). For Jesus, suffering and dying on the cross must come first, so that He can be raised on the third day (Matthew 17:22-23). Both His death

and resurrection play into His role as the Son of Man who "has come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). The Lord clearly says to His disciples,

*Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up (Matthew 20:18-19).*

Jesus' sacrifice was to be cruel and agonizing, since the "Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to



fall upon Him.” We cannot forget, however, that His resurrection and life at the right hand of God gives us life.

The full significance of the death of Jesus Christ is revealed at the institution of the Lord's Supper. The bread is "my body," the fruit of the vine is "my blood of the new covenant," and His blood is declared to be "poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). The reminding of this sacrifice leads us to recall our sins and need for forgiveness; it calls the Christian who partakes of this memorial supper to confess His sins, repent of them, and ask God's forgiveness.

Christ declares that He will give the life of His flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51). The entire passage (John 6:47-65) is suffused with the conception of "life for life," one of the elements constituting the conception of the sacrificial act. In John 8:28, Jesus refers to the lifting up of the Son of Man, a clear reference to His crucifixion. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). This lifting up, showing love for all, will draw people to Christ (John 12:32). The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep (John 10:15). In John 10:17-18, Christ claims the power to lay down His life and to take it again. He is both the offering itself and the One who offers. In John 11:25-26 Christ is the source of life, and life after death. He could only do this if His death paid for our sins (1 Peter 1:18-20) and His resurrection proved His immortality.

While the high priest Caiaphas spoke truly of the death of Christ, he did not understand its true significance. As the high priest of the nation he gives, though unconsciously, a significant expression to the truth that it was "expedient" that Jesus should die for the nation and for the children of God everywhere scattered (John 11:47-52). Jesus knew His death was not the end; His death like a seed would allow Him to bear much fruit (John 12:24-33). The idea of life coming from the dying seed is associated with the power of the cross to attract all men to Himself, for only the Lord Jesus possesses eternal life.

### ***Christ's Priesthood in Acts***

Christ's priestly office in the Acts of the Apostles finds a clear reference in Philip's application of Isaiah 53:7-8 found in Acts 8:32-33: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." Philip, having been guided by the Spirit, used this Scripture to "preach the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:35). Likewise, Peter's words to Cornelius culminated in the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ's death and resurrection when they were united with Christ in baptism (Acts 10:39-43, 48; 11:14; Romans 6:3-7).

The idea takes its most distinct form in Paul's sermon at Antioch in Acts 13:38-39: "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from every-

thing from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." Paul also makes reference to what the blood of Jesus did in his address to the elders of the church in Ephesus; He declares that the church of God was purchased "with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

*Rather than use the Law of Moses as the means for salvation, God provided a propitiary sacrifice for all in the blood of Jesus Christ.*

### ***Christ's Sacrifice in Paul's Epistles***

Since all have sinned, God found in the gift of Jesus a means to atone for the sins of all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Rather than use the Law of Moses as the means for salvation, God provided a propitiary sacrifice for all in the blood of Jesus Christ.

*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstra-*



*tion, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:21-26).*

Jesus was “delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25, ESV). Through Him we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand (Romans 5:2). Christ died for weak, ungodly sinners; and we are justified by His blood (Romans 5:6-9). In 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 Paul said the preaching of the cross is to save those that believe. The subject of his teaching was not merely Christ, but Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul declares Christ to be our Passover. 1 Corinthians 15:3 clearly declares Christ died for our sins. Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). We serve Christ, because He “loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly” (Galatians 2:21).

The epistle to the Ephesians says we have redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses, through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). This forgiveness through His blood brings reconciliation to God and peace (Colossians 1:20). Since we are reconciled in His fleshly body through death, He can present us before the Father “holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Colossians 1:21-23). We are buried and raised with Christ in baptism by faith in the working of God, which results in the forgiveness of “all our transgressions” (Colossians 2:12-13).

This transformation from darkness to light through our union by faith and baptism in the death and resurrection of Christ provides a new perspective and a new hope for glory, as we set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-4). 1 Timothy 2:5-6 declares that Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and man, who gave Himself a ransom for all.

## ***Jesus as Our Great High Priest in the Book of Hebrews***

The author of the book of Hebrews carefully and thoroughly describes the role of Jesus as our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). The opening words of the book of Hebrews contain the essential thought: “after making purification of sins” (Hebrews 1:3). His crowning with glory and honor followed His suffering death to become the author of our salvation.

*But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings (Hebrews 2:9-10).*

The title of high priest is first introduced in Hebrews 2:17; Jesus is “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.”

In Hebrews 3:1 Jesus is “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” The epistle to the Hebrews refers more than once to our confession, an acknowledgement of who we are because of what He did (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). In chapter four, the writer then sets the foundation for his argument revealing the excellence of Jesus with the words:

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).*

From Hebrews 4:14 to 10:14 the writer deals with the high-priestly work of Jesus. His unique, once-for-all sacrifice, His eternal priesthood, His place in the order of Melchizedek all reveal a superior role than that enjoyed by the Levitical priests.

We can see His qualifications as a priest by the fact that God Himself appointed Him to this role and office (Hebrews 5:1). “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels,

namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). He is well suited for priestly service since He in humility shared in flesh and blood, suffered, and endured temptation (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15; 5:2-6). Jesus was prepared to offer salvation and forgiveness to the obedient, because by suffering He learned obedience and was made perfect (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Christ as our High Priest had the two qualifications which every high priest needed. First, he had the divine call (Hebrews 5:5-6). God had named him a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Second, His experience in the flesh with suffering and temptation gave him a compassion for suffering sinners (4:14-16). Robert Milligan in the Gospel Advocate Commentary noted:

Such a quality of head and heart was peculiarly necessary in every High Priest; for to him it belonged to decide, in any given case, whether or not a sacrifice could be legally offered for the sin committed. See Lev. 10:8-11; Deut. 17:8-13; 24:8; 33:10; Mal. 2:7. If a man sinned through ignorance or in error, that is, either without a knowledge of God's will in the case, or under such temptations as might serve to obscure for the time being his consciousness of guilt, then in that event and under such circumstances a sacrifice might be offered, and the sin might be forgiven. (Num. 15:22-29.) But not so if the sin was committed with a high hand, that is, in a spirit of haughty insolence and open rebellion against God and his government. In that event, there was no room for repentance, and none for sacrifice. The presumptuous sinner was always to be put to death, "at the mouth of two or three witnesses." (Num. 15:30, 31; Deut. 17:6.)

### ***The Unique Priesthood of Christ***

His unique priesthood is characterized by the fact He serves after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10). His service, unlike the Levitical priests who grew old and died, was an eternal one at the right hand of God (Hebrews 6:20). Like Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus was both a king and a priest, who was greater than Abraham (Hebrews 7:1-3, 8). The Lord Jesus was made a priest independent of His earthly family of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:3, 13-14).

For that reason, Jesus' priesthood is superior to that of Levi (Hebrews 7:4-10). Milligan describes how Jesus was superior to the Levitical priests:

Such was the character of the Levitical High Priests. Some of them were very wicked, proud, vain, and ambitious men: and all of them, without exception, were subject to the common weaknesses and infirmities of our nature. Even Aaron himself, the first and doubtless one of the best of the order, made a golden calf and encouraged the people to worship the idol. (Ex. 32:1-29.) And hence the necessity that these High Priests should daily offer up sacrifices for themselves as well as for the sins of the people. But not so with Jesus, the Son of God, who was made a High Priest by "the word of the oath" which was given after the Law. He has by the one offering of himself in the heavenly Sanctuary, not only made expiation for the sins of the people, but by the sufferings and trials which he endured on Earth he has himself been perfected forevermore.

The change in law or covenant demanded a new and different priesthood from that of Aaron (Hebrews 7:11-13). Jesus could serve like Melchizedek, since He lived "according to the power of an indestructible life" (Hebrews 7:16); He could serve as a great high priest because the Lord's oaths are immutable (Hebrews 7:21); and He is able to save forever because He lives forever to make intercession for His people (Hebrews 7:24). He is indeed unique as a priest, because He offered up not an animal but Himself:

*For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever (Hebrews 7:26-28).*

The High Priest and Lord Jesus entered within the veil of the greater and more perfect tabernacle as a forerunner for us (Hebrews 6:20). He presented the sacrificial blood in heaven itself (Hebrews 8:3; 9:7, 24) and obtained for us eternal redemption

(Hebrews 9:12). By doing so He established or inaugurated the new covenant with His blood (Hebrews 9:15-22). “For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives” (Hebrews 9:16-17).

The result of the Lord’s high-priestly work is a cleansing from sin through His blood and through His intercession (Hebrews 9:23). By this will in establishing a second covenant, we can be sanctified by the by “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who He sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14); and through His blood we can draw near to God with the full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:21-22).

God Himself appointed Christ as priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5-10), a priesthood greater than the Aaronic priesthood (Hebrews 7:4-22). His priesthood came as the fulfillment of a prophecy containing an oath: “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). While Christ’s priesthood in the new covenant is eternal, the Aaronic priesthood as part of the first covenant was temporary. “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13; cf. 10:8-10). The first covenant is taken away by a change in law and in priesthood. Christ’s high-priesthood is made effectual by His own blood; and He entered once for all into the holy place, and has become the Mediator of a New Covenant (Hebrews 9:11-15).

Jesus Christ is forever the representative of man before God in heaven. “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true

one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own” (Hebrews 9:24-25). Though prescribed by the Law

of Moses, it is “impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). “For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law” (Gal. 3:21). Sin required a greater sacrifice. Christ by the sacrifice of Himself forever takes away sin, and has consecrated the new and living way to God (Hebrews 10:19-20). He is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24). The entire Epistle of Hebrews is steeped in the conception of Christ’s priesthood.

### ***A Sinless Sacrifice***

Just as the Law of Moses demanded the very best in one’s sacrifice, so in the new covenant the sacrifice of Christ also had to be

without spot. The laws of sacrifice in the book of Leviticus prescribe the specific details of sacrifices that please God, and nothing less would suffice. Offering deficient animals proved to be offensive to God (Malachi 1:6-9; cf. Deuteronomy 15:21). God would not accept the profaned offerings of defiled priests (Leviticus 21); they were to be holy. Jesus offered Himself as a perfect, sinless sacrifice. It is for this reason that those who follow Christ are able to approach God’s throne. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Jesus can help us in our times of temptation, because He too was tempted; yet He never sinned. His sinless nature makes Him the perfect sacrifice.

The book of Hebrews describes the character of



*Statue of Melchizedek in Rome*

our great high priest Jesus:

*For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:26-27).*

Peter agrees with this assessment and discusses Jesus' sinless character as He hung upon the cross. "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:22-23). "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). John also speaks of Jesus, our advocate and the propitiation for our sins as "the righteous" (1 John 2:1-2). He said, "You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

### ***The Once-For-All Sacrifice***

The sacrifice of Jesus was once for all and never needed to be repeated, unlike the offerings of the Levitical priests.

*And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:11-14).*

Some have taken verse 14 to mean the sacrifice of Christ has made those who were once saved, by faith alone, to always be saved. The Scriptures however teach the necessity of faithfulness of a pure heart in obedience to the end. Robert Milligan explains who was made perfect by this once-for-all sacrifice.

The one offering which he has made of himself is enough. By it he has forever perfected them that are sanctified. But who are they? Evidently the same as the sanctified in 2:11; those who by faith and obedience have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), and who have risen with him

from the baptismal grave to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; 3:1). All such have come to perfection in Christ, finding as they do in him all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), so that they have only to persevere in well doing to the end of life, by abiding in Christ as the branch abides in the vine, and then with spirits as pure as the angels before the throne of God, they will join the redeemed millions "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

### ***Christ's Ongoing Ministry as our High Priest***

Hebrews helps us understand that when Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father, He went there for a purpose. We should not suppose that since He offered Himself on the cross, He has no more work to do on our behalf. The Scriptures give us three distinct things Jesus is now doing on our behalf to bring about our salvation.

**First, Jesus as our great high priest is now interceding for us in heaven.** The purpose of intercession is to pray for, appeal, or plead on behalf of someone to God. Paul encouraged the Romans by appealing to this intercession at a time of persecution.

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).*

The Hebrew writer notes, "but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25). The Christian can have ongoing forgiveness, since Jesus as our high priest who lives forever continues to plead the case for those who draw near to Him. The sacrificial Lamb is also the pleading priest, who continually appeals to God to forgive us. His continuing appeal offers us continuing forgiveness as we walk in the light and confess



our sins (1 John 1:7, 9).

**Second, the Lord Jesus works as our mediator in order to bring about our salvation.** Paul describes this unique role in 1 Timothy 2:3-6:

*This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

Not only did Jesus give His life as a ransom for many, He is now uniquely standing between God and man as our one and only mediator. A mediator stands between two parties to remove a disagreement and to help them reach a common goal. God's goal for all people is that they be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. When Christians sin, the Lord Jesus mediates between them. Giving His life as a ransom for all allows Him the privilege to appeal to God on their behalf.

**Third, Jesus is functioning today as our advocate when we as Christians sin.** John explains, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). As a propitiation for our sins, Jesus is an atoning sacrifice whose purpose is to reconcile us to the Father. This Son of God whom God gave as a sacrifice is now our advocate with the Father. An advocate is someone who is called to our side to help us; in this context he is like a legal assistant who pleads our case and defends us.

Though we have sinned, He is the righteous, atoning sacrifice, whose blood cleanses us. He is the sacrificed offering to appease the wrath of God on account of our sin. As a propitiation, He suffered

death to bring about our forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father. Now, as we strive to walk in the light in a world that lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19), we find ourselves sometimes falling to temptation and sin. The Lord Jesus is our helper and protector as we confess our sins and turn from them. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18).

We are not suggesting here that this protection affects those who willfully walk in darkness (1 John 1:6) or those who commit sins that lead to death (1 John 5:16). The sacrifice of Christ no longer remains for those who harden their hearts in unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-14) or continue in deliberate, willful sin (Hebrews 10:26-31). God, however, distinguishes sins that lead to death from those that do not (1 John 5:16). "All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death" (1 John 5:17). These

are the sins for which the Lord Jesus pleads our case.

### **Conclusion**

We offer deep sadness for the sins we have committed but are most grateful that our Lord was willing to sacrifice Himself that we might have forgiveness. More than that, we express the greatest thanks that He stands as our intercessor, mediator, and advocate throughout our lives. Though Jesus knew Peter would deny Him three times, Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). The great

high priesthood of the Lord Jesus is a complete one in sacrifice, in caring for our souls, and in interceding for us with the Father. May the grace He has given and the blood He shed prove never to be in vain.

*Not only did Jesus  
give His life as a ran-  
som for many, He is  
now uniquely standing  
between God and man  
as our one and  
only mediator...*

*May the grace He has  
given and the blood  
He shed prove never to  
be in vain.*

# Jesus: The Bridegroom

Keith Stonehart

Ephesians 5:22-33 comes to mind when we think about the marriage relationship. The majority of the time, our perspective of this text is on the roles in marriage—in fact, this is one of the best texts to find out the roles of husbands and wives.

But when we examine this text, I believe that we see that the roles of husbands and wives is actually just an application of the main point of the passage. The main point Paul is trying to make is in verses 32-33:

*This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband (Eph. 5:32-33).*

The main point of this text is to emphasize the relationship not between husbands and wives, but between Christ and His bride, the church. He uses the husband/wife relationship within this text to show the relationship between Jesus and His people.

In Revelation 21:2, the apostle John has a vision of heaven. He describes it this way: “*I saw the Holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*” It’s fascinating to me that when John tries to put language to the heaven that he saw, he chooses this moment, when a bride comes down the aisle to her groom.

The bride is a picture of heaven. The groom waiting to receive her is a picture of heaven.

The bride and groom are depicted here as a vision into heaven, where Jesus waits for us. Ephesians 5 also depicts Him as our husband, and we are, as the church, His wife.

Clearly, this is an important relationship described, one that we can easily relate to—and yet sometimes, like in our own marriages, we forget.

It is good to be reminded that We are The Bride.

We live in a cynical world, and it is skeptical at best in its view of marriage, and perverse at its

worst. But those images stand in sharp contrast to the way the Bible talks about marriage.

