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### Published Quarterly:

January, April, July, October

### Cobb Publishing

704 E. Main St.

Charleston, AR 72933

(479) 747-8372

CobbPublishing.com

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### Subscription Rates:

Annual Print: \$15.99

Bundles of 10 or more receive a  
20% discount!

Digital Subscription: FREE!

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# The Quarterly

Volume 5 – Number 3 – July 2021

## JULY HAS CONSPIRED AGAINST ME...

First, let's just get this out in the open. Pretty much every writer had their articles turned in back in June. So all the blame for this issue being late is mine. But while I know you are patient, kind, and forgiving, I thought I would give some sort of explanation. For one, I chose to put all projects on hold (including this issue) in order to help get all of Earl Kimbrough's Restoration Movement writings in print. (See ad later in this issue for more information.) There are other things that came up, but most of them were self-inflicted, and probably won't garner any sympathy, so I'll ignore them.

To say I am excited about the contents of this issue would be an understatement. Danny E. Davis, author of *True Worship: Knowing God by Developing a Closer Relationship with Him*, has written a guest editorial on the content of our congregational prayers. Jamie Beller introduces his new series on Church Discipline and Disfellowship by showing the value of fellowship in the first place. Jim Mitchell starts a series that deconstructs Calvinism as he quotes from prominent Calvinist apologists. Andy Sochor (host of the *Plain Bible Teaching* podcast) offers an insightful look at what *real* Pharisees actually are. Andrew Erwin gives an excellent overview and review of the Bales-Teller Debate. Gerald Cowan looks at the five killers of Jesus.

In addition to these, Jake Schotter shows what Life in the Church should look like, John Krivak talks about "The Baptism of Kirby," Keith Stonehart delves into the importance of scars, Richard Mansel digs into the interesting history of the Essenes, William Howard starts a study of God and time, Gantt Carter compares the beginning and the end of the Bible (Genesis and Revelation), Kyle Frank looks at "The Lost Books of the Bible," and there's several more you'll enjoy.

For those who enjoy church history, Jimmie Beller's section on "Unusual Happenings in Oklahoma" will make you smile. Earl Kimbrough's "Ten Events that Changed My Life" and "F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida" will give you a greater appreciation for the work of those who have gone before us.

And your editor humbly submits his own articles on the date of Revelation, as well as the question: "Does God Allow Women to Lead in Worship?"

*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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# WE DO NOT PRAY AS WE OUGHT

*A Guest Editorial by  
Danny E. Davis*

*“But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”<sup>1</sup>*

Recently, a dear Christian friend and I were discussing prayers, and I told him I wanted to be careful about asking him (and others simultaneously) to pray for my spiritual work because I did not want them to gain the impression that I was boasting—and even more so, I wanted to be careful that my intentions were purely to glorify God and not for my own pride. I am mindful and fearful of what Jesus said in the gospels when He told us to “do good works and pray in secret and not as the hypocrites do.”<sup>2</sup> And this is how my friend responded:

“In a world where all the prayer requests  
are for aches, pains, diseases, and surgeries,  
it is refreshing to be able to pray for something  
of a spiritual nature.”

In the following early morning hours, as I arose to meditate and pray on these things, a verse and thought came to my mind: If the Holy Spirit intercedes for us because we do not know how to pray as we ought (and we believe this is true because the Holy Spirit guided Paul to write it), then why are many (most?) local church prayers about “aches, pains, diseases, and surgeries” which are focused on physical things and not spiritual things?

Have you ever considered this question?

Let us examine Romans 8:25-26 to better understand what the Holy Spirit told us through Paul. The whole creation groans until now, and Christians groan within ourselves as we await the glorification of our bodies at judgement day. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities and intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. If one examines the original Greek text from verses 22 through 26, a summary would be that one is often at a loss for the words to pray during suffering circumstances. Does this describe our prayer in

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:25-26

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:1,5-6

the assembly when we focus solely on medical infirmities?

As I reflect on the 16 congregations of which I have been a member over the last 27 years (I have moved a lot because of my job), I must write that perhaps all of them, except one or two, often offered assembly prayers almost entirely focused on physical issues (medical well-being) instead of spiritual well-being. Beloved, pause with me for a minute and consider the gravity of what you just read: over the last 27 years almost all the 16 congregations of which I have been blessed to have been a member focused almost solely on medical issues in their prayers except one or two that I can recall.

And I wonder: *is this wrong?* It is not wrong to ask God to help us in any matter, but we need to soberly ask ourselves, *Is God pleased if we focus so often on physical things and not spiritual things as we approach Him in prayer during the assembly?* Can you hear Jesus say: “O ye of little faith.”?

Help us LORD to be more of what You intended for us to be. Help us LORD.

Praying occasionally on medical issues in the assembly, when the requests cause us to mourn and afflict ourselves before the LORD, is one thing. But when medical/health issues are the *only* things prayed for...?

### ***What else should we consider to be more pleasing to God in assembly prayer?***

As we consider the questions I have raised, here are some things we would do well to remember.

(1) Praying for medical issues, aches and pains is not wrong, but I am aware of only one explicit verse in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit guided James to mention praying for the sick.<sup>3</sup>

*“Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”<sup>4</sup>*

What about Paul’s infirmity? In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul prayed that a “thorn in the flesh” would be removed, but God refused. We are not sure it was a medical or physical issue, but the Greek word used in verse 10 for “infirmities” denotes “a disease, sickness, or weakness.”<sup>5</sup> In this case, Paul did pray for healing, but his request was denied, and the Lord told Paul to rely on His grace.

Other than James’ statement and Paul’s request, I see no New Testament scriptures about Christians gathering to pray for the sick/physically ill. I see several prayers, however, relating to the spread of the gospel and faithfulness in Christ. Does this mean many today have their minds set on physical versus spiritual things? Should we be doing better in some local assemblies by setting our minds on things above?

I will leave these thoughts and questions to you, dear readers. However, in response to these questions, here are some things we should consider.

- (1) God knows what we need before we ask.
- (2) Prayers in the New Testament rarely focused on physical/medical issues.
- (3) We wrestle not against flesh and blood.
- (4) We should set our minds on things above.

Thank you for considering this question with me. May God be glorified as we endeavor to better understand His will in our prayers.

---

<sup>3</sup> And it is possible that this verse refers to a spiritual sickness, instead of a physical one (because one of the results is that his sins would be forgiven). See comments in *Justified by Works: A Study of the Letter from James* (Bradley Cobb)

<sup>4</sup> James 5:13-16

<sup>5</sup> E-sword Greek Dictionary



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# WILTED PETALS

*Exposing the Fallacies of Calvinism,  
One Petal at a Time*

*Jim Mitchell*

The teachings of John Calvin (embraced by a large number of religious groups) have historically been grouped into five areas, and, as will be seen in this series of articles, teach things which are totally unsupported by the Word of God. This article will deal with the first of these “Five Points” of Calvinism, as they have come to be known (along with its popular acronym TULIP). The approach will be to mention what is usually offered as “proof texts” for Calvinism with several questions in mind. (1) Are proponents of Calvinism assuming what, in fact, they need to prove? (2) Are their conclusions warranted by the context of the scriptures cited? (3) Are they reading things “into” passages which are not present or “removing” things which are? (4) Are they using terms in consistent fashion? And (5) Are they placing meanings upon words in the following texts which are less than accurate? Calvinistic contentions throughout the article are from the book *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended, and Documented*, by David Steele, Curtis Thomas, and Lance Quinn (Phillipsburg, NJ. P&R Publishing, Second Ed. 2004). The “Five Points of Calvinism” and brief statements from the above authors are provided as a summary of these positions held by Calvinists. All italicized material in this article are quotations from those authors.