According to John, it’s a picture of the new heaven and earth coming together as ONE. I think that’s worth remembering.

That’s not to say that marriage is all angels on clouds playing harps, but, in my experience, it’s the things that require everything of us that are the most precious to us in the end.

## ECHAD

Deuteronomy 6:4, a passage known as the Shema says, “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

The Hebrew word for “one” is *echad*. It means a unity with plurality. Many, yet somehow, at the same time, one. As Christians we believe that God is three yet one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In one of His final prayers in the gospel of John, Jesus prays for his followers, saying, “*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.*”

Genesis 2:24 says, “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*”

It’s the same Hebrew word *echad*.

When two people join their lives together in marriage, they enter somehow into this mysterious unity with plurality, two yet somehow one.

Like we do when we are baptized into Christ

This is why the destruction of a marriage is so painful, because it’s the tearing apart, the ripping in half of something that has been bound together.

Like we do if we leave Christ

So it seems to me that the hardest part of marriage is the tending to, the nurturing, and the maintenance of oneness. C.S. Lewis described it as a “second kind of love.” He said,

Being in love is a good thing, but it is not the best thing. There are many things below it, but

there are also things above it. You cannot make it the basis of a whole life.

It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. And no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all. Knowledge can last, principles can last, habits can last; but feelings come and go.

And in fact, whatever people say, the state called “being in love” usually does not last. But, of course, ceasing to be “in love” need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense is distinct from “being in love.” It is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced in marriage by the grace that both people ask, and receive, from God.

They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other, just as you love yourself even when you don’t like yourself. Being in love first moved you to make the promise of fidelity: but this quieter love enables you to keep the promise.

It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run—being in love was the explosion that started it.

There are moments in a marriage where it’s virtually impossible to understand your spouse. There are moments when what she wants makes absolutely no sense. There are moments when what he wants just seems flat out dumb.

But if it’s true that a marriage creates one flesh out of two people, then you don’t get to dismiss one another’s feelings or perspectives because by the definition of marriage you are one and the same:

If she feels it, then so do you. If he senses it, then so do you.

This is the hard work of marriage, of oneness: to mutually submit to and partner with one another.

This also is the case in our marriage, our unity, our oneness with Christ. In every relationship, there is a lead—and there is the response to the lead.

### **CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIS BRIDE**

The Greek word for love is *agapaō* (v) or *agape* (n) definition—Jesus Christ! This is a love that chooses to be devoted to the good and well-being of its recipients, whether they are deserving of it or not. It is not based on emotions. At times it goes against natural inclinations.

His love wasn’t given to the bride because she

was worthy of it (Romans 5:6-8). She was “ungodly” and a “sinner”! Imagine going out of your way to try to get a woman who is your enemy to marry you! He truly went out of the way to win the heart of His bride. He loved His enemies, US! He willingly, purposely, & sacrificially gave Himself for her! His love was selfless, a love of sacrifice.

What was He willing to do for His wife? He was willing to leave Heaven, become a bond-servant, and to die for us (Philippians 2). Why did He give Himself? Because He had—and wanted to share—a purifying love. He is the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23). Jesus died for His bride so she could be cleansed and sanctified. It was for her salvation, so she could be cleansed, sanctified, & perfected!

He desires His bride to “come down the aisle” without spot; pure and white! Beautiful and glorious!

### **THE BRIDE'S RESPONSE: LOVE IN RETURN**

1 John 4:19—we love Him because He first loved us.

Matthew 22:37 – Love with ALL our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We must fully devote ourselves to obeying the husband. We must forsake all else, give our hearts to no other, willing to sacrifice all for Him (Romans 12:1-2). We must show adoration to the one who loves us so much! Our hearts must belong to Him!

### **ONENESS OF CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE**

Just as there is oneness between a husband and wife, so also there is with Christ and His church.

Jesus left His Father in Heaven to come to this earth, and left His mother here on earth when He died on the cross so He could be joined with His wife and become one with her.

We are one with the Lord (John 17:22-23, 1 Corinthians 6:17). We were united with Him at baptism.

There is such a oneness between Jesus and His bride that if you show love/hatred to the bride, it is as though you are doing it to the Husband!

Matthew 25:34-40 – Jesus takes what is done to His bride personally. If you serve the least of His brethren, you do it for HIM—He states: IF you do not serve the least of these, you do not serve HIM!

Acts 9:4—“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

This “oneness” that Christ has with His church brings with it the idea that He treats the church as

His own body, providing what is needed for His body to be nourished and cared for.

According to Ephesians 4:15-16, Jesus, the church's head, provides for the body's growth. He gives us as His people all that we need to make this happen. He cares for and cherishes the church that He is one Spirit with (1 Corinthians 6:17).

### **THE BRIDES RESPONSE: PURITY**

God is #1! There is to be no flirtation with the world, which James 4:4 calls adultery. We are in such a sacred union that we must not unite ourselves with another. There is no neutrality. This is a Non Negotiable!

We cannot love two lovers. We must choose one or the other (1 John 2:15-17)

*Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).*

*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).*

- We must flee spiritual adultery and sexual immorality!
- We must exhibit purity for our husband!
- We must leave all to be united with Him!
- Christ can only have union with a pure bride!
- Paul's concern for the bride: that she would be presented to Christ on the last day pure and chaste! (2 Cor. 11:2)

How about this one: What would you do in this scenario?

While your wife is on her way down the aisle, someone comes out of the crowd with a bucket full of mud, runs up to the bride and pours the whole bucket all over the bride?

What do you think the husband would think about such a thing? This should encourage us to treat our brothers and sisters in a certain way! For us to throw a stumbling block before another brother or sister in Christ, it is as though we are throwing a bucket of mud on the dress of His bride! He will hold us accountable!

### **CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE BRIDE (EPHESIANS 5:22-24)**

Christ is the leader in His home!

*He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23).*

Jesus' word is final. His decision stands and the church is to follow Christ, even when we do not understand or agree (Proverbs 3:5). But we do understand that His leadership is focused on the well being of those He leads.

It isn't all about Him. It is sacrificial, looking to the needs of His wife whom He is devoted to.

### **THE BRIDE'S RESPONSE: SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE**

*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (Rev. 19:7-8).*

The Christian (member of the bride) who sees and understands what Jesus sacrificed by showing His perfect love, but is unwilling to submit to the husband, is a fool!

We must submit even when it's difficult! If we only submit when we agree, that isn't submission at all!

What do we do when it is difficult and when we do not agree? We remember that our husband knows what is best for us and has our best interests at heart, and we submit. We obey, calling Him Lord! We participate in maintaining this relationship, this eshad unity, this oneness.... As he is the husband, and we are the bride.



# JESUS: THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Perry Hall

At 1 year of age, I was hospitalized with a rare condition, causing a lack of strength in my toddler back so I could not sit up. So rare was this malady, I became the subject of a medical journal. Around 6 years old, I remember a certain morning vividly. My bedroom was downstairs but my parents' bedroom was upstairs. That morning I awoke and knew something was not right. I had to crawl up the stairs yelling, "*I can't walk.*" My mother drove me to the hospital, while her younger sister held me in her arms. My Mom cried the whole way as she wanted to be the one holding me. This time the cause was an infection on my spinal cord. Vividly, crawling up those stairs that morning has remained in my mind. I also clearly remember enduring the pain of the spinal tap as they stuck that needle deep into my spinal cord. At that part of my illness, it was now me crying. I remember the doctor whispering in my ear something my mother is convinced he never said: "*I won't take this out until you stop crying!*" Probably he whispered, "*I need you to stop crying so I can take this out.*" I had to be totally still, otherwise moving could result in further damaging my spinal cord.

While 20, I woke up one morning with numbness on the right side of my face. I called home and my mother told me to go straight to a doctor. The diagnosis was Bell's Palsy which paralyzed half my face to the degree I couldn't close my eye even when sleeping (I had to wear a patch). Food dribbled out

of my mouth. Disheartened, I asked my fiancé if she wanted out of our engagement. She said no. During this physical and emotional turmoil, I distinctly remember a certain night when I walked out, alone, into the dark, and started praying. I cried, and cried out, asking God why this was happening to me?! How could I preach if I couldn't even speak plainly? During this solemn prayer, without forethought, I slapped my paralyzed face as hard as I could! Although better today, there are times when I continue to suffer residual effects.

Soon after getting married in my 20's, the back problems returned. Vertebrae would slide out of place, causing me to collapse onto the floor. This happened periodically for 25 years. Then it got worse. In my early 50's, I started walking with a cane and spent 3 years on pain medications. Then I had my first back surgery, a laminectomy, which created space by removing the lamina — the back part of a vertebra that covers your spinal canal. Relief at last! For one month. Sigh. Then two more years of pain, procedures, and medications until my second back surgery; a back fusion from the L3-S1. I have surgical scars on the front and the back because they had to lift my internal organs on to my stomach to get to the spinal cord.

That's my introduction, rather your introduction, to me; introducing my credentials to talk about Jesus as the Great Physician. Instead of "street-cred," this is my "med-cred"!



Another physician records in his memoirs some intriguing episodes regarding the Great Physician. This doctor is Luke (Colossians 4:14), who writes his memoir about Jesus. Notice the following passages:

- Concerning the Great Physician Physically Healing: **Luke 4:23 (CSB): Then he said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Doctor, heal yourself. What we’ve heard that took place in Capernaum, do here in your hometown also.’”**
- Concerning the Great Physician Spiritually Healing: **Luke 5:31-32: Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”**

There are three types of physical healing: natural, medical, and supernatural. Jesus’s miracles are the last. There three types of healing: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Jesus is the healer of each. There are three periods of healing: past, present, and future. Jesus is seen in all three. Let’s consider Luke’s words from the Holy Spirit regarding the Greatest Doctor known to man because He created man.

### ***The Great Physician – Physical Healing***

Instead of listing a plethora of signs, wonders, and miracles, let’s examine in detail just one example of Jesus being the Great Physician physically. Pardon the format but cramming the notes within the text is the leanest way to get the most information. I chose this one due to its use of unique use of words; plus, she too had back problems!

***Luke 13:10-17: As he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, a woman was there who had been disabled [lit., a lack of strength] by a spirit [i.e., Satan, v.16] for over eighteen years. She was bent over [here only in the N.T., to bend together, medical word for curvature of the spine] and could not straighten up [“Used by Galen of strengthening the vertebrae of the spine” (Vincent)] at all. When Jesus saw her, he called out to her, “Woman, you are free [only time in the N.T. were this word is used of disease; “Medical writers use it of releasing from disease, relaxing tendons, and taking off bandages” (Vin-***

***cent)] of your disability” [i.e. a lack of strength] Then he laid his hands on her [Jesus illustrates the importance of human touch. With just a thought, Jesus could have cured the woman. With just the sound of His voice she could have stood up straight. But no, this Jesus, this healer, this teacher who instructs Who God is because He is God, and what man should be because He is also man, heals with a touch and comforting words!], and instantly she was restored and began to glorify God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant [from two words meaning to feel much pain – ironic] because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, responded by telling the crowd, “There are six days when work should be done; therefore come on those days and be healed and not on the Sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “Hypocrites! Doesn’t each one of you untie [luō] his ox or donkey from the feeding trough on the Sabbath and lead it to water? Satan [all illnesses, whether directly or indirectly (through sin) originate from Satan tempting Adam and Eve to sin and the world becoming cursed] has bound this woman, a daughter of Abraham [Daughter of Abraham – 1) a term not found in any of the prior Jewish literature; 2) we should see others as equal to ourselves! How would we want to be treated?], for eighteen years — shouldn’t she be untied [luō; Christ makes a play on words here. He uses the same verb, “loose,” to describe the ox and donkey as He does the woman being “loosed” from Satan through healing] from this bondage [one purpose for remembering the Sabbath was Israel being freed from Egyptian bondage (Deut.5:12-15)] on the Sabbath day?” When he had said these things, all his adversaries were humiliated, but the whole crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things he was doing.***

Then Jesus tells two parables (Luke 13:18-21), one of leaven and the other of a mustard seed. The placement of the two parables after the miracle healing of the bound and bent woman should not be separated. Jesus’s healing shows the kingdom which is the topic of the parables. The Great Physician is the prophesied Great King!

## ***The Great Physician – Physical and Spiritual Healing***

Since Luke and others point to Jesus' dual healing roles, let's consider how they intersect. The physical healing of Jesus reflects the spiritual healing (For your extended study, see below an addendum with vocabulary which shows this intersectionality). Just as Jesus spoke in parables, which were earthly stories with heavenly meanings; Jesus' physical healings were a living parable, type, or allegory of spiritual healing. Consider the healing of the paralytic (Luke 5:17-25). Let's focus on Jesus's question:

*Luke 5:23-24: Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he told the paralyzed man, "I tell you: Get up, take your stretcher, and go home."*

It is easier to "say" your sins are forgiven since there is no observable proof to the contrary. So, Jesus does that which is harder to "say," get up and walk. If he is powerless, there is demonstrable verification.

Why did Jesus heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people when proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23)? The answer is more than "miracles confirm His message." And again, the significance is more than "to cause belief." The answer implies that the living parallel of physical healing typifies the spiritual healing. Even beyond that, the answer demonstrates that in overpowering the physical maladies which is part of this cursed earth, Jesus can overpower even the devil himself. There is another answer, too, which ties together Jesus's physical and spiritual healing – compassion. Imagine the emotional healing, knowing Jesus cares when so many do not!

## ***The Great Physician – Physical and Spiritual Healing and Prophecy***

Notice again from Luke's memoir,

*Luke 7:21-23: At that time Jesus healed many people of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and he granted sight to many blind people. He replied to them [i.e., John the Baptist's disciples], "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive*

*their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news."*

The good news is on par with physical healing! This is a quote and additional thought from Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1. Connecting Jesus' healing powers through the Spirit back to the Old Testament is purposeful. Jesus is God Incarnate, the Great Physician, and therefore Yahweh-Rapha or Jehovah-Rapha. In Hebrew, rapha (râpâ') means "to restore," "to heal," or "to make healthful." When God heals the waters at Marah, He says, "For I am the LORD who heals you" (Ex.15:26). Did you notice something odd here? God doesn't say, "I am the LORD who heals the water." God said, "I heal YOU." God heals the water and heals them...with a tree (Ex.15:25). See another healing and another tree?

*1 Peter 2:24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

In Exodus 15:26, there are few translations which keep the power of this name of God, which is literally, Yahweh-Heals. Here is the Names of God Translation:

*Exodus 15:26 (NOG): He said, "If you will listen carefully to Yahweh your Elohim and do what he considers right, if you pay attention to his commands and obey all his laws, I will never make you suffer any of the diseases I made the Egyptians suffer, because I am Yahweh Ropheka."*

The Expanded Bible brings us back to Jesus being the Great Physician:

*Exodus 15:26 (EXB): He said, "You must obey [or listen to the voice of] the Lord your God and do what he says is right [is right in his eyes/sight]. If you obey all his commands [statutes; ordinances; requirements] and keep his rules, I will not bring on you any of the sicknesses [diseases] I brought on the Egyptians. I am the Lord who heals you [your physician]."*

Many OT passages speak of God healing (Jer. 3:22; 30:17; Isa. 30:26; 61:1; Psalms 103:3). Yahweh is the Great Physician who heals the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of His people. Jesus is this

Great Physician Incarnate.

### ***The Great Physician – The Ultimate Physical and Spiritual Resurrection***

The resurrection is the ultimate physical healing. Luke includes the son of a widow of Nain (7:11-17); the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue (8:40-42, 49-56); plus, Jesus' resurrection (ch. 24). Then in Acts, Luke's memoir of the spiritual body of Jesus, the Church, two more resurrections (Acts 9:36-43; 20:7-12). Even the non-resurrection miracles in Acts are attributed to the resurrected Jesus:

*Acts 4:8-10 (CSB): Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy."*

### ***Conclusion***

Can you imagine the scandal if Jesus tries to heal, but Satan, who has bound that poor woman for 18 years, intervenes and causes Jesus to fail?! Or what if Satan tempts Jesus away from going to the cross, thus making his spiritual healing journey to earth a total failure?! Or once again, imagine Satan standing outside that tomb, and with all his power – which is considerable – keeping that rock from ever moving away. Satan defeating Jesus would make God a loser! Satan would have proven Jesus is not the Great Physician over illness, spiritual sin, and death. Subsequently, the result would be Jesus, the Great Quack.

### ***Addendum – Vocabulary: WORD STUDIES***

Many of the words used to describe physical healing are used for spiritual healing, that is, our salvation. Is this an accident?

#### ***A. Therapeuo (2323)***

- a. "primarily signifies to serve as a therapon, an attendant; then, to care for the sick, to treat, cure, heal (Eng., therapeutics) (Vine, p.543).
- b. "2. to heal, cure, restore to health" (Thayer, p.288).

#### ***B. Iaomai (2390)***

- a. "to heal, is used (a) of physical treatment 22 times; in Matt.15:28, A.V., 'made whole,' R.V., 'healed;' so in Acts 9:24; (b) figuratively, of spiritual healing, Matt.13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb.12:13; 1 Pet.2:24; possibly, Jas.5:16 includes both (a) and (b); some mss. have the word, with sense (b), in Luke 4:18. Apart from this last, Luke, the physician, uses the word fifteen times (Vine, p.543).

#### ***C. Sozo (4982)***

- a. "to save, is translated by the verb to heal in the A.V. of Mark 5:23; and Luke 8:36...; the idea is that of saving from disease and its effects" (Vine p.543).

#### ***D. Diasozo (1295)***

- a. "to save thoroughly (dia, thorough, and [sozo])" (Vine, p.543).

#### ***E. Katharizo (2511)***

- a. Physically: to make clean, to cleanse.
- b. Spiritually: to free from the defilement/guilt of sin and from faults.



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# Matthias

Bradley S. Cobb

Though Matthias is only mentioned once in the biblical record, we actually know more about him than some people think.

## **Matthias the Early Disciple**

In order for Matthias to be nominated as an apostle, he had to have been one who “went in and out” with the apostles and Jesus, dating back to the baptism of John.<sup>1</sup> This means that Matthias was well-known among the apostles as being one who had proven faithful in following the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. Matthias would have seen Jesus perform miracles, and most likely was among those who traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem and saw Jesus overturn the tables of the money-changers.<sup>2</sup> Since he had to have been one of the earliest disciples in order to be nominated to be an apostle, it also means he was probably one of the ones in Judea with Jesus, baptizing people.<sup>3</sup>

## **Matthias the Witness of the Resurrected Christ**

We are not told exactly *when* and *how* Matthias saw Jesus after His resurrection, but we do know that it happened, because it was a requirement for someone to be nominated to become an apostle. Certainly, it was one of the following occasions:

*Christ died on behalf of our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and*

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<sup>1</sup> This has caused some unnecessary confusion, because none of the apostles followed Jesus until at least 40 days after His baptism. The reference, then, is to someone who was a disciple of Jesus dating back to the time when John was still alive and baptizing people—obviously, the earlier the better.

<sup>2</sup> John chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> As recorded in John 3:22, 4:1-2.

*that He has been raised up on the third day, according to the Scriptures. And that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve; thereafter He appeared to over five hundred brethren at once, out of whom most remain until now, but some have also fallen asleep; thereafter He appeared to James, thereafter to all the apostles.*<sup>4</sup>

## **Matthias the Chosen**

Prior to Pentecost, there were around 120 disciples meeting together in Jerusalem, and Matthias was one of them. He watched as Peter stood up and announced that the Scriptures foretold that Judas Iscariot was to be replaced:

*Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, “Men and brethren, it was necessary for this Scripture to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of David, spoke before concerning Judas, who was the guide for the ones who took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained a part of this ministry. ... For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein,’ and ‘His overseership let another man take.’ Therefore, from these men who have accompanied us all the time in which the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until that same day that He was taken up from us, must*

---

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Modern Literal Version. Some believe the phrase “all the apostles” is a reference to the seventy men that Jesus “apostled” (sent) in Luke 10.

*one have been to be a witness with us of His resurrection.*<sup>5</sup>

We don't know what Matthias was thinking at this point, but it probably included the idea, *I've been with them during that time.*

Among the 120 disciples that were there, only two men were put forward—Joseph Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias himself.<sup>6</sup> The apostles did not choose between the two of them, but instead, they went to God in prayer, asking *Him* to show which one had been chosen.

*They prayed, and said, "You, Lord, who knows the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, to go to his own place."*<sup>7</sup>



After the prayer, they<sup>8</sup> cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias.<sup>9</sup> As a result, he was chosen to be-

come the new twelfth apostle. This selection shows that he was a faithful disciple, and that the Lord trusted him.

The results of this selection were that Matthias was baptized with the Holy Spirit not long afterwards, along with the rest of the apostles. He stood up and preached the wonderful works of God in another language, along with the rest of the apostles. He performed miracles and wonders, like the rest of the apostles. He helped oversee the distribution of funds for the needy saints in Jerusalem, along with the rest of the

apostles. In short, even though he was the *newest* apostle, he was still an *apostle*, with every bit as much authority as the other eleven had. It wasn't as

<sup>5</sup> Acts 1:15-17, 22. Verses 18-19 are an insertion by Luke, explaining what happened to Judas after the betrayal, something that the author didn't include in his gospel account.

<sup>6</sup> Since Peter laid out the requirements for the replacement, it appears as though these two men were the only ones who were qualified. It's not that the others among the 120 weren't faithful disciples of the Lord, but that they weren't able to be a witness of the entire ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, as Matthias and Joseph were. This is strong evidence that the man called "Nathanael" by John (see chapter on Bartholomew) was already one of the apostles, for he fit these qualifications.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:24-25. The KJV needlessly confuses some of this passage. The word "whether" is used, when the Greek is literally "which one." It uses the phrase "that he may take," when the Greek is literally "to take," and makes perfect sense just like that (as rendered in the translation we have chosen to use

above).

<sup>8</sup> The text isn't clear as to the identity of the "they" under consideration. It may be that Joseph and Matthias both cast their lots, and it landed on Matthias. It could be the apostles themselves who did this. The second seems more likely, as Joseph and Matthias were not the "they" who were praying in the verses previous to this (see how they are referenced as "these two" and not "us two").

<sup>9</sup> The casting of lots is not, as some would have us believe, a form of gambling. Gambling involves risk, whether it is placing a coin in a slot or wagering large amounts of money on a football game—there is always the risk that you will lose something. In casting lots, there was no such risk of loss. It is equivalent to flipping a coin or drawing straws to determine who is chosen for a specific job. In fact, the book of Proverbs (16:33) says that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof [that is, the determining of who is chosen] is of God."





though he was some newcomer to the scene, for he was one of the earliest disciples of the Lord, and had been in the apostles' company for years.

Matthias died in faith, and when this life is over, we can hope to meet him as well.

### ***Matthias in Tradition***

Almost all the early writers who deal with the topic say that Matthias was one of the seventy men chosen by Jesus in Luke 10 to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God, and heal sicknesses.<sup>10</sup> These men were “sent”<sup>11</sup> by Jesus Christ with a mission very similar to the apostles in their “limited commission.”<sup>12</sup> Some believe that it is this group of people that Paul was referencing when he said that Jesus appeared to *all* the apostles (after already mentioning “the twelve”) in 1 Corinthians 15:7.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 1, chapter 12.

<sup>11</sup> The Greek word for “sent” in Luke 10:1 is the verb form of “apostle.” Thus, Jesus “apostled” these men, and they were, in a very real sense, *apostles* of Jesus Christ—just not counted among “the twelve.”

<sup>12</sup> Compare the words of Jesus in Luke 10:1-16 with Matthew 10:1-16.

<sup>13</sup> See the commentaries of Adam Clarke; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; Henrich Meyer; and John Wesley. If this is the case, then it fits together with the requirement that the nominees for Judas' vacant spot was to be one who had seen

It is said by some that the selection of Matthias was a mistake, a “blunder” made by the apostles, and that the real heir to Judas' spot was Saul of Tarsus.<sup>14</sup> In the face of the biblical evidence, however, it's impossible to take such a view seriously. (1) Peter properly applied biblical prophecy to say Judas needed to be replaced. (2) They prayed for the Lord to make the selection, and there is no indication that the Lord ignored the prayer. (3) God approved of the choice, for Peter stood up “with the eleven” (which would include Matthias) as ones who were speaking in tongues by the power of God.<sup>15</sup> (4) Paul never once classed himself as one of the twelve—in fact, he showed that he was *not* one of them in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

After Matthias disappears from the biblical stage, there are traditions that say he spent time evangelizing Ethiopia with Rufus and Alexander, the sons of Simon of Cyrene, who bore the cross of Jesus in Mark 15:21.<sup>16</sup> A work entitled “The Acts of Andrew and Matthew” is, in a significant number of manu-

the risen Lord.

<sup>14</sup> See David Smith's article in James Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, “Matthias.”

<sup>15</sup> See Acts 2:1-14.

<sup>16</sup> See Budge, *Contendings of the Apostles*, Vol. 2, page 163-164.

scripts, titled “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias.”<sup>17</sup> Because of the similarity in their names, the traditions tend to overlap, with no real certainty about which apostle is supposed to be under consideration.<sup>18</sup> In one version of this work, Matthias, Rufus, and Alexander all go to Ethiopia to a city of cannibals, where Matthias is captured, blinded, and thrown into prison before he is healed by God and rescued by Andrew. After they were both captured and thrown back into prison, they caused a flood to come on the inhabitants of the city, and then as they walked out of the prison, the waters divided in front of them like the Red Sea. Though many died in the flood, the apostles prayed and all those who died were raised up. Afterwards, many were baptized.<sup>19</sup>

*The Preaching of Thomas in India* claims that Matthias was taken by Peter to Persia.<sup>20</sup>

The *Martyrdom of Matthias*<sup>21</sup> says that he preached in Damascus, where the people rose up against him, fastened him to a bedstead of iron, and tried to burn him alive on it for 24 days straight, but like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the flames didn’t harm him. Thus, the people in Damascus began to follow Christ. After some more time working among the people, he moved to Judea and there died.<sup>22</sup>

Though it is now lost to time, a heretical gospel account was written by someone who attached Mat-

thias’ name to it. Meanwhile, a second-century Gnostic sect falsely claimed that they got all of their doctrines from Matthias. Some traditions say he worked in Jerusalem and died there,<sup>23</sup> while others say he was martyred in Ethiopia,<sup>24</sup> and still others believe he was martyred in Colchis.<sup>25</sup>

People have been tempted to identify Matthias as someone else in the biblical narrative. At least one writer has suggested that Matthias is the same as Nathanael.<sup>26</sup> Clement of Alexandria was of the opinion that Matthias was another name for Zacchaeus, the tax collector mentioned in Luke 19.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Matthias.”

<sup>24</sup> See *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, “Matthias.”

<sup>25</sup> See Richard Watson’s *Biblical and Theological Dictionary*.

<sup>26</sup> See the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Matthias.”

<sup>27</sup> This according to John Gill, in his notes on Acts 1:23.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, there is confusion on whether it is Matthias or Matthew that is under consideration in some of ancient Apocryphal Acts. In the stories about the cannibals, some manuscripts say Matthew, while others say Matthias. As such, many of the traditions about Matthias are also said to be traditions about Matthew, simply because no one knows for certain which one is under consideration. See the section “Matthew, According to Tradition” in an article by this author on that apostle for more details (*The Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2).

<sup>18</sup> The Ethiopian traditions, which were translated by Budge in *Contendings of the Apostles* say that it was Matthias who went to the city of cannibals, which is what is described in “The Acts of Andrew and Matthew/Matthias.”

<sup>19</sup> This version of the story is contained in Budge’s *Contendings of the Apostles*, Vol. 2, pages 267-288. Pages 370-403 give a fuller version of the story, called *The Preaching of Matthias*.

<sup>20</sup> See Budge, *Contendings of the Apostles*, Vol. 2, page 320. This work appears to be a slightly enlarged edition of the *Acts of Thomas*, at least of the opening sequence.

<sup>21</sup> The title for this work is rather ironic, considering that it records Matthias dying a natural death.

<sup>22</sup> Budge, *Contendings of the Apostles*, Vol. 2, pages 289-294.

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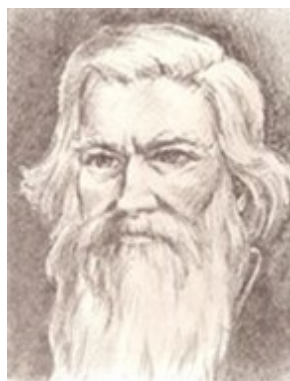
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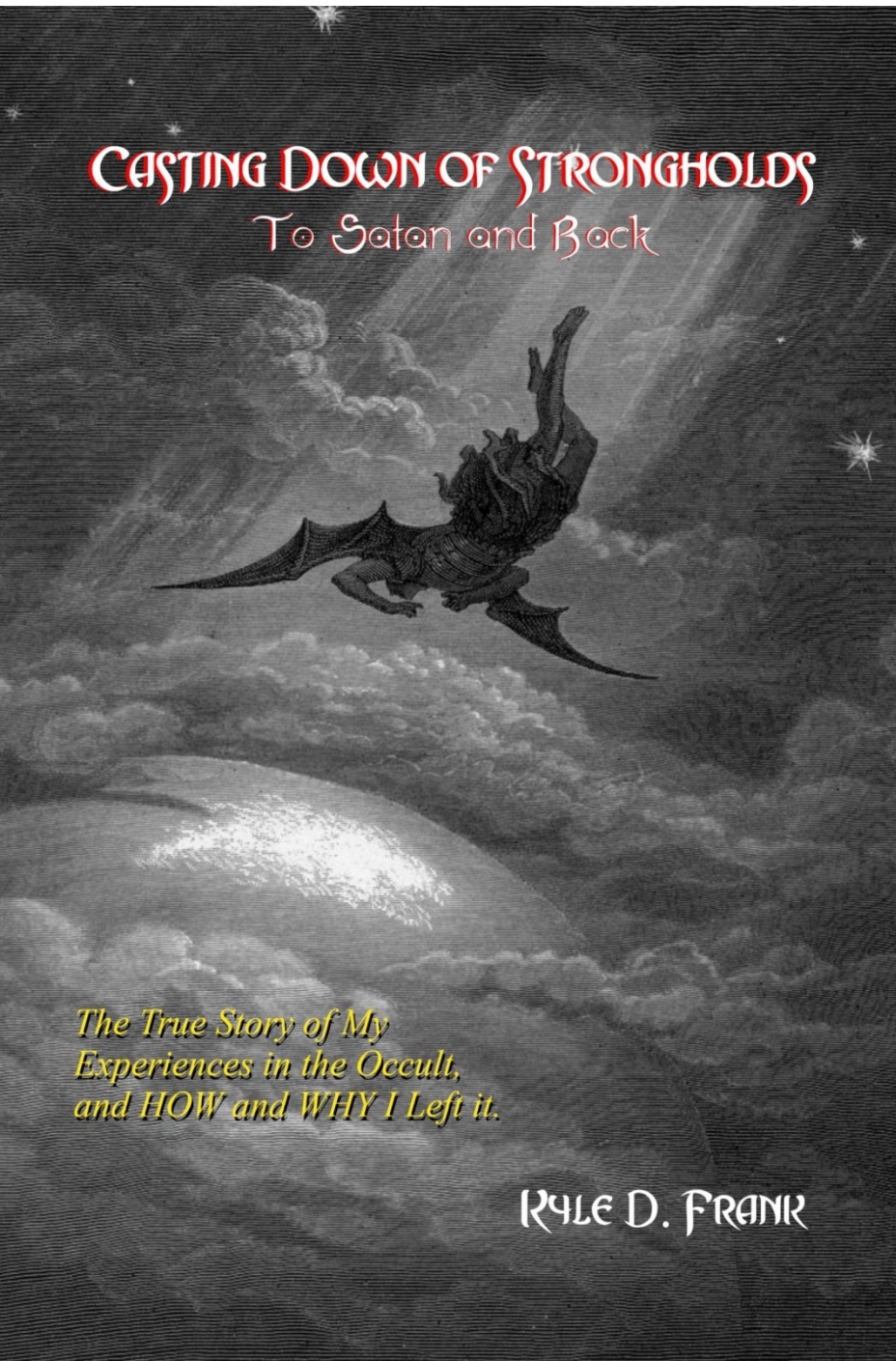
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# Zombies at the Lord's Table

Gerald Cowan

## INTRODUCTION:

This is not a sermon or study about zombies, though I have actually thought of preaching about “zombie religion.” What do you know about zombies, the so-called “living dead” popular in horror movies and other fiction? The concept of “once-dead-now-living” or, as commonly figured, the dead who have some sort of “living” experience is a powerful metaphor that needs some focused discussion and application in most churches. You are probably familiar with the inverse of the metaphor—the living who are dead—which appears in scripture (Ephesians 2:1-2, 1 Timothy 5:6), a concept which will figure prominently in this present essay about being spiritually dead while physically alive that can be called zombie religion.