**T** – Total Depravity (i.e. “Original Sin”) – “*Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel . . . His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature. Therefore, he will not –*

*indeed cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm.*” (p. 5)

**U** – Unconditional Election (i.e. “Predestination”) – “*God’s choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God’s choice.*” (p. 6)

**L** – Limited Atonement (i.e. “Particular Redemption”) – “*Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners.*” (pp. 6, 7)

**I** – Irresistible Grace (i.e. “The Efficacious Call of the Spirit”) – “*In addition to the outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected. However, the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion.*” (pp. 6, 7)

**P** – Perseverance of the Saints (i.e. “Once Saved Always Saved”) – “*All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are*

*eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of almighty God and thus persevere to the end.”* (pp. 7, 8)

### **An ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

*from the above mentioned Authors*

*“The question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration came to be formulated into five points, or why it was named Calvinism, but rather is it supported by Scripture? The final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. If Calvinism can be verified by clear and explicit declarations of Scripture, then it must be received by Christians; if not, it must be rejected”* (p.17) [emphasis is mine, JPM].

While the first topic (Total Depravity/Original Sin) is the only one this article will address, the authors state that these five doctrines *“are so inseparably connected that no one of them can be fully appreciated unless it is properly related to, and viewed in light of, the other four; for they mutually explain and support one another”* (p. 18).

From the authors’ admission, the five points of Calvinism stand or fall together.

Within their defense of Calvinism, they use “approximately 250 passages (consisting of well over 400 verses),” stating that these are the “more important” passages supporting these five doctrines (p. xxii). So, how do the “proof texts” from these authors and their statements about these passages stack up against the “clear and explicit declarations of Scripture”? Are their conclusions actually found in the “proof-texts” offered, or are the authors in fact assuming what they must prove.

#### **“PROOF-TEXTS” on what the Authors Propose as “Spiritual Darkness”**

*“As the result of Adam’s transgression, men are born in sin and by nature are spiritually dead; therefore, if they are to become God’s children and enter His kingdom, they must be born anew of the Spirit.”* (p. 20) Note the verses these authors use to ‘support’ this position, along with how they miss what is being stated.

**Romans 5:12 “...death spread to all men, because all sinned...”**

To begin with such a passage in “support” of the above statement is indeed a glimpse of what is to follow. The verse gives us a reason diametrically

opposed to the statement it is intended to prove. Death spread “because all sinned,” not because all were sinners at the point of their birth. This verse states something opposite to the contention of the authors.

**Ephesians 2:1-3 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked...also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”**

This second “proof text” fares no better than the first. The activity of the recipients – “in which you once walked” – relates to what Paul wrote in the first text mentioned from Romans. While this passage states they were “by nature” children of wrath, it gives no indication to the origin of that nature. Thus, to use this passage as validation for their stated position is to argue from presupposition, not from scripture.

**Colossians 2:13 “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”**

As was true of the previous verses referenced, this verse also gives us no answer to the origin of the Colossians being previously dead in their trespasses. To assume a connection between Paul’s statement and Adam’s sin is just that, an assumption.

**Psalms 51:5 “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”**

*“David confessed that he, as well as all other men, was born in sin”* (p. 26).

This verse actually says NOTHING about the child (David), but as the second phrase elaborates upon the first, it actually deals with the condition of the mother. Both from a logical as well as a doctrinal perspective, it is a huge jump indeed to go from being born in a condition of sin to being born a “sinner.” And my contention is neither contained in this verse nor justified by the context.

**Psalms 58:3 “The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”**

This verse also states the opposite of a Calvinistic understanding of its statement. In order for this to legitimately prove their point, it needed to say that they were already astray from the moment of

their birth, not that they “go astray.”

**“PROOF-TEXTS” from a Calvinistic  
Perspective on “Darkened Minds and  
Corrupt Hearts”**

**Genesis 6:5** “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually.”

The authors maintain – “*as the result of the fall, men are blind and deaf to spiritual truth. Their minds are darkened by sin; their hearts are corrupt and evil*” (p. 21).

For this verse to validate the point being made, it must incorporate within it or its surrounding context that Adam’s fall was the reason for their wickedness and evil, and that they were incapable of choosing any other behavior. This verse does not make that designation and therefore does not substantiate their position.

**Genesis 8:21** “...the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth...”

This text actually is a very strong argument AGAINST the position these Calvinistic authors wish to perpetuate. While this verse says the imagination of the human heart is evil “from...youth,” it contains nothing to either substantiate an evil heart from the first breath of life or that this evil was the result of Adam’s fall.

**Ecclesiastes 9:3** “...Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

Perhaps it is, in part, due to their faulty view of Psalm 51:5 that this verse is used. However, this verse deals neither with being full of evil from either conception or birth, but with the way one lives. Once again, another “strong verse” believed to support Calvinism does nothing of the kind.

**Jeremiah 17:9** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

The reason and/or basis for such a condition of the heart is NOT addressed in this passage and, not dealing with the point being made by the authors, cannot therefore be used as a “proof-text.”

**Mark 7:21-23** “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

This is another verse which argues against the premise that these evils are a result of Adam’s fall and of humanity being born in “total depravity.” If this was indeed the case, Jesus would be guilty of teaching something false (which He is not). If these evils were the result of Adam’s fall they could not, in Jesus’ words, “defile a man” for he would have already been defiled from the point of his birth.

John 3:19 “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Jesus said men loved darkness because their deeds were evil, NOT because they were born in sin as a result of Adam’s fall. Once again the authors assume what they have yet to prove, and once again they read into a passage something which it does NOT contain.

Romans 8:7, 8 “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

Here is a good example of ignoring the context in which verses are found. The verses immediately preceding this quotation argue strongly against the position that men are “born in sin,” and make this usage of the passage suspect. Note what Paul wrote in verse 5 of this chapter.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

The “carnal mind” (v. 7) is achieved when people “set their minds on things of the flesh” (v. 5), not that their minds were involuntarily set upon evil because of someone (or something) else. Note also that the term translated “subject” in the phrase “not subject to” in 8:7 “has the underlying sense of “to

obey,” “be obedient” in a variety of contexts” (*Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Stephen D. Renn, ed., p. 943). A refusal to submit or to obey does not necessitate an inability to understand. Surprisingly, the authors of this book endeavoring to defend Calvinism do exactly the opposite and go a long way to defeating it instead of defending it when they quote 1 Corinthians 2:14 and Ephesians 4:17-19.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

**Ephesians 4:17-19** “Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness” (RSV).

What makes the usage of 1 Cor. 2:14 so intriguing is not just what Steele, Thomas, and Quinn assume rather than prove, but that they immediately follow this passage with Eph. 4:17-19. This is another passage one would think these authors would avoid since it also proves detrimental to Calvinistic teaching. The statement that men “became callous” and “have given themselves up to” every kind of evil, deals a deathblow to the idea that men were “born” callous or “born” with evil, darkened minds.

**Ephesians 5:8** “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light...”

WHAT created or caused this state of “darkness” is not addressed in this verse nor does it state HOW one finds his/her way into such darkness. In order for this verse to be used by Calvinists to support this doctrine it must deal with both of these issues. It addresses neither.

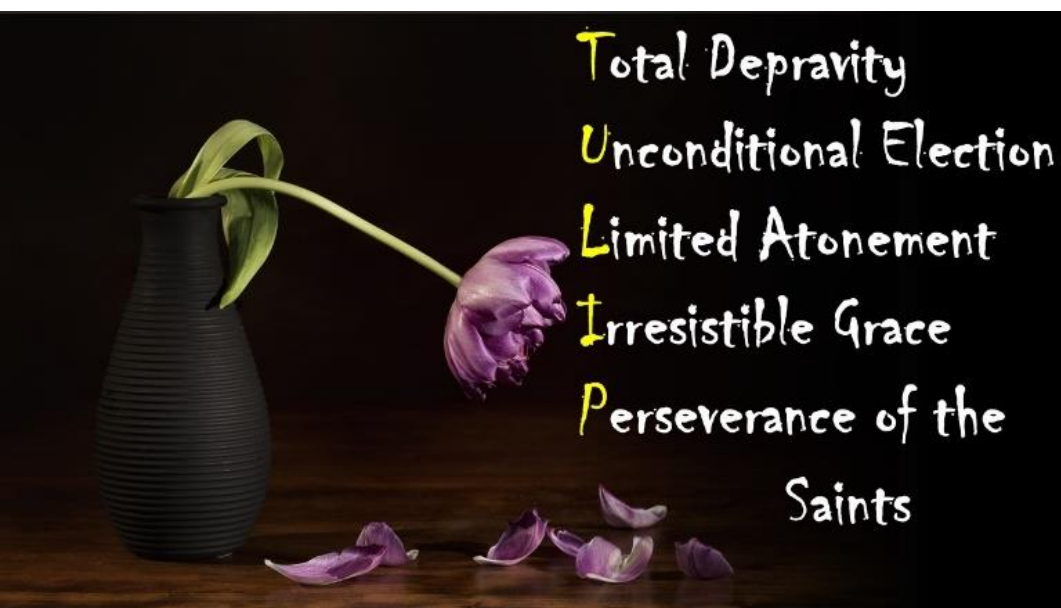
**Titus 1:15** “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.”