## THE DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION, AND REAPPEARANCE OF LAZARUS. JOHN 11

**Lazarus was a dead man.** It is important that it be proved that he had really died and was truly dead. Jesus was in a place remote from Bethany, home town of Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. Notice of his illness and critical condition was given to Jesus, probably with the expectation that he would come, perhaps to heal Lazarus and restore him to good health. But Jesus saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate and declare the power and glory of God. He waited two days before telling the apostles that Lazarus was in fact dead and made plans to return to Bethany (11:1-7).

It was dangerous for him to return because the authorities had wanted to stone him and were still seeking to apprehend him. The disciples feared Jesus might be killed if he went back. When Jesus made it clear to them that their friend and his was in fact dead and he was going to “awaken” Lazarus from the sleep of death, thereby proving he was sent from God, Thomas (the one sometimes inappropriately called “doubting Thomas” because he demanded visible physical proof of the resurrection of Jesus) said, “*Let us go with him and (if necessary, be ready to) die with him.*”

When Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days, time enough for decomposition to be progressing. He had been prepared for burial and actually had been buried. Mary and Martha and many of the Jews were mourning the death and loss. It was widely thought that, had Jesus been present before his death, Lazarus would not have died—that Jesus would have healed the sickness and prevented the death. They seemed unaware or forgetful of the fact that Jesus could also heal remotely (Matthew 8:5-13), and that he who had raised the dead before could also raise up dead Lazarus.

**The supposed futility of trying to change the status of a dead man.** “Lord if you had been here you could have prevented his death, but he's dead now and (presumably) there is nothing you can do for him.” The four-day delay is important: the superstition of the time was that the spirit stayed in or near the body for three or four days and could be rejoined with the body during that time; by that time it would not be possible to restore spirit and life to the dead. Jesus went to the tomb where many mourners were gathered and commanded the tomb to be opened (even though the unpleasant prospect of exposing a four-days-dead corpse was feared and opposed), and called Lazarus to rise and come forth. Notice, he did not call for someone to bring Lazarus out of the tomb but rather called for Lazarus himself to come forth on his own.

Four days of death and decay would have had indelible effect so that the body might be unrecognizable and the sight and smell of rotteness would be notable. But Jesus, after praying to God, gave the command for the dead man to respond, to rise, and resume normal living functions.

Lazarus, still wound up in the grave cloths and his face covered, did walk out of the tomb as commanded. It has been suggested by some that if Jesus had not named Lazarus in his command, all the dead in all the graves would have come forth. Whimsical but possible—but such possibility was forestalled by the precisely limited command. Jesus ordered

that he be unbound and allowed to go free. Release him, unbind him, let him go. Lazarus, not an imposter or substitute but Lazarus himself, healthy and whole and recognizable to everybody, stood before them and was attended to as living not dead.

**The response and reaction of the Jewish authorities to Jesus' raising of Lazarus.** Knowing that the resurrection of Lazarus and continuation of miracles by Jesus would provide strong impetus for Jesus' ministry and an end to their power in traditional Judaism, the Jewish authorities increased their determination to kill him; they sought to kill Lazarus too. Caiaphas the high priest claimed it was expedient to sacrifice one man (Jesus) for the "good" of the nation, that it would benefit the nation and prevent the people being dispersed and fragmented in their beliefs. He unwittingly prophesied (prompted by the Holy Spirit, proving the Spirit can and sometimes does move and work in even unbelieving blasphemous persons) that the death of (this) one man could lead to the salvation and preservation of many. John validated and explained the prophecy: not only would Jesus die for the nation but also in order to gather together into one body all the children of God scattered among all nations throughout the world—that is, to call together His church (11:49-52).

After this Jesus discontinued his public appearances but stayed with his disciples in a city called Ephraim. They waited there for the coming Passover. The people wondered if Jesus would come to Jerusalem for the feast. The priests and Pharisees increased their watchfulness and urged others to watch and inform them if he did in fact appear anywhere.

### **REAPPEARANCE OF LAZARUS AT A SUPPER FOR JESUS IN BETHANY. JOHN 12:1-11**

**Interest in the once-dead-now-living Lazarus.** Six days before the Passover which would see Jesus dead on a cross, the Lord and his disciples came again to Bethany. There they (Mary, Martha, and perhaps Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead) prepared a supper for him. Lazarus ate at the table with Jesus. Lazarus was a man of great local interest. No doubt people asked him many times what it is like to be dead, what he saw and heard and experienced while dead. No word of it is revealed to anybody. Note: those who claim to have had a death and return experience have said many things, with little overall consensus and surely with

no agreement as to the purpose and intended lesson to be learned from it. When crowds learned Jesus was there they came to see the one who had raised up Lazarus. Curiosity seekers also wanted to see Lazarus.

**The resumption of life by the resurrected Lazarus.** Question: do you suppose Lazarus who had truly been dead, buried, and raised to life again would have declined an invitation to sit at table and share a meal with Jesus who had done this miracle in his life? Further question: do you suppose that any others of the invited guests would have neglected an opportunity to sit at table with Jesus and with the man he had raised up from death? Last question for now: would you decline an invitation or neglect the occasion if you were invited to share a supper with Jesus and someone he had raised to life after certified death? I will ask the question again later when suggesting applications of the lesson to ourselves.

**Public response to the return to life of Lazarus.** Following the miracle of Jesus raising up Lazarus, many of the Jews who witnessed it or heard of it from the witnesses became believers in Jesus. The resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus convinced many Jews, some of the priests and Pharisees included, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah/Christ that Israel had long waited for. But the resurrection of Jesus himself did not convince many of the Jews, and Gentiles too, that they should follow him in serving God.

There is great irony in the fact that when Jesus himself was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit, attested to by the apostles and other witnesses, it did not have the same effect as the resurrection of Lazarus. Apostle Paul notes that Jesus was declared to be, proved to be, the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). But Jews were skeptical—even though many others, not only the apostles, claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus. Both Jews and Gentiles remain skeptical and unwilling to believe today what they have not and cannot see with their own eyes. Reports recorded in the Bible do not convince them.

As Jesus said after his parable of another Lazarus and a rich man who had died and were in hades (Luke 16:19-31), when the rich man asked that Lazarus—not he himself, but Lazarus—be allowed to go back (a resurrection would be required here) and warn his still-living brothers in hope of getting them

to repent and change their life-style lest they end up in the same torment he was experiencing: "They have (the scripture, the words of) Moses and the prophets and should listen to them. If they will not hear the scripture they would not be convinced even if someone went back from the dead to warn them" (Luke 16:19-31).

**Response of Mary to the Lord who raised up her brother.** At this supper Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (John 11:2) took a pound of very expensive ointment and anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Judas, the hypocrite and thief and soon to be betrayer of Jesus, complained about the waste of the ointment. But Jesus commended Mary for her act of love. He said it amounted to anointing him for his burial, which would occur in seven days from then.

### **SUMMARY AND APPLICATION FOR TODAY.**

A man who had died, was buried for four days, and then raised up to resume his earthly life by the power of Christ, was seated at a supper table with the One who resurrected him, and an unknown number of others who shared in the common meal. Jesus himself was not the host, but surely he was the one in whose honor the supper was prepared and shared. "*They made him (Jesus) a supper*" (John 12:2).

Although this was a supper for the Lord it was not "*the Lord's Supper*." There are a number of interesting parallels that can be drawn between the supper in Bethany and the Lord's Supper, the covenant memorial meal shared regularly in an assembly of the Lord's people. It is not a meal prepared by the Lord, though in some sense it prepared *for* him and to be shared *with* him (Mark 14:25, Matthew 26:29).

Every Christian is a spiritual Lazarus. Every Christian has experienced death, burial, and resurrection at the hand of Jesus. Like Lazarus we died—we died spiritually, not physically. We, as all accountable humans do, became spiritually *dead in trespasses and sins* (Ephesians 2:1-3), dead and separated from God by our personal sins (Isaiah 59:1-2). But when we heard and believed the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16, Romans 1:16-17) and came to the knowledge of our true sinful condition and its certain end, the urgent desire to correct it and be saved from it led us obey and fulfill every condition the Lord imposes on those who answer His calling and come to Him for salvation. Confessing Jesus to be Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:36-37),

we asked him to be our Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-12). Hastening then to be buried, baptized into him and his death (Galatians 3:26-27), we were called to come up out of the grave of baptism's water, raised up by him and with him to continue in a new birth and a new life (Romans 6:1-5, Colossians 2:12).

Now did you get all of that? The old corrupt person that we were died and was buried. But like Lazarus we did not stay in the grave. Baptized into Christ, as a new person, newly born, recreated in Christ Jesus as new creatures, we are now spiritually alive and continuing a process of transformation into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:2).

We do not know what Lazarus looked like when he was resurrected after being buried four days. When he was set free he was no doubt recognized by all as Lazarus. But in our case as Christians there was and is a great change. We don't look like the old person—the new glow in us is the light, goodness, and character of Christ. The words that come from us are the words we have learned from Christ. The works we do are the works of Christ. When people are around us they are aware of the presence of Christ in us.

Each Lord's Day congregations of once spiritually dead but now spiritually alive men and women gather and sit at the table of the Lord. We are alive because He is alive. As living persons we do not and will not decline the invitation to be seated with the Lord at the Lord's Table. Obviously he is not physically present, but he is most assuredly present with us spiritually, just as he promised. Only dead people decline or neglect the opportunity to be seated with him at his table and eat a symbolic meal in his honor. If you were invited to eat with him would you decline?

The sweet fragrance of fellowship attends the eating of the Lord's Supper. When Mary opened that costly perfumed spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus with it the fragrance of the oil filled all the house (John 12:3). Christians are like a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord God (2 Corinthians 2:15, Ephesians 5:2), and surely to each other. It is possible to think of Christians gathered to memorialize and honor the present Lord. How sweet and pleasant it is when they gather in fellowship in and as the household of God. What an honor it is to be invited, to be allowed, to be welcomed to the Lord's



table!

**How inexplicable it is then that the supper of the Lord should be a perfunctory exercise of zombies.** Zombies may be once-dead and once-revived but dead again. The stench of their unresolved deadness is intolerable. They are there “going through the motions” of a memorial feast, but their hearts and minds are disengaged. The bread of his body does not nourish them; the cup of his blood does not enliven them.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Who but the dead would decline or resist an invitation from the Lord to join him in his kingdom, his church, his house? Who but the spiritual dying or dead would neglect the eating of the Lord's Supper with him and with his faithful people in an assembly devoted to his purposes?

**Prayer:** Our Father in Heaven we want to honor

and worship you in the way that is acceptable and pleasing to You. And so, we come to the table of our Lord as we have been taught by your Word to do, *in remembrance* of Him who by His power and through His blood raised us to a new life, having cleansed us from our sins. Father, impress upon our conscious minds that we will always need your grace and forgiveness. Every time we eat the bread and drink the cup in the Lord's Supper we remember Him and the price paid for our salvation. We pray that our obedience will be as sweet-smelling to you as was the anointing oil that Mary put on our Lord's feet. May our lives and our worship and our fellowship in Christ be a sweet-smelling aroma, a special incense to you and to us. We offer our prayer, our praise, and our petitions in the name of Jesus Christ, trusting that you will accept our obedience and our worship. Amen.

## RAISING THE DEAD

*A Poem by Gerald Cowan*

He did not say, “Bring out the dead.”  
“Lazarus, come forth,” the Savior said.

And had he not thus specified  
All the dead would have complied.  
One day he will give that command,  
And, from all parts of sea and land,  
The dead from all time past will come.  
No longer blind or deaf or dumb  
Each then will speak in his own voice,  
Admit and verify his choice  
Of how, in what way he would live  
And what of self to God he'd give.  
Each then will hear Lord Jesus say,  
“Come with me now,” or, “Go away.”

“With or without me you will be,  
Both now and in eternity.”  
Not only Lazarus, but me  
From death the Savior Christ did raise.  
With countless others He has saved  
From hell, I lift my voice in praise.  
Two and sixty years have passed  
Since I, dead then in sin,

Was called to life again by Christ,  
My war with Satan thus to win.  
With my defending Savior Christ  
Beside me I choose not to flee.  
To my soul's enemies he says,  
“To own him you must conquer Me.”  
Now dressed in armor God supplies  
And with Lord Jesus close beside,  
Not dreading death or any foes  
I in my Savior's love abide.  
To His memorial supper  
He Invites, and makes a place for me.  
How could I dishonor and reject  
The one who saved and made me free?  
To spurn his invitation now—  
Has gratitude now grown so dim?—  
Would be dishonor, more to me  
Than it could ever be to him.  
God help me honor Your dear Son,  
My Savior Lord, through whom I pray,  
And in eternal servitude  
Give the tribute I am glad to pay.

# LORD, IS IT I?

*Bill Howard*

This question was uttered on an occasion when twelve men were with Christ observing the Passover and sharing the meal. They became concerned about a statement that Jesus had made at that time. He stated: “verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:21-22). We are going to explore further the reason for those queries. However, before we get into that, let us consider a few thoughts about sin.

All the times that our Lord has been disappointed with man’s behavior would be impossible to calculate. From the beginning of recorded history, mankind has failed to do as God wished for his creation. It was man’s misdeeds that necessitated God’s sending Jesus to earth in the first place.

Man’s first sin on earth was failing to believe that God meant what He said. Eve did not believe God’s instructions and was disobedient. She was led into sin by Satan. Adam also failed to heed instructions, so he joined with his wife in disobedience and sinned also. “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned” (Romans 5:12, NLT). These two sins, disbelief and disobedience, served to bring sin to mankind, and the result is separation from God.

Sin was now in the world and had created a separation between the Creator and His creation, mankind. Not happy with this division, God chose to make a way for man, whom He loved, to be reconciled to Him. John says: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). There are many dozens of other scriptures relating to God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice, but that can be another lesson. For this writing, we are dealing with the above mentioned question. Lord is it I? (Mat-

thew 26:21-22).

The account states that as they were partaking of the Passover feast, Jesus made this announcement to the twelve: “One of you shall betray me.” This without a doubt came as a shock to them. At first they were in disbelief and bewildered; this revelation came like a bolt out of the blue. They were sorrowful and couldn’t believe that one of their number would betray the Lord. It was then that eleven of the twelve asked the question: “Lord is it I?” Judas didn’t even call Jesus “Lord”; he used the designation “Rabbi” or teacher. Judas was one of the twelve Apostles and was the treasurer of the group. He is always mentioned last, and generally with a description that brands him as something less than good and honest. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all brand him as a traitor. When Mary took the pound of Spikenard and anointed the feet and head of Jesus, it was Judas who protested saying it would be better to be sold and given to the poor. John’s take on this was: “not that he cared for the poor; he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciple’s money, he often stole some for himself” (John 12:6, NLT). It is not out of reason to believe that an evil motive can be hidden in an altruistic gesture. This seems to be the case of Judas’ protest about the use of the Spikenard. He had revealed his true character nonetheless.

It was after the meal that Judas went to the chief priests to bargain with them for a betrayal of Jesus for money and the selling of his soul. Matthew records that the amount agreed upon for the betrayal was thirty pieces of silver. Matthew says that Judas, realizing that Jesus was condemned, repented himself and went to the chief priest and elders in an attempt to return the money. They would not put it in the treasury because it was blood money. Judas threw the money at their feet and went out and hanged himself, ending a wasted life that could have

been much more.