The same comment can be made here as to previous verses. This passage says NOTHING about the “origin” of this “defilement” and, as such, gives no support to the doctrine of “total depravity” (original sin).

### ***“PROOF-TEXTS” regarding the Calvinistic Perspective on “Bondage to Sin & Satan”***

**John 8:44** “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.”

The stated contention of the authors is that “*before sinners are born into God’s kingdom through the regenerating power of the Spirit, they are children of the devil and under his control; they are slaves to sin*” (p. 23). For a moment, move from the topic of “original sin” to see this statement in connection with the doctrine of “Perseverance of the Saints” (Once Saved Always Saved). Calvinists have argued that a child cannot change the one to whom they belong. The idea is “once a child of your father, always a child of your father.” By the above italicized quote, the authors of this book on Calvinism have painted themselves into a corner. If it were the case that all of humanity were “*children of the devil and under his control*” until such time as they were “*born into God’s kingdom,*” and since a child cannot change who his/her father happens to be, then wouldn’t that mean that ALL were children of the devil? That is exactly the point they make in their statement. If all were of their father the devil but





can be changed from children of Satan to children of God, would not the doctrine of “once saved always saved” prove itself false from their own statements? If indeed “sonship” could be changed from an unholy union to a holy, could it not be changed from a holy one to an unholy? The idea “once a child of your father, always a child of your father” cannot be used in connection with the idea of “once saved always saved” from the Calvinist’s own teaching.

In order to prove the point Calvinists attempt to make from this verse in John 8, they need a statement which absolves humanity of any and all responsibility and proves that no one has any choice in their actions. John 8:44, just like every verse used before it, fails as a proof-text.

**2 Timothy 2:25,26 “...if God will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”**

If they were “depraved from birth,” then they would not have to be “snared” by the devil as they would already be his. “Having been taken captive” could not have taken place if they were already captive. The point Steele, Thomas, and Quinn wish to reach is the utter control Satan has on humanity. This is another passage one would think these authors would avoid due to the damage it does to this doctrine of Calvinism.

**John 8:34 “Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’”**

**Romans 6:20 “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”**

The point Jesus makes in John 8 is echoed by

Paul in Romans 6:16-18 where the Roman Christians are told they were “slaves to whom you present yourselves” and to whom you “obey.” The question to be addressed is whether or not the context of Romans 6 allows the idea of sinfulness being a choice or totally involuntary. Neither verse cited is a “proof-text” for Calvinism as these authors would have us to believe. In John 8, Jesus places being a slave of sin in the context of committing sin, not the act of being born.