Let's explore some thoughts about Judas that are worthy of our consideration. We, in one sense, do not know a lot about Judas, yet we have learned what he was and wasn't. He was numbered among the twelve, fully recognized as an Apostle with the same advantages and privileges of the others. He was picked by Jesus. Did He know that Judas would betray him? We can't question Jesus' ability to know everything; He was God with us. Judas was given opportunity to do right, but he chose not to. Perhaps he was never Christ's true subject. Some things we cannot know.

What we can know is quite disheartening. He was deceitful, he asked the question of Jesus: "Master is it I?" He knew he was the one which Jesus had mentioned; he had to know that Jesus also knew.

All four gospels show him as a traitor; he betrayed the Savior. He was a thief; he took money that didn't belong to him. He showed his selfishness and insincerity by finding fault with Mary for the anointing of Jesus. He begrudged the honor that was shown to Christ. He was a hypocrite wanting to appear to be what he wasn't. Finally, he was a coward. He was sorry about the path he had taken, but he didn't have the courage to face up to his mistakes and try to make them right. So he hanged himself. The tragic end of a shamed individual who had been given every opportunity to live a productive life, as did the other eleven Apostles, but for reasons of which we are not fully aware, he chose to do differently.

It is saddening and truly unfortunate to witness one destined for greatness falling prey to temptations which result in destruction. Judas could have been another Peter or John, perhaps a remarkable preacher and teacher as was the Apostle Paul, but his inclinations took him in a totally different direction.

Sadly, from the time of Adam and Eve to the present day, we have known similar stories like that of Judas repeated time and again. Temptations in any era of time have always been prevalent. Satan is a tireless tyrant, and a powerful foe whose entire purpose is to separate man from his God. Peter warned

of Satan's intent: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He has the capacity to corrupt; he is evil and sly, and Paul warned: "and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14, KJV). This is just one of the many stratagems in his arsenal with which to beguile and mislead.

Our journey through God's word, the text, reveals that in all ages of time there have been individuals who were destined for greatness but failed. Adam is our first example, created in perfection but failed because of disobedience, Samson, Saul, Solomon, Job, David to name a few. Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and retribution was swift. The result of disobedience was not fatal in all cases. Some of those overcame their failures and

pleased God. Many of the Israelites who were brought out of bondage in Egypt failed. They were promised a land flowing with milk and honey; it was theirs for the taking. After forty years in the wilderness, those above twenty years of age when leaving Egypt did not enter into that Promised Land because of disobedience. It is sad to know that some can and will fail to benefit from the exceeding great and precious promises of God because of disobedience and failure.

The greatest promise God has made to mankind is eternal life in His presence if we choose to accept—but choose we must. Having chosen to avail ourselves of this promise, there are conditions we must address; we have a duty to respond to God's teaching and will. As His family, we have responsibilities. This goes beyond the initial steps toward salvation. We are fully aware of the necessity of believing in Jesus and accepting by faith that he is God's Son, confessing this belief, turning from our past life, and being baptized for the remission of our sins. Doing this makes us a new creature: a Christian added to the Lord's body His church. At this point, we are renewed; there is no past, and we are on the better path of life: the path that leads us to that eternal home with our Creator where there will be no concept of time; it is forever.

Being on this new course brings us to the realiza-

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but choose we must.*

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tion of the responsibilities we embrace as a member of God's family. Jesus said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, KJV). Truth will be found in a study of God's word. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Be like the Bereans and search the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11b). Only by studying and contemplating the scripture will we grow in knowledge. Everything we need to know and do is outlined in the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Prayer is a strong defense against failing to live righteously. Paul told the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). While we are likely incapable of praying constantly, we can always be in a prayerful spirit. It is in prayer that we are close to God and gain knowledge, wisdom, and strength. "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you" (James 4:8). "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NLT). "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results" (James 5:16, NLT). For the striving Christian, there can be no substitute for prayer.

Another necessary shield in our defense against being overcome with the things of the world is worshipping our God. In worship: we give thanks for all the blessings, we praise and glorify the name of God, we ask forgiveness of our failures, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus who took upon himself the sins of all and gave his life so that we might have eternal life. The psalmist David said: "Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will

praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:1-4). "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only wilt thou serve" (Luke 4:8, KJV). "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24)

The Christian cannot fail to worship God. The early church gathered on the first day of the week to worship God and to partake of the communion; we should do the same. The writer of the Hebrew letter warned: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). The writer may have been warning about the coming of the destruction of Jerusalem; we cannot know for sure. However, it diminishes nothing from the importance of the admonition to us today

because the Day of Judgment for all is certainly coming.

Serving our God is not a part-time endeavor; it is a full time job. An hour on Sunday morning probably does not suffice, but some seem to believe it does. "Lord, is it I?" When we realize the responsibilities we have as God's family, we need to be certain we are acting and doing as we should. Perhaps our prayer life isn't what it should be, maybe we are not diligent in our studies of the text, likely some do not contribute of their means according to the extent they have been blessed. When we are approaching that most holy time when partaking of the communion service, are we thinking of nothing other than Christ's sacrifice? It is evident that at times people fail in these things. We need to think on these things and perhaps the question, "Lord, is it I?" is something we need to answer for ourselves. Only we and God know for certain.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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# THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT: EXPERIENCES AND MISTAKES OF J.D. TANT

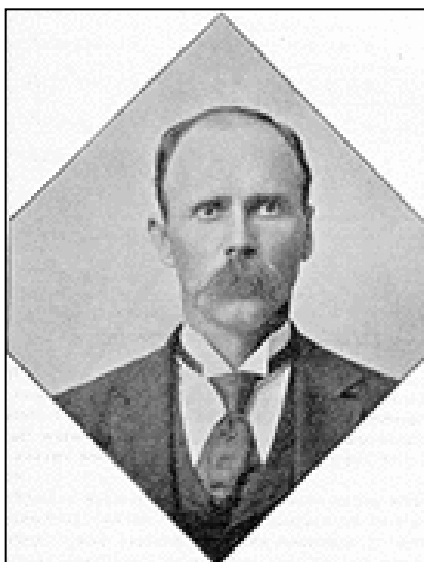
*J.D. Tant*

**[EDITOR'S NOTE: J.D. Tant wrote a series of letters/articles for the *Gospel Advocate* beginning in 1897. The purpose of these letters was to help young preachers learn from his "Experience and Mistakes." We are reprinting the first four of those letters here, and plan on including the rest over the next few issues of *The Quarterly*. Enjoy!]**

## ***Experience and Mistakes— Advice to Young Preachers. No. 1.<sup>1</sup>***

Paul taught us to follow him, as he followed Christ. Many of us, early in life, select someone as our hero, whom we wish to follow and from whom we wish to receive instruction. Many young preachers make mistakes in life which frequently retard their progress for good. As I have traveled over the road of hardships and discouragement in order to preach the word, and thinking I may be able to give some word of warning to the young men and some word of encouragement to the honest-hearted, I have thought well to write a few letters under the above head[ing], [so] that discouraged young preachers may never grow weary in well-doing. Ever remember that the reward comes to the faithful.

My first experience as an evangelist in the church of Christ began in 1881, immediately after I accepted the truth under W.H.D. Carrington, of Austin. I had been preaching a year, however, in the Methodist Church prior to that time. Among all preachers it has been my lot to meet, I found Brother Carrington to be the greatest friend to young preachers. He has,



perhaps, proselyted more young men from the sectarian world than any other man in Texas. He claimed that more than fifty young preachers from the sects came into the church under his preaching. I always found him to be a father, brother, and a helper to the young man who wanted to preach. While it is true he had his faults as other men, yet I shall ever hold memory sacred for him for the good he did me in my younger days.

During the year 1881 I taught music some, worked on the farm, and preached every Sunday, with two or three protracted meetings, receiving as remuneration a living made by Farming and much criticism for trying to preach when I knew I would be a failure in that field. At this time my father's health gave way; and father, mother, and one sister fell into my hands to be cared for and supported, which I thank Almighty God I did faithfully till all were laid to rest a dozen years after in the Hamilton graveyard.

During 1882 I worked altogether on the farm, going out from ten to twenty mile[s] to preach every Sunday. I held four protracted meetings, and even built up a reputation that year as being the most reckless horse rider for a preacher in all that part of the country; and some of the brethren even claimed that if they would encourage me by going out to hear me preach I might some day in the distant future make a preacher. At the same time, however, I heard of others who said I could never succeed, because I fought the dear Methodists and Baptists too much.

I did my first baptizing during 1882, and was not paid anything for my preaching, as people in that day always paid for value revived; and they thought to give me their time to hear me preach was all it was worth.

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 39, No. 21, 5/27/1897

Early in 1883, in connection with Brother W.E. Nelson, I bought a small farm. As Brother Nelson was a preacher, we preached much together that year, he furnishing the sense and I the lung power, both of which are essential to the success of the gospel. I built myself up to receive remunerations for my preaching that year. Brother Nelson and I held a two-weeks' meeting together, and received for it \$9.75. I got \$4.75 for my part. Soon afterwards Brother Nelson took sick, and was unable to go eight miles to marry a couple; so I went in a hard rain all the way and received for it \$5. The year then closed, and I made a count and found I had received \$4.75 for preaching the gospel and \$5 for marrying a couple; total, \$9.75. This demonstration of my brethren for my third year's work as a preacher showed conclusively, to my mind, that I was a man of some ability; that my service was in demand; and I verily thought I could succeed as a preacher.

I then began to cast about to get into a larger field of usefulness, where my talent would be better known, seeing it was already being appreciated from the amount I had received; but the question came: How shall I cut loose from the farm, support father, mother, and sister, and at the same time continue to preach the gospel? I realized of a surety I could never succeed preaching while bound down with farm work six days in the week. I had no society to give me a helping hand, no church to send me out, and did not have sense enough to become pastor of some city church at \$500 a year, as many young preachers now do; but, like Nehemiah of old, I made my prayer and request known unto God. (Neh. 2:4). Also had I often meditated upon Ps. 84:11, which says: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." I had also received much encouragement from Brother Paul, who had said: "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) I truly believed I loved the Lord, and desired to become an efficient soldier in the conflict; and now, looking back over the last fifteen years, I can truly say God permitted those things that I might, as Timothy, learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ; that I might be able to bear the hardships and privations of life and be able to resist the temptation of a financial board

at my back, which was repeatedly offered me in after years by those who turned from God's plan.

During this time Brother C.M. Wilmeth, whom I had met while I was a Methodist preacher, was State evangelist, working under the eldership of a congregation. All of us then were doing missionary work through the church before the society of Texas was organized. I wrote Brother Wilmeth my surroundings and desire to spend all my time preaching, and asked for advice. His answer I will give in my next.

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*I... built up a reputation that year  
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part of the country...*

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### **Experience and Mistakes— Advice to Young Preachers. No. 2.<sup>2</sup>**

My first letter brought me to the close of 1883.

For three years' preaching I had been paid \$9.75—a sum sufficient to drive many young preachers from the field now.

I had just written to Brother Wilmeth for advice, and finally his answer came. Wilmeth told me he was selected and sent out by the church of Christ at Waco to do missionary work. Many other churches were cooperating with the Waco church by sending their contributions to the Waco elders, or to him direct in the field, and that for some time he had been looking out for a "Timothy"—a young man to travel with him and lead in song service and prayer, and to help him do his writing, and to go before and commence meetings, and get all things ready for his coming.

He thought if he could get such a man he could urge the brethren to contribute two or three hundred dollars a year to his support; and from what he had heard of me, he thought I could do the work and was willing to give me a trial.

All things were arranged for our meeting in San Antonio. At a missionary meeting of preachers for Southwest Texas, Brother D. Pennington was present; and to speak of his faithfulness in those days, he was laboring hard with the San Antonio mission, and was among the grandest gospel preachers of Texas. He had been at San Antonio six months, built up the church from almost nothing to forty-eight members, and was loved by many for his earnest-

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<sup>2</sup> *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 39, No. 22, 6/3/1897

ness, zeal, and knowledge of the Bible. I loved Brother Pennington for his work's sake, and regretted when he got on the fence. I felt more than sad, after he had spent a lifetime in preaching the gospel true to the things that were written, to learn of his falling over on the society and organ faction in the declining years of his life. God only can tell what the ending will be. I trust all young preachers who may read this will beware of the first step.

But to return to San Antonio. This was my first visit to a preachers' meeting. Fourteen preachers and several women constituted the sum total. I have visited two other preachers' meetings since that time, and had occasion to pray for forgiveness for spending the Lord's time and money on both occasions to gratify the lust of the flesh.

Such meetings are devised by human wisdom, conducted in the interest of human plans, and those who oppose human plans are set down upon an equal with a political meeting. For that reason, if I ever attend another, it will be to see, as did Ezekiel, that I may be able to expose the same. I shall be careful to take money enough with me to pay my hotel bill and fighting expenses while there.

Preachers and women are the grandest people on earth while following the word of God, and the most dangerous when governed by human wisdom, and when they go beyond what is written.

At San Antonio I agreed to become Wilmeth's "Timothy," and depend upon the contributions. We traveled together three weeks, and by that time it was fully developed to Wilmeth's mind that I did not suit him.

1. Because I was not acquainted with city people and city ways; and, if I should go ahead to introduce his meetings, he would have only to come to attend the funeral after the meeting was dead.

2. I could not help him in writing, for no ordinary man could read my writing.

Wilmeth left me at Hempstead, Texas and went home, promising to write me where to meet him when I should be needed. After seven weeks, he wrote me to do the best I could, as he could not use me anymore.

I then counted. I had been out preaching two and one-half months; had spent \$17 of the \$20 I left home with; had received nothing for my preaching except my board; was one hundred and forty miles from home among strangers with \$3, and did not know what to do.

At this time, Brother George Harvey, one of the most godly men in Texas, came for me to go with him for a meeting near Willis. During the meeting, Brother Harvey worked me into [teaching] a five-months school at \$40 per month. In looking back over those five months in the schoolroom, I can say, with pride, I kept good order, for that term of school I was paid \$200. I then spent seven months evangelizing, for which I was paid \$92. This closed out my year's work for 1884, and I had \$292, less traveling expenses, one hundred additions to the church, much experience, many friends made, and some enemies. From this I decided I could not make a living by preaching, so I thought to give it up and go to teaching. I engaged a school for ten months at \$60 per month, and rejoiced to think I could soon be out of debt, and have my little home paid for, support father and mother without the financial pressure that had caused me so many sleepless nights and so many prayers.

At this point I attended a meeting of the churches of East Texas who had been cooperating in support of Brother Harvey for two years. Brother Harvey was giving down under so much work.

Fourteen little congregations were represented in the work. They had \$269 in the treasury, and wanted an evangelist for the ensuing year, 1885.

Harvey could not work. All eyes were turned upon me. Brother Harvey pleaded it was my duty to take the field. I argued my financial embarrassment, and could not stand the thought of giving up a \$600 for a \$260 remuneration. But Brother Harvey argued to give up the school, go to work with that amount in sight and trust to the Lord, and he was sure the amount would be raised to \$600 or \$700. I yielded to Brother Harvey's entreaties, gave up the school, went to work, and learned by experience that a man can trust to the Lord for himself, but it is not safe to trust for four or five hundred men and women, who are not taught their duty along that line.

The result of this I'll give in my next.

### ***Experience and Mistakes— Advice to Young Preachers. No. 3.***<sup>3</sup>

The year 1885 found me at work as an evangelist sent out by the churches of Montgomery, Waller, Grimes, Harris, and Washington Counties. They had \$269, and promised this would be raised to \$600 or

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<sup>3</sup> *Gospel Advocate* Vol. 39, No. 23, 6/10/1897

\$700, provided the people where I should preach would give me that much. My work was located in four of these counties, and no appointment was over seventy-five miles away. I had no horse to ride, so the brethren decided to loan me a horse each trip when their horses were not in actual service. If they were, they decided that walking was not crowded that year, and I was young, and an occasional walk of forty or fifty miles to meet my appointment would not only strengthen me, but would also carry out Paul's instruction to Timothy to endure hardships as a good soldier.