**Titus 3:3 “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.”**

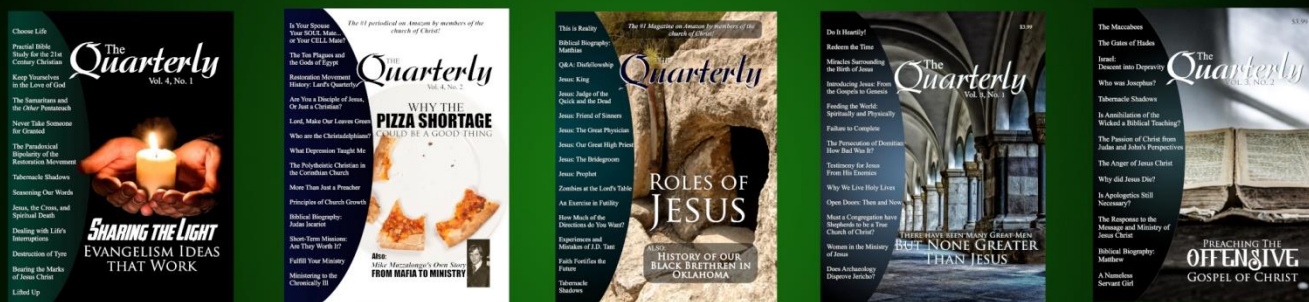
While the verse does not deal with the background of why we were foolish, disobedient, deceived, etc. (which it must address in order to be used as a “proof-text” by these authors), the very term translated “disobedient” involves a choice—which cannot truly be allowed if Calvinism were to be consistent. Where only one action is possible, it is impossible for disobedience to be the result. If there is only one way in which you can think and/or act, you cannot disobey.

### ***Final Observation Concerning Unproven Assumptions in this portion of the book:***

While this article has only dealt with passages dealing with the alleged doctrine of “Original Sin” as found in the above mentioned book on Calvinism, please remember that, in the mind of these authors, these are many of the “*more important*” passages which they believe support this teaching.

Indeed, the **T** in **TULIP** has withered and fallen from the “flower” of Calvinism, which has proven itself to be at odds with what all of these verses actually say.

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# AFTER BAPTISM *Then What?*

Danny E. Davis

*“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”<sup>1</sup>*

When someone gets baptized into Christ, then what? What do we tell them? How do we encourage them to proceed? They need to grow. But whose responsibility is it to ensure a new Christian grows? Is it an individual responsibility or is it the responsibility of members of the local church? It is the responsibility of both.

When a person is baptized into Christ, we must remember (and their local church must remember and act accordingly) that they are babies in Christ. A newborn in Christ, just like a baby, is totally dependent on others to grow. The baby will cry out when he is hungry (seeking the Word), because he is totally dependent upon others to feed him (the Word) until he can get his feet underneath him, begin walking, and grow enough to take on more solid food. It is no different for a person baptized into Christ. So, as a local church member encouraging a newly baptized Christian, how do we support them?

I am afraid that sometimes we baptize people and then pray for them. *God bless you, congratulations, go in peace.* But we do not take an **active** role in their growth. I have seen it happen more times than

I wish to recall. I have been heartbroken when a baby in Christ falls away (anytime, but especially) before they have had one-full year as a Christian – just like Jesus predicted in the parable of the sower<sup>2</sup> and the parable of the weeds.<sup>3</sup> It is easy for those around them to say, “Well, they must not have been truly converted to Jesus.” I do not see how passing the blame can ease the conscience when someone falls away from Jesus. There should be tears by the local church and reflection: What if they were converted to Jesus yet members of the church did not take an active role in their growth? It happens. Let us all work to ensure that never happens in the local churches that belong to Christ where we are members. Amen?

When someone gets baptized into Christ, let us teach them what it means to “be holy” and share these thoughts with them. ***After baptism, Christians should obey, perfect holiness, and walk in the light all the remaining days of their lives on earth.*** As members of the local church, let us take an active role and encourage new Christians in these endeavors.

**Obey.** The word “obey” is found 108 times in 104 verses in the New King James version of the Bible. Perhaps the most sobering verses about the importance of obedience were written to the Thessalonians about Jesus’ return. Paul wrote: “... (when) the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:26-27