But in all these things I was not to be discouraged. The year 1885 was one I spent preaching the word. Often I rode forty miles during the night, lay down on my blanket, slept one or two hours, and was up and off again to meet all appointments. Many were the times I had to swim creeks to reach my appointments. I remember on one occasion of swimming seven different times to meet an appointment. Yet I knew a preacher's success depended largely on his making no disappointments. Many brethren who live five miles from church could stay away when the preacher came, and nothing be thought of it; but if they happened to go out once and the preacher was not there, even though he must come fifty miles and swim from five to seven creeks, they would claim that high water was no legal excuse for a preacher's failure. If the preacher did not come one time, these brethren would tell others not to go the next time; that the preacher was not a man of his word, for he had disappointed them. For that reason, I did in 1885 as I have done during the last eleven years, made no disappointments.

But 1885 came to a close, and the time of reckoning came. Like Paul of old, who called the church together at Antioch to tell what he had done (Acts 14:27), I called the church together at Bethany to report my work for the year. I found that I had done much preaching, more than I was physically able to do. I had started up three or four small congregations, had prompted the brethren to build one church, and had baptized eighty-seven during the

year. I had received \$239.75, not as much as was in the treasury at the beginning; but some of that had been used for other purposes, and I had never said anything about money, had failed to do my duty on this line, which will come under the head of mistakes in my seventh and eighth articles.

I had done as Brother Harvey told me to do, trusted to the Lord, and had failed to get the six or seven hundred dollars because my trusting was like a Methodist preacher's conversion, all trusting and no working. A Methodist's conversion is all faith and prayer, without obedience; and he as often fails to be scripturally converted as I failed to get the six hundred dollars. I then learned that it was well for a man to trust to the Lord for himself, provided he was honest and would work for a living and pay his debts; but when it came to trusting for other men who would neither work nor pay their debts, it was rather dangerous, and liable to leave a man without a support. I then saw, as I thought, the mistake I had made. It was in preaching instead of teaching; but since, I have thought the hand of God was in all those things.

I closed out my work in East Texas because I was not physically or financially able to stay longer. I returned home and made a calculation of all my affairs, and found I had been preaching much of the time for five years; had spent twenty-one months of that time entirely in the work, and had received as remuneration for my work, all told, \$341.50. This may seem a small sum to many of our young preachers who think they must quit preaching if they cannot get from three to eight hundred dollars for the first year; and I, too, confess I hardly saw my way out at that time. I was almost \$1,000 in debt, and had only made enough in two years to pay the interest on my farm and allow it to make enough to support loved ones at home. "What must I do to get out of debt?" was the all-absorbing question at that time. Finally, John-like, I decided the work was too great, the support too small; and as I had a good position offered me to travel in the interest of "Thrall's Texas History," I thought best to accept the same; but before perfecting arrangements, Brother John A. Lin-

*I then learned that it was well for a man to trust to the Lord for himself, provided he was honest and would work for a living and pay his debts; but when it came to trusting for other men who would neither work nor pay their debts, it was rather dangerous, and liable to leave a man without a support.*

coln, of Davilla, persuaded me to go to Bell County and do the work of an evangelist. By his endorsement I was well received among the brethren in that county. I spent one month at my own charges to arouse the brethren of the county. I found a thousand members in the county at that time, twenty-two congregations, six churches, and the membership of the county worth over \$1,000,000. Yet, with all that amount of wealth, I found no one man willing to pay over \$10 for missionary work in the county. With all due love and respect to the brethren of Bell County, hoping many of them will read this and profit by it, I would like to say in this connection that in all my travels I found more wealth, more members, and less zeal for mission work in Bell County than in any other section. However, the work was put before them. They employed me as evangelist sent out from Holland. They decided I was worth \$50 per month. I preached three and one-half months, and had fifty-one additions. The brethren got behind \$90, and never did get able to pay the same. They concluded they were going to have a drought, canceled my work, and turned me out to go where the brethren wanted me.

I did fairly well that year, helped nearly two hundred unto obedience, was paid \$100 for my work, and closed out my year's work by holding my first debate, of which I will speak in my next [letter].

### ***Experience and Mistakes— Advice to Young Preachers. No.4.<sup>4</sup>***

My last brought me to the close of 1886, in debate with W.N. Leak, Missionary Baptist. I often look upon this as the most remarkable debate of my life, because it was my first. I spent more time studying and praying that the truth might prevail in that debate than any other I have ever held. Ten years have come and gone since that time. It has been mine to hold from three to nine debates each year, yet in none of these did I study as I did in my first debate. I argued with my brethren that I was not able to meet Leak, to get [P.D.] Wilmeth, but they said: "No; you must fight it out." I then began to study, realizing God's word was the only effectual sword I had to fight with to do the Master's will. The time came; many were there, and the work began. For three days all things went well, I on one side, Leak on the other; but on the fourth day, after trying to defend the Baptist doctrine of direct opera-

tion of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, Leak found he could not do so, and with me signed an agreement that in conversion the Spirit operates upon the sinner's heart through means. That surrender cut short our debate. This, however, as all my debates since, was different from most debates I see reported by my brethren, and different from all Baptist reports. In most reports "our man" crushed out the other side like breaking dry eggshells with a sledge hammer. I have never been so able in debate, and have never had a fool on the other side. So all my debates have been two-sided.

With sadness again, I refer to my first debate. Ten years brings to us many changes. J.F. Grubbs was my moderator. He was then among the most noted evangelists of Texas. I thought him the strongest in argument I had ever heard. He was as tender-hearted as a child, and fought with the whole armor of God on. I have often wept as a child at his earnest presentation of the gospel; but, alas! the mighty has fallen. Brother Grubbs is lost to society, lost to his family, lost as a soldier, and lost to God. In the heated prohibition campaign of 1887, Brother Grubbs espoused the cause of the whisky men. This turned many against him; persecutions came fast and severe, and this gave him the downward step in the broad road. He saw his influence gone, and from Christianity he turned to infidelity. He is, today, from home and loved ones gone—a wanderer somewhere upon the earth. How sad and how fatal for one to fall by the wayside!

Also do I remember with sadness and joy Brother Crawford, who was my Bible reference during that debate. I wanted no passage but that he could give chapter and verse. With sadness, I remember him because he walks with us no more; with joy I remember him because he was one of GOD'S noblemen and died true to his post, a soldier of the cross. He has long since gone to that rest that remains to the people of God; but this debate must not allow me to forget affairs at home.

Three months before this debate, I had held a grand meeting for the brethren, with twenty-one additions. All were aroused, and said I must preach all the time. We made a financial calculation, and found I was \$1,000 in debt. I had been offered \$1,800 for my farm, but I thought it was worth \$2,000. They thought I could not afford to lose \$200, and said they knew a man who had \$1,000 to loan. Ten of the brethren signed a note to get the money for me, and

<sup>4</sup> *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 39, No. 24, 6/17/1897.



were going to pay me out of debt. For this I agreed to spend two years in their territory all the time. All things seemed satisfactory to both sides. I felt happy, and thought the Lord had looked in mercy on me at last; but, alas!

I learned that ninety-nine promises out of one hundred made just after a big meeting are like promises made in a convention. If we get out of either alive, we forget the promises made under the excitement of the moment. Three months passed. Our notes were coming due. I wrote those brethren, reminding them of their promise, and asked for the \$1,000 to pay my little home out of debt for father and mother, so I could go to their field at once. The answer finally came, stating that they waited two months to go to see the man with the \$1,000, and when they saw him, he had loaned the money. They could not get the money outside the bank, and interest would be so great they thought I had better make other arrangements. Two days before my notes were due, I sold my little home for \$1,200, for which I

had refused \$1,800 three months before; I met all my debts. These brethren, who thought \$200 too great a sacrifice for me to make just after the meeting, did not think \$800 too much three months after; but such is life. I uncompromisingly made the sacrifice, paid [myself] out of debt, thank the Lord, and had opportunity of breathing fresh and free air once more. I had been preaching six years, and had received \$641.50 for my preaching. I was twenty-five years old, young, and full of life, not easily discouraged; so I thought I must try again. I settled all debts, bought a few things for the loved ones at home, then counted all the money I had left. I had \$47.30. With this amount I borrowed a pony and started to the Northwest to seek a home, and continue to preach the gospel of Christ, believing in all these things the Lord was on my side.

This brings me up to the last ten years of my evangelizing in the West, of which I will write in my next.

# FAITH FORTIFIES THE FUTURE

## (Part 2)

*Jake Schotter*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a day and age of uncertainty, it is vital that we have a fortified faith. If the events of the past few months have not shown this to be the case, one only needs to look around and see the instability of the world and contrast that with the steadfast hope a Christian has in the Lord Jesus Christ. He instructed us three times in Matthew 6:25-34 to not worry (6:25, 31, 34). Within those commands, three reasons are given: our Father (6:26-30), our faith (6:31-33), and our future (6:34). How do we go about eliminating worry? One way to abandon our inability to control temporal things and focus on the eternal is to have a fortified faith. Therefore, when we go to Hebrews 11:1-3, we see a truly clear definition of what it is and what it does to a believer. We also see several demonstrations of how faith fortified several people who have lived lives acceptable be-

fore God.

In the first 10 chapters of Hebrews, the author has been focused on proving how the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ is completely and in every way superior to the Old Covenant which was marked by animal blood. He demonstrates in the first 10 chapters how Jesus is better than anything connected to the Old Covenant: Jesus is better than angels, prophets, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and previous priests and any sacrifices they performed. Jesus is a better seal, sign, and sacrifice than any animal offered under the previous Covenant. The point, then, that the author is making is this: "Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Move on from the symbolic Old Covenant to the New Covenant in Jesus."

It is important to note that these examples of faith are not to show how one develops their faith. Rather, the chapter details how faith remained firm in these people's lives despite what, at times, seemed

like overwhelming obstacles. Hebrews 11 gives us a guide on how to remain steadfast in the faith. In the opening three verses of this wonderful chapter, we see three facts on how faith can fortify the future – even if our faith is fumbling and faltering.

### **FAITH ASSURES US (11:1)**

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”*

When determining what something is, it is helpful to know what it is not. In the prior article, we began with defining what faith is not. First, faith is not gullibility – accepting or believing something simply because someone said or wrote it. The Bible warns us about giving an ear to false teachers and doctrine (Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 John 4:1). Sadly, multitudes never listen, study, nor question what they hear or read. Genuine faith is not gullible, because it is connected with studying the Scriptures like the noble Bereans. Second, faith is not rash foolishness. Our faith does not need to take unnecessary risks for the sake of proving itself. Even Jesus refused the request of Satan to display His faith when taken to the top of the temple and asked to jump off (Luke 4:9-12). Finally, genuine faith is also not “seeing is believing.” Faith accepts what it cannot see (Psalm 27:13; John 11:40; 2 Corinthians 5:7). In John 20:24-29, we see Thomas, like so many, say, “*Unless I see... I will not believe.*” God says, “*Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.*”

So, what is faith?

#### **Faith is belief; the ability to visualize our hope.**

The first clause in the definition of faith is “*the assurance of things hoped for.*” The New King James Version translates this as “*the substance.*” That is a helpful way of saying it puts weight and form into what we are placing our confidence in. We have faith in things that we do not currently have or see—we’re looking into the future and confidently believing that it will be reality. Faith gives what we hope for substance and reality.

As you go through this chapter, you see men and women who acted on their faith in expectations that did not become reality during their lifetimes. In other words, all of them had nothing except promises. Their faith was in things not seen—they were invisible. This is repeated 11 times (11:1, 3, 7, 8, 13, 15

(2x), 20, 26, 27, 39).

In these verses, we also read of these great examples of faith putting “*substance*” to what they “*hoped for.*” These people had a clear visualization in their minds of what they were putting their faith in: the Patriarchs saw the promises and welcomed them (11:13), the Patriarchs were thinking of the promise (11:15), Isaac regarded the things to come (11:20), and Moses considered Christ (who was only a Messianic hope at that time) and looked to the reward (11:26).

So, what is our hope in? Are we putting substance, weight, special consideration in our future rewards? For the men and women of Hebrews 11, they were looking forward to their heavenly reward, that far better country (11:13-16). Why would we look forward to heaven? Because we confidently believe in the testimony of Scripture! Heaven is not just a wish—it is a reality to us that we must put substance to, and it impacts how we understand and anticipate it to be!

We do not possess our hope right now, but we can know for certain that these promises are ours in the future. Faith is neither possession nor sight since we cannot see with our eyes, currently, what God has promised to give us. Although we cannot have a physical or visible guarantee of what God offers, we are so assured in His promises that we live our lives in such a way as if we were already given these things. Only a Christian, through the perspective of faith, can see what God has prepared and promised for those who believe (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

#### **Faith is behavior; our actions vindicate our hope.**

The second clause of the author’s definition of faith includes “*the conviction of things not seen.*” This takes the first clause, “*the assurance of things hoped for,*” further. It’s not simply hoping, hoping for something specific, or even strongly hoping for it... it is the conviction that it is true. The word for “*conviction*” implies that there is an unwavering confidence. It is more than an idea that has weight and substance that we believe in—it’s a firm conviction. Faith is living on the basis of things not seen and being so sure of them that they become our convictions. So, the author has moved from what we believe to how we believe, because we live by our convictions.

See how the concepts of belief and behavior are interrelated and demonstrated in the lives of these

faithful people. Notice all the “crazy” actions these people had on their “to-do lists” (11:7, 9, 27, 30). Can you imagine how they must have felt with their neighbors and friends in conversation?

Conviction is a firmly held belief which implies a deeper manifestation of the inward assurance we have. Christians are people of faith and they are prepared to live out their belief. If you believe the truth, your behavior should manifest that belief. In other words, our lives should reflect a commitment to what our minds and hearts are assured is true. We should be so sure of God’s promises and blessings which are future that we behave as if those promises were already realized. Ultimately, having a faith that gives the promises of God weight and substance and behaving based on that belief is what assures us that we actually do have faith.

### **FAITH APPROVES US (11:2)**

*“For by it the men of old gained approval.”*

All of these “*men of old*”—Old Testament saints, the people listed in this chapter—were “*approved*.” The Greek verb means to be praised, to have a favorable witness or testimony. So, we have a listing of all those who were found “*approved*” on the basis of their faith. Faith is the only way to please God (Hebrews 11:6). They believed God and it was because their faith had substance and was a personal conviction that controlled their conduct.

Thus, the Hebrew writer wants his readers to know that to shrink back will have devastating consequences. If they are no longer accepting God’s promises and no longer living the life He prescribed, they have lost God’s approval. Only genuine faith can bring us into a relationship with God and only a persevering faith can maintain it. The evidence for the validity of their faith and our faith is the way we live. Their belief and subsequent behavior received God’s endorsement! So, one significant way that we find evidence of God is in the way people have lived, because the way they live speaks of the reality and of the greatness of what they believe. In this chapter, we find the term for “*approved*” four times (11:2, 4, 5, 39) and it comes from the word for *testimony*, and our English word *martyr* also comes from this same root.

May this constantly remind us to be concerned about actually having a personal faith that is also an active faith! Donald Grey Barnhouse, a famous preacher in Philadelphia, once said, “Men may not

read the gospel in seal-skin, or the gospel in morocco, or the gospel in cloth covers,” talking about the various materials Bibles are bound in, “but they can’t get away from the Gospel in shoe leather!” Our faith is what people see, because how we behave reflects what we truly believe—words are not enough. Somebody once said:

You are writing a gospel,  
a chapter each day,  
by deeds that you do  
and by words that you say.  
Men read what you write,  
whether faithless or true—  
say, what is the “Gospel According to You?”

Edgar Guest wrote a poem entitled, “I’d Rather See a Sermon.” In it he wrote,

I’d rather see a sermon  
than hear one any day.  
I’d rather one should walk with me  
than merely tell the way.  
The eyes a better pupil  
and more willing than the ear,  
fine counsel is confusing,  
but examples are always clear.

Perhaps an even more popular quote is, “Christianity is not taught – it is caught!”

Faith is more than just looking for approval, it’s an active lifestyle. This is a very evident pattern in Hebrews 11. A brief overview of this chapter reveals faith worshipping (11:4), walking (11:5-6), working (11:7), waiting (11:9-22), warring (11:23-28), and winning (11:29-38). We have, up to this point, seen a faith that fortifies the future (1) assures us because it’s a mental activity, and (2) approves us through physical activity. There is one final element the Hebrew author adds in verse 3.

### **FAITH ACKNOWLEDGES REALITY (11:3)**

*“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”*

To help us understand what he means by faith, the writer supplies an illustration in verse 3 that we are all to do—“*by faith we understand*.” This statement makes it clear there is evidence that God created the universe from things that are not visible and depicts a knowledge of something that has not

been seen by our eyes. It suggests that the evidence is so overwhelming that we believe even though we have not seen it.

Thus, the Hebrew author takes us all the way back to the time of creation where God created everything out of nothing. There was nothing but God and that is exactly what the inspired person is saying here. It was *“prepared by the word of God.”* God used His inherent power when He used His voice to create everything we know and see and more into existence. A cursory reading of Genesis 1 and 2 reveals the constant refrain of what God said and did nearly 50 times! You can only understand this by faith because no one was there to observe it. If you were, where have you been? What have you been doing? Job 38-41 reveals the ludicrousness of the thought through God’s sarcasm. The Psalmist in Psalm 33 declared:

*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast (vv. 6-9).*

If you say you are a Christian, how can you not believe that? The fact that the author puts verse 3 at the start of his list of *“by faith...”* shows that faith in God as the Creator is foundational to knowing and pleasing God. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”* is the very first verse in the Bible, and we must confront this simple and powerful reality (Genesis 1:1). We cannot begin to understand ourselves, other people, world history, or God if we reject the early chapters of Genesis. John MacArthur wrote:

If Genesis 1-3 does not tell us the truth, why should we believe anything else in the Bible? Without a right understanding of our origin, we have no way to understand anything about our spiritual existence. We cannot know our purpose, and we cannot be certain of our destiny... If God is not the Creator, then maybe He is not the Redeemer. If we cannot believe the opening chapters of Scripture, how can we be certain of anything the Bible says?

We know *“that the worlds were prepared by the word of God”* and notice the last statement, *“so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”* It is important to note the humility of the Biblical writers—they do not attempt to explain how God can create something from nothing. Instead, they affirm that God spoke and creation happened. An anonymous person wrote, “Faith raises us from phenomenal to spiritual causes; from second and inefficient causes to the Supreme, the one great First Cause. Nothing can be simpler; and the passage thus interpreted is luminous and eloquent with a beautiful and fundamental truth.” Therefore, this statement was the foundation of all of these people who *“by faith”* were able to please God. This simple statement becomes the basis for the entire chapter. The men of faith described in this chapter all looked to a higher order than the created, material order. Abraham *“was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”* (11:10). It was said of the Patriarchs *“that they are seeking a country of their own... a better country, that is, a heavenly one”* (11:14, 16). Even Moses believed in a future deliverer whose name was Christ—while *“seeing Him who is unseen”* (11:27). In other words, the unseen spiritual world surpasses the physical world to such a degree that they based their lived on what they understood by faith. Do we have this kind of faith?

## CONCLUSION

The type of faith we have determines what kind of person we will be. Is it a faith that pleases God or is it one that is experiential? Without the faith that is described in verses 1-3 and demonstrated in the rest of this wonderful chapter, there are some things that do not make any sense (1 Corinthians 2:9-13).

So, the question becomes, “is your faith able to fortify your future?” Do we have the ability to visualize what God has promised us? Do we actually live out those promises because they are our convictions? Do we have a faith that approves us? Do we have a faith that acts? Do we accept and acknowledge reality as it truly is? Do we believe in God’s account of the creation or man’s?

Do we have a faith that fortifies the future—when things are well or when things are worse?

# BIBLE Q&A:

## DISFELLOWSHIPING

[Note: We received the following questions earlier this month at TheCobbSix.com. If you have questions you would like to see answered in the pages of *The Quarterly*, feel free to email us at [CobbPublishing@gmail.com](mailto:CobbPublishing@gmail.com). We also welcome comments, corrections, or even disagreements. Just be nice about it.]

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*Hi Brad. I loved your answer to my previous question on baptism. It satisfied me and I have another.*

*Is "disfellowship" local or universal?*

*Can wrongful "disfellowship" shut someone out from God, just because a church took the action? Is it valid?*

*If a "disfellowshipped" brother repents elsewhere, can another congregation restore him?*

*Does a person need to plead to the church, even in the face of a wrongful and unscriptural disfellowship?*

*God bless you.*

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Greetings, friend!

The issue you ask about is clouded with confusion among Christians because of two main reasons:

1. The idea of excommunication is a prominent one among so-called "Christendom" because of the use of it by Catholics, and there are myriads of examples throughout history. Thus the history with Catholic excommunication (and even modern usage of the word in non-religious contexts) has colored the discussion.
2. The word "disfellowship" is nowhere in the Bible, yet we use it as though it is.

### ***Local or Universal?***

If we want to answer your questions, then, we need to understand what the Bible speaks of in regards to removing someone from the church.

1. Paul writes that we are to "mark those who cause division...and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). The word "avoid" means to take actions to assure you do not come into contact with someone. In order to avoid someone, they would have to be in the same general vicinity as you. After all, it makes no sense to say "Avoid those people who live hundreds of miles away that you will never meet anyway." Thus, in the command to "avoid" those who cause division, Paul shows us that is it something local under consideration.

2. 1 Corinthians 5:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14 both instruct Christians to "not have company" or "keep no company" with unrepentant sinners. This, too, involves something local, because you obviously don't keep company with people you don't know or have never met.

There are no commands or instructions or examples of anyone "disfellowshipping" someone in a different congregation, or "disfellowshipping" a whole congregation somewhere else. The only commands and exam-



ples are of local bodies of believers removing unrepentant sinners from their own congregations. If we want to use the word "disfellowship" to describe this action, so be it—but it still only refers to the actions taken in a local congregation against people who have been meeting with that congregation.

### ***Does it Change One's Standing Before God?***

Now, the question remains, does withdrawing company from someone change that person's standing before God? The answer is easy: No, it does not. All withdrawing company (or disfellowshipping) does is recognize that the person is no longer walking in fellowship with God, therefore also not in fellowship with faithful brethren, and thus needs to be removed from the local body of believers so that he doesn't (1) think he is acceptable before God while in his unrepentant sin, and (2) doesn't infect others with his influence. 1 Corinthians 5 speaks of a man who had his father's wife, and was to be cast out. He was already separated from God—now the church needed to recognize that and act accordingly.

Just as a Scriptural "withdrawing company" doesn't change the person's state before God, a wrongful "disfellowship" doesn't either. There may be times where someone is standing strong for the truth, and the congregation doesn't want to hear it—so much so that they withdraw company ("disfellowship") from him. This in no way changes the person's standing before God. If he is a faithful Christian, and is still "disfellowshipped," he is still considered by God to be a faithful Christian. The ones who would have to answer before the Lord are the ones who would wrongfully reject him from the local congregation.

### ***Restoration Elsewhere?***

You asked, "If a disfellowshipped brother repents elsewhere, can another congregation restore him?" If a brother truly repents, and becomes right with God, then he has been restored by God to full fellowship. However, that doesn't automatically mean that a congregation will recognize it (though they should). 2 Corinthians speaks of a man who repented, was accepted back by God, but who had not yet been welcomed back by the congregation there. Paul's response was basically: he's repented, he's in fellowship with God, so you (the congregation) need to recognize it and welcome him back.

It would be a good idea for the "disfellowshipped" brother to contact the congregation that withdrew company from him and let them know about his repentance, and perhaps also give them contact information for the elders and/or preacher at the new congregation for verification so they can share the happy news with confidence to the members.

### ***How to Correct a Wrongful Disfellowship?***

Your final question was: "Does a person need to plead to the church, even in the face of a wrongful and unscriptural disfellowship?" Before answering this, I guess it would depend on whether the "disfellowship" was done by people who sincerely are trying to follow God's word, or if it was done by people out of malice or to show their power over others. If it is the first option, then there is every reason to believe that discussing the matter would be beneficial. For this, I would point to Matthew 18:15-20, and suggest that one goes to the people who brought up and/or pushed the "disfellowship" and try to explain calmly and rationally and clearly why it was wrongful and unscriptural. If that doesn't work, taking some others along to hear the evidence and help point out any misunderstandings and problems with the situation would be the next step. If this still doesn't work to solve the issue, then taking it before the whole church (and not in an antagonistic way, where one attacks or badmouths brethren) is the last step—and hopefully the church would see that a mistake was made.

If, however, the second scenario (a "disfellowship" done out of malice or as a show of power) is what happened, then reasoning with them would most likely be useless (though it is worth a try).

Ultimately, we have to make sure that we are right with God, according to His Scriptures, even if the local congregation refuses to recognize it and welcome us in fellowship.

-Bradley S. Cobb

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# QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

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## ***On Going Through the Motions***

Boredom is spiritual quicksand. The rut of “going through the motions” is unbecoming worship of the great I AM. Throughout human history, spiritual boredom has prompted worship innovations. To solve the malady of boredom, humanity tends to try to increase its interest and enthusiasm using the placebo of novelty, not the divine remedy of introspection and repentance.

John Chowning:  
*God Speaking To Us and For Us*

Life is what you choose to make of it. Living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age does not occur accidentally. It requires flint-like (Isaiah 50:7), steadfast (Luke 9:51) determination. Godly living is achieved via the backbone, not the wishbone.

John Chowning  
*God Speaking to Us and for Us*

An age is called Dark not because the light fails to shine, but because people refuse to see it.

James A. Michener

## ***On Self-Centered Mission Trips***

We need to stop the do-gooder “selfie” mission trips that are all about us and not about what the brethren actually need in a place. We must find ways to be more effective in our world evangelism efforts. We are spending thousands of dollars to send people overseas who have no business going. If they are incapable of teaching the lost here, why on earth would we send them overseas?

Adam Evans  
*Bring Them In: 2020 Spiritual Sword Lectures*

## ***On Second-Hand Faith***

There has descended to us a kind of reverence for authority found in great names, that is very hurtful. These authorities have been canonized by us, and are not to be disturbed. This is partly because of superstition from which we are not yet free, and partly from laziness that makes us willing to accept statements, rather than look for the truth ourselves. In this way errors are handed down from one genera-

tion to another, for centuries, without having been suspected of being untrue. Some great man has made a hasty statement, which, at the time, he intended only to be understood as a kind of guess, and then it has been copied by one after another, till a dozen or twenty scholars can be quoted as holding that view; and this will be evidence enough for the faith of all the rest, for centuries to come.

D.R. Dungan  
*Hermeneutics*

## ***On Self-Centered Obedience***

Many men today are in the condition of the prophet Balaam; they are very anxious to do and say whatever the Lord may direct, provided the Lord will direct them to do and say the things they prefer.

D.R. Dungan  
*Hermeneutics*

## ***On Instrumental Music***

Friends, instrumental music in the church is a relic of the Roman Catholic Church, it was borrowed from Rome. When a thing is borrowed it ought to be returned. Why not send the organ back—back to the pope and to the Catholic Church. When Martin Luther came out of the Catholic Church, he left instrumental music where he found it, and called it an 'ensign of Baal.' John Knox called it 'a chest of whistles.' John Calvin said it was 'no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, or the restoration of other shadows of the law.' The Lutherans opposed it, the Presbyterians opposed it, the Baptists opposed it, and the Methodists opposed it. John Wesley said he would have no objection to the organ in their chapels, 'provided it is neither heard nor seen.' Calvin said, 'the Catholics foolishly borrowed it from the Jews.' That is true; and I will add a codicil to it. The Catholics borrowed it from the Jews, the Protestants borrowed it from the Catholics, the Christian Church borrowed it from the Protestants—and the New Testament church did not use it. You can choose where you will classify in that category, I stand with the New Testament church, and for New Testament practices.

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.  
*Bulwarks of the Faith*

# TABERNACLE SHADOWS

## THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

*Mark McWhorter*

When the priest entered the Holy Place he saw the Candlestick to his left, on the South side. It is what gave light in the Holy Place. On the priest's right, the North side, he saw the Table of Shewbread. This table is discussed in Exodus 25:23-30; 31:8; 37:10-16; and Leviticus 24:5-9. The Table was made of shittim (acacia) wood and overlaid with gold.

The Table was 1.5 cubits high, one cubit broad, and 2 cubits long. There was a crown of gold around the top. It had a border of a hand-breadth, which also had a crown of gold. It had two rings of gold on each side attached to the legs. Staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold were inserted into these rings.

The wood covered with gold is a symbol of Christ's perfect humanity covered with his deity. Gold is his glorification.

### ***Utensils***

There were dishes and spoons for applying frankincense. According to Numbers 7:86 there were 12 of these. There were also covers and bowls (possibly for the drink offering since the word "cover" in Exodus 25:29 means "pour"). These were made of gold. Some were for holding, protecting, and aiding in eating. Christ in his full glory does all of these things for the Christian. The spoons were also used for taking incense to the Altar of Incense (thus, a close relationship between the Table and the Altar).

The spoons aid in bringing a sweet odor to God.

Being of pure gold indicates that those things associated with the Table are deity. No human is qualified to cover, preserve, or add to what is on the Table. Only the Lamb is qualified (Revelation 5:12).

### ***Crowns***

The two Crowns may represent Jesus as King of earth and heaven. Philippians 2:9-11, "God ... hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Crowns may represent him as King of both Jew and Gentile.

The Crowns may represent him as King of both Israel and Judah. He brought the two together again. Ezekiel 37:22, "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be King to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

These may also represent the crown of thorns and the crown of glory. This would coincide with the bread representing his body.

These may also represent Jesus as High Priest and King (Zechariah 6:10-15).

### ***Shewbread Means...***

The word "shewbread" comes from two Hebrew



words meaning “bread of the faces,” where face indicates “presence.” Jesus is always present with us. He is always looking at us. We can always look to him. The Savior aspect of the bread can be seen in that a similar term to “showbread” is used in Isaiah 63:9. There he is referenced as “the angel of his presence.”

### ***The Continual Bread***

The bread was also called the “Continual Bread” (Numbers 4:7). The loaves were to always be present (Exodus 25:30). God’s food is always available.

Jesus said he was the bread of life. While this reference is primarily the Scriptures which are eaten at the Brazen Altar, the Shewbread cannot be excluded. “I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35, 48, and 51). He said he is the “bread of God” (John 6:33); and the “true bread” (John 6:32).

In John 6:56, he said, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” We must feed on Scripture and we must feed at the Lord’s Table. Both are necessary to have eternal life. A Christian cannot be saved by only one of the two. This is why it is absolutely necessary to attend corporate worship and partake of the Lord’s Supper.

### ***The Hallowed Bread***

In 1 Samuel 21:4-6, it is called the “hallowed bread.” The Kohathites were responsible for making the bread for every Sabbath (1 Chronicles 9:32). It was given to a priest who “set it in order” on the Table (Leviticus 24:5-8).

### ***Frankincense***

The loaves were on the Table for seven days, giving off a gracious odor of frankincense. Frankincense was burned on the bread, which made it a sweet smelling memorial. It was also burned on the Altar of Incense. It represents prayers and singing of Christians. Eating the word should be done associated with prayer and asking for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

The bread by itself had no sweet smell. It was odorless. Christ’s human body sacrifice had no holy odor by itself. The two criminals also gave their bodies. What made Christ’s body special was the holiness and purity of his soul. The frankincense represented holiness and purity. Such holiness and

purity only comes about through obedience to God.

There is a different word used for “pure” frankincense than is used for “pure” gold. “Pure” in reference to gold, means a purity developed. Gold must be refined. “Pure” in reference to frankincense, means a natural purity. This does not indicate that Christ, as God, had to develop his deity (gold representing deity). This was what was necessary to have pure gold in the physical world.

However, there is an interesting dichotomy with the two words. Christ was pure deity, and he had to develop and manifest pure humanity. Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Hebrews 5:8-9, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

### ***Eaten***

Every Sabbath the bread was eaten by the priests in the Holy Place (Leviticus 24:9). It could not be eaten anywhere else.

Christians eat the Bread of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. To miss eating the Lord’s Supper is to miss engaging in the Holy Place. It is to miss eating that which is “most holy” (Leviticus 24:9).

The priests ate the bread standing because there were no chairs in the Holy Place. It reminded of the Passover night in Egypt every time it was eaten. Exodus 12:11, “Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover.”