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:18-23

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:24-30

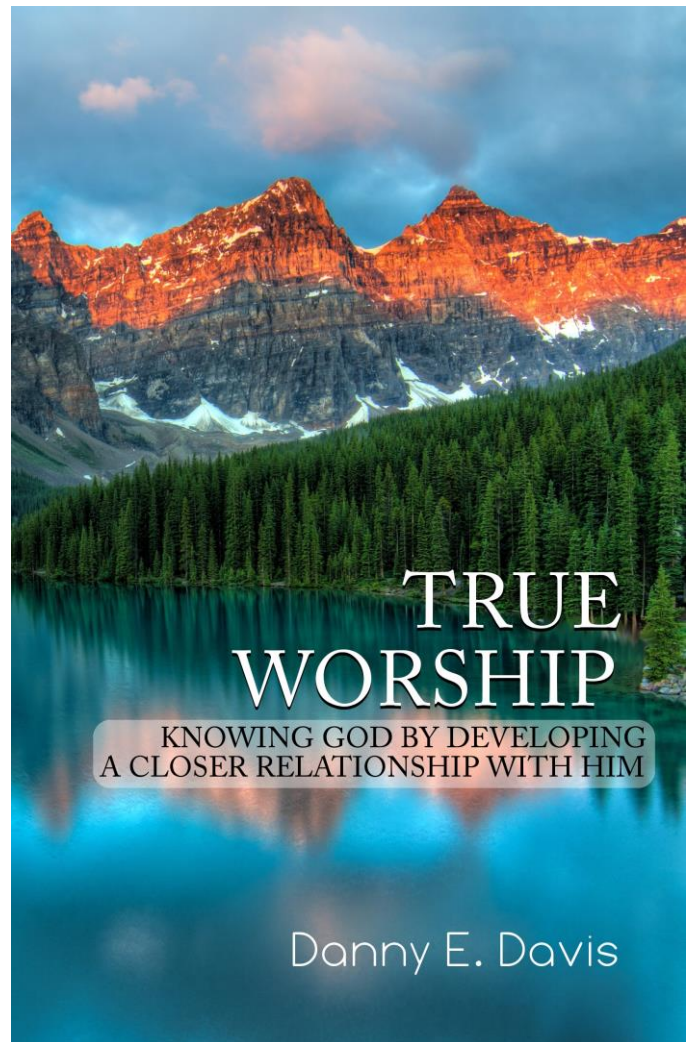
mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not **obey** the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>4</sup>. That is a frightening thought and a reminder that we need to obey God with our all. After baptism, we see why it is important to obey God for the remainder of one's days. What about perfecting holiness?

**Perfecting Holiness.** Our God is a holy God. Holy means He is “set apart, pure, separated from sin.” God is “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness.”<sup>5</sup> And God told His people in the Old Testament to be holy: “For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.”<sup>6</sup> Peter reminded New Testament Christians to be holy in his first epistle.<sup>7</sup> But how do we set ourselves apart to be holy when we all sin and fall short of the glory of Christ?<sup>8</sup> We must remember Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where he informed Christians that we are the temple of the living God.<sup>9</sup> And as the temple of the living God, knowing that we are His sons and daughters, we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”<sup>10</sup> Yes, that is it. God expects us to “perfect holiness” in our lives. After we are baptized, we daily work to avoid sin and temptation. As Christians, we should shun evil, knowing God is holy and He expects His people to be holy. That means there should be no *known* standing sin in our lives; we must repent and put it away if we want to perfect holiness in the fear (reverence) of God. What about walking in the light?

**Walking in the light.** John tells us that “God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and the truth is not in us. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”<sup>11</sup> How do we walk in the light? Read our Bibles to find out what God de-

tests and what constitutes sin and work to overcome it on a daily basis. If we do not walk in the light, we set a bad example to others who know we wear the name of Jesus. With all of our hearts, souls, and strength, let us avoid staining the name of Jesus.

How great and glorious is the God we serve. Although we all sin and fall short of what God would have us to be, He has provided a way for us by the blood of Jesus. After baptism, then what? God expects His people to be obedient, perfect holiness, and walk in the light.



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<sup>4</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8

<sup>5</sup> Holy | Definition of Holy by Merriam-Webster

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 11:44

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 1:15-16

<sup>8</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:1

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 1:5-7



# TEN EVENTS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE (IN SEVEN YEARS)

## PART TWO

*Earl Kimbrough*

### ***The Fourth Event: Preaching at Frostproof***

The fourth event in the chain that changed my life in seven years took place the second year I was in college and is directly connected with my being there. When I returned in the fall of 1948, Albert Holt and Claude McQuiddy, veterans on the GI Bill, told me the little church at Frostproof wanted a student preacher from the college to preach for them. Albert and Claude invited me to ride with them to Frostproof to talk to the church about my preaching there regularly. Albert and Claude then preached at Avon Park and Sebring, respectively, which were just south of Frostproof. They had cars and passed through the town each Sunday on the way to their appointments. They promised me transportation to Frostproof each Sunday, if I arranged to preach for the church regularly.