The Christian should be always ready for the Judgment. The Lord could come calling the faithful home at any moment. Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

### ***Fire***

The loaves were made by fire. Once again we see the complete devotion of Christ’s sacrifice. He allowed himself to be completely given to the fire of trials and death.

### ***Fine Flour***

The bread was made of fine flour which underwent a grinding process. All coarseness and une-

venness removed. Two-tenths deals were in each loaf (3.5 pints according to Josephus).

The bread also included oil, salt, and water (Leviticus 2:1,5,11,13). Oil was a flavoring and helping to hold the flour together. This was the Holy Spirit working through Christ. Salt being the thing that flavors and preserves. 2 Chronicles 13:5 tells us that David's covenant with God was a covenant made with salt. Our teaching and speaking to others is to be done with salt (Colossians 4:6). Jesus spoke with salt; he is our example. Having a life influenced with salt leads to peace (Mark 9:50).

The wheat seed had to die, be ground, and feel fire in the oven. Christ was bruised. He died in the fire of crucifixion.

### ***Twelve Loaves***

The loaves represented Christ for all Israel. The names that were written on the Breastplate of Judgment and on the shoulder pieces of the Ephod (Exodus 29) were also written on the loaves. Even after the split of Northern and Southern Kingdoms, the 12 loaves were to be on the Table in the Temple.

The twelve tribes represent the twelve spiritual tribes of the Church.

On Pentecost, 2 loaves were offered (Leviticus 23). They were baked with leaven, unlike the 12 loaves. These two represented Jew and Gentile and the growth of the church.

The twelve loaves were on the Table in two rows of six, divided. Divisions and strife are seen and thus perhaps showing that Christ overcomes division. Another indication may be of Jew and Gentile all being invited to eat of Christ.

The loaves were in "rows" (Leviticus 24:6-7). Some think they were in piles, which the Hebrew word can mean. But, that would mean only the top loaf of each pile would have frankincense on it. They were more likely in true rows. The Hebrew word for "row" indicates "arrangement or ordering." Christ's death was according to God's plan and ordering. The showbread was commanded according to that plan. Christians eat the Lord's Supper according to God's plan.

### ***Most Holy***

The bread was called "the most holy" of the offerings made by fire, (Leviticus 24:9). All other offerings were burned on the Brazen Altar. They were completely burned, and when they were finished burning, the offering was over.

But the bread was always there and never gone. This may give a particular understanding of Psalm 23:5, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies...." The Christian is able to eat from the Lord's Table every Sunday. The Christian participates in communion with the Lord. He is always available. He is never gone.

God condemned those who found weariness in the Table. Malachi 1:11-13, "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts...." A person who states a belief in Jesus but refuses to attend worship and partake of the Lord's Supper is denying a need for what is most holy.

Jesus stated in Luke 22:16-18 things that apply here. He said is the Table from which we eat. The "table" being a symbol of the things on the table as well as the thing which supports those things on the table.

### ***Prohibited to Eat***

God prohibited some from eating the bread. Those that could not eat were those with a running disease or leprosy. Strangers to the Israelites, hired servants, and sojourners were also prohibited. Thus, there was a purity required for those who would eat. Every person eating must be pure.

God does not recognize the non-Christian (non-Saint, non-Priest) when the non-Christian eats the bread. There is no sanctification given for the non-Christian. Those Christians (Priests) who are full of sin (the saint unrepentant of sin) are also not given sanctification by eating.

### ***Conclusion***

The Table of Shewbread is important for the lessons it portrays of Christ and his Church. It is of great importance that the New Testament Priests eat of the bread on the Table. It is important that the New Testament Priests hallow that Table.

# THE TRUTH

## ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS:

### *A Sermon Outline*

*Michael Shank*

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**LESSON TEXT: 2 Peter 2**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Many passages speak of the existence of false teachers, but none is any more specific than that of 2 Peter 2.
2. This chapter provides positive proof that there have always been those who would pervert Bible truth.
3. Five major ideas emerge from a study of this great chapter.

#### ***THERE WILL BE FALSE TEACHERS AMONG US***

1. 2 Peter 2:1
  - a. Notice the word “but” – draws a contrast (1:21/2:1).
  - b. In contrast to those who were moved by the Holy Spirit, Peter notes two things:
2. There were false prophets ***also among the people – the Israelites;***
  - a. Deuteronomy 13:5.
3. There shall be false teachers among you
  - a. This is not a surprising prediction in light of what Jesus taught His disciples – Matthew 7:15.
  - b. Notice what one of His disciples wrote – 1 John 4:1.
  - c. Thus, we need to be on guard for false teachers.

#### ***MOTIVATIONS FOR FALSE TEACHERS: REVENUE***

1. There are a number of reasons that explain the existence of false teachers, but two of these are discussed in 2 Peter 2.

## 2. **Revenue**

- a. 2 Peter 2:3, 14-15
- b. “Revenue” is “the gross income returned by an investment”
  - 1) In this case, the investment was the time and energy invested by the false teachers to promote false doctrine so that they might receive revenue from their happy hearers
- c. It was through covetousness that these false teachers endeavored to “make merchandise” of their hearers [or, exploit - NKJ], and
- d. They taught what they did because they had hearts of covetousness
- e. Their attitude was like Balaam “who loved the hire of wrong-doing” or, “loved the wages of unrighteousness” [NKJ] (2 Pt. 2:15)
- f. Many false teachers are only in it for the money

### ***MOTIVATIONS FOR FALSE TEACHERS: REBELLION***

## 3. 2 Peter 2:10-12

- a. The people described in these verses manifested a number of evil characteristics:
  - 1) Desire the filthy
  - 2) Despise dominion (authority)
  - 3) Daring (presumptuous)
  - 4) Self-willed
  - 5) Disrespectful of authority
  - 6) Mere animals (without reason)
  - 7) They speak evil of things whose worth and value they cannot appreciate

### ***THE RECIPE FOR BECOMING A FALSE TEACHER***

- A. Third, a careful study of 2 Peter 2 provides a compelling description of the *modus operandi* of the false teacher
  - 1. They repress their real intentions
    - a. 2 Peter 2:1-3, 13-14
    - b. “Privily” – smuggle in secretly (v. 1)
    - c. “Feigned words” – fictitious (v. 3)
    - d. “revelling in their deceivings while they feast with you” (v. 13) – they use fellowship to gain trust and then to deceive
    - e. “Beguiling unstable souls”- prey on the weak (v. 14)
    - f. “Cunningly devised fables” argument are made up, or artificial (2 Pt. 1:16)
    - g. “Crept in unawares” (Jude 4)
  - 2. They recruit their followers by promising what they cannot deliver
    - a. 2 Peter 2:17
    - b. Peter describes them as:
      - 1) “Springs without water” – a traveler and a dry well
      - 2) “Midst driven by a storm” – promising clouds, but no rain
    - c. They recruit with empty enticing words



## ***THE RESULT OF FALSE TEACHING***

- A. It results in repudiation of the Savior Who does for us
  - 1. 2 Peter 2:1
    - a. Sin waxes worse and worse
  - 2. It results in many following after lasciviousness
    - a. 2 Peter 2:2
    - b. Many teach that the Bible is not our pattern – Divorce for any cause, etc.
  - 3. It results in the way of truth being evil spoken of
    - a. 2 Peter 2:2
    - b. “faith alone” cheapens the faith.
    - c. When false doctrines like this spread, then the truth (which we preach) is spoken evil of—because people believe the lie.
  - 4. It results in the damnation of its hearers and practitioners
    - a. 2 Peter 2:1
    - b. Hearing a lie, believing a lie, and acting upon that lie, will lead to disaster
    - c. If we believe a lie we will be damned (2 The. 2:10-12)

## ***THE REMEDY FOR FALSE TEACHING***

- A. What’s the remedy for false teachers?
  - 1. 2 Peter 2:20 – knowledge
    - a. It’s through knowledge that we escape the pollutants of the world;
    - b. We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby (1 Pt. 2:1-2)
    - c. We must be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11)
  - 2. Reflection on our blessings will keep us from being easily seduced
    - c. Doctrines that do not require much are not worth much
  - 2. Remember the Reward awaiting the Righteous
    - a. 2 Peter 1:11

## ***CONCLUSION***

- A. Thus let us be like the Psalmist.
  - 1. Psalm 119:104
- B. Invitation.
  - 1. Hear the gospel (Acts 2:22-24).
  - 2. Believe the gospel (Mark 16:15-16).
  - 3. Confess the gospel (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10).
  - 4. Repent because of the gospel (Acts 3:19).
  - 5. Obey the gospel (Romans 6:3-5).
  - 6. Live in the hope of the gospel (Revelation 2:10).



# WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

Kyle D. Frank

We who name the name of Christ are under the authority of Christ. Scripture has a great deal to say to each of us about how we are to be under that authority. The Lord has spoken to us through the Spirit by means of the apostles. In the epistles from the apostles, we learn a great deal about how we are to apply that word to our lives. This where the proverbial “rubber meets the road.”

We are instructed not to be “hearers only” as told by James in 1:22: *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* We are to be doers of that which has been given to us. This is application. Let me make it plain: there is no easy way to make application. It is hard work: hard determined work. There are numerous ways to make application but I will only name one or two.

To begin with, we need to spend time delving into God’s word. It is our food. 1 Peter 2:2 tells us that it is milk, and 1 Corinthians 3:2 tells us that it is solid food. We are to grow from being spiritual infants, feeding on spiritual milk, to mature Christians, eating solid spiritual foods. This can only be accomplished by feeding on and by applying that food to our spiritual bodies. As a child cannot grow without physical food, neither can a spiritual child grow without spiritual food. The application of this comes from meditating on God’s word and applying it in our lives from day to day.

We often tell ourselves and others that our memory is “bad.” What exactly is “bad?” Perhaps it is “bad” (poor) from lack of use. Begin to memorize God’s word. You can do it—if you try. If I can do it with brain damage, you can in fact memorize scripture. Start small and work your way up.

Next, apply it to your daily walk through prayer and meditation. For guidance on that, look to David’s examples throughout Psalm 119. For example: verse 15—*I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.* Verse 23—*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.* Verse 78—*Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I*

*will meditate on your precepts.* Verse 97—*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.* These are but a few examples from the one Psalm. This acrostic Psalm gives a myriad of reasons why one should make a diligent search for and meditate on God’s word. Perhaps this was one reason why David was a man after God’s own heart.

Another method that one can use is to ask questions of the text and record what answers you come up with. These questions are a good way to apply the verses under study: Does this text reveal something I should:

- 1) believe about God?
- 2) praise or thank or trust God for?
- 3) pray about for myself or others?
- 4) have a new attitude about?
- 5) make a decision about?
- 6) do for the sake of Christ, others, or myself?

There are times when a verse of Scripture will have such evident application for your life that it will virtually jump off the page and plead with you to do what it says. More often than not, however, you must interview the verse, patiently asking questions of it until a down-to-earth response becomes clear. By asking these, or similar types of questions, we will be able to gather as much information as possible from the text under consideration.

After this process is complete, then comes the task of application. Application is where the “rubber meets the road.” The questions and answers are the tools that we use. But we then need to apply the word to our lives to reap the benefits from this hard work. Growth is the result, and by this we become better servants and stewards of the manifold blessings which God gives to us as a reward for our hard work. We must start to use the tools and seek to glorify our heavenly father as well as exhort and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the goal for which we are striving daily. Let us strive for this goal!

# About the Authors

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**Jeremie Beller** has lived in Oklahoma his entire life. He has spent more time in school than any person should (earning a BA, MA, MDiv, and PhD). He has served the Wilshire Church of Christ since 2007, and serves as an adjunct professor at OCU. Jeremie's wife, Delaina, teaches 4th grade at Oklahoma Christian Academy. They have one son (Keaton) and one daughter (Kayden).

**Jimmie Beller** loved to smile, even though he suffered for over a decade through cancer brought on by his service as a medic in Vietnam. He loved reading, studying, and listening to sermons. He told the editor he looked just like Jeremie Beller (Jeremie and the editor both disagree with that assessment).

**Gerald Cowan** earned degrees from Freed-Hardeman College, Lambuth University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He has preached the gospel to which he is committed for a bit more than 60 years. He is also committed to short-term missions, focusing for the past 22 years on the European country of Albania (Biblical Illyricum). He and his wife Neda have produced children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Though he was a late comer to the gospel and a late bloomer as well, an underachieving writer, and is considered a lame duck by many, he steadfastly resists retirement, is still a student, and glad to be called a preacher.

**Adam Cozort** works with the Lakeside church of Christ in Springfield, IL. Over the last 15 years, he has preached full-time with congregations in Illinois, Mississippi, and Georgia. He is a licensed high school sports official in football, basketball, and baseball. He and his wife Shea have five sons who they have been homeschooling since before COVID-19 made homeschooling a requirement.

**Kyle Frank** is a disabled workaholic whose idea of fun is spending twelve hours a day reading the American Standard Version (of 1901), Restoration Movement biographies, sermons, and seeing how many writing projects he can keep going at once. He

also runs So and So Publishing.

**Chris Gardner** sends a poem: "Preacher for life; married the perfect wife; has four great kids; likes to raid the fridge; favorite season is the fall; the Cards are gonna win it all." He also thinks he's a Jedi Master.

**Perry Hall** has preached for over three decades, and has degrees in History and Philosophy. His marriage is nearing the big 35 mark. He has successfully endured and recovered (mostly) from back surgery. He and his wife have four children. He occasionally writes at [PerryDox.com](http://PerryDox.com)

**Bill Howard** is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his "retired" time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others.

**William Howard**, for much of the year, has found himself feeling like Beethoven's horse. Ludwig van Beethoven was given a horse. He rode the animal a few times but soon forgot all about it. Beethoven's memory on certain things was pathetic. It would have starved to death but for the care of a servant. The horse probably asked itself, "Didn't I have a purpose? I'm sure I can do more than stand in a stable." The animal had to have wondered how he became the horse of the world's greatest composer of the day and the world's least likely man to care about a horse.

**John Krivak** is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted via email by using [jkrivak@zoominternet.net](mailto:jkrivak@zoominternet.net).

**Richard Mansel** is a preacher, writer, book-lover, and former editor of *Forthright Magazine*.

**Mark McWhorter** is an extremely knowledgeable medical expert who assisted with heart transplants,

and developed protocols which today are standards. In addition to writing for the Quarterly, he also sells used books at affordable prices, and tries to help people be rational in the face of medical crises.

**Jim Mitchell** recently purchased the copyrights to Ivan Stewart's Open Bible Study program, and has been using it to great success. He and his wife Jennifer live in Oklahoma City, where he works with the Cherokee Hills congregation.

**Phil Sanders** is the speaker for the *In Search of the Lord's Way* television program, which is seen by thousands every week across the country. He has a PhD. from the Theological University of America, and is a frequent contributor to *Spiritual Sword* and *Gospel Advocate*.

**Jake Schotter** loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He has been very fortunate to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them cheaply. He is a Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

**Michael Shank** is a former electrician who wrote a book called *Muscle and a Shovel*, describing his conversion to the Lord, and another, *When Shovels Break*, that shows that Christians who fell away can come back to the Christ. He is currently getting acclimated to the higher elevations since moving to Colorado.

**Keith Stonehart** has been married to Kelly for 20 years. They have 2 children, Kiah and Kole and a "son born out of due time," Carlos, who is 30. Keith

was the lead singer and guitarist in a touring rock band until 2001 when he was taught the truth. Keith is the full time Evangelist at the Fultondale church of Christ in Fultondale, Alabama, just north of Birmingham.

**Jefferson Davis (J.D.) Tant** is dead. Though, if he were still alive, it is likely that a segment of the American population would demand his name be changed because they would call it "racist."

**Bradley S. Cobb** is a lazy slacker, who couldn't take the time to get this issue out on time. Something about working 45 hours a week at his part-time job in the humid Arkansas heat. Or maybe it was something about needing to sleep. Or was it... \*yawn\*... Where was I? Oh, hey, look, it's naptime.

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to all our readers.*

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# Where will you go?

"How shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14



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# Whom will you send?

"How shall they preach unless they are sent?" Romans 10:15