Frostproof at the time was a small citrus-packing town in southern Polk County in the highland ridge section of Florida between Lake Wales and Avon Park. It was situated between Lake Clinch and Lake Reedy on SR 17. There had been no regularly established Church of Christ there until 1946, the year before, which at first met in the city hall on Sundays and held mid-week Bible study at the home of Ernest Y. Dubose. In 1947 the church met in a little frame building near the city hall. The church had purchased the building and remodeled it for church use. It was meeting in this one-room building when I first went there on September 12, 1948 to preach and to discuss my preaching for them regularly.



The church building was only a block off SR 17. So Albert and Claude let me out at the building to sit on the steps and wait for the people, none of whom I then knew, to arrive for services. That day was one of the most memorable occasions of my life and the beginning of a longtime relationship

with members of the Frostproof church, most of whom, at that time, were related to the DuBose family. The church invited me to preach for them regularly and they offered to pay me fifteen dollars a week. I gratefully accepted the offer and looked forward to beginning, but because I had other preaching appointments, I could not begin until October

I did begin preaching at Frostproof on that date and rode over from the college with Albert and Claude each Sunday. This continued until April 15, 1951, which was about two months before I finished college. I held gospel meetings and preached at other places on occasions

during this time, but my regular preaching the last three years I was in college was at Frostproof. While the pay was small, the fifteen dollars in today's value would be worth \$116.85. So it was a considerable amount for a small church and I applied it to paying the college, which helped reduce my obligation.

### ***The Fifth Event: Turning Down Tampa***

The fifth event actually occurred before my first Sunday at Frostproof as the church's regular preacher. Somethings unusual happened during the month before I began my regular work there, which could

very well have diverted me from ever preaching at Frostproof again, and were of sufficient importance to change the course of my life. I had appointments to preach in Tampa, two of which were at what was then known as the Waters Avenue church. I did not know it at the time of my first preaching there, nor until I preached there the second time, but this church was trying out some student preachers with a view to hiring one of them to preach there regularly.

The second time I preached at Water's Avenue, the brethren invited me to become their preacher and offered to pay me twenty-five dollars a week. This ordinarily might have been a great temptation, especially to one in my financial situation. Under the circumstances, I might have been expected to quickly accept Waters Avenue's more generous and convenient offer, and let somebody else preach at Frostproof. First, Frostproof was 85 miles from the college, while Waters Avenue was only about three miles away. And by preaching there I would not have to miss breakfast every Sunday morning, as I did, to catch my ride to Frostproof. Still further, preaching at Water's Avenue meant I would be paid about two fifths more money. I would also have the honor of being the only student preacher at the college (there were more than twenty) to be the regular preacher of a Tampa church. The preachers for the other churches in Tampa were either faculty members at the college, or other seasoned preachers.

Yet, even with the advantages of preaching at Water's Avenue, I decided to turn down the offer and to go on and preach at Frostproof as planned. I do not remember even hesitating to make that decision. And the only thing I remember that had a bearing on it was that I had already promised to go to Frostproof. Nothing else mattered! The decision I made that day is the fifth event that changed the course of my life. Had I not followed through by going to Frostproof in October 1948, none of the other five events that changed the course of my life afterward would have counted. I would clearly have been heading off in an entirely different direction. And while that also would no doubt have changed the course of my life, it would definitely have broken the ten link chain of events that sent it in the direction it went.

I cannot even begin to contemplate what the circumstances of my life might be today, if I had broken my promise to Frostproof by preaching at Waters Avenue instead. The other five events are direct-

ly connected with my preaching at Frostproof. Looking back on my life now, more than seventy years after this event, I consider the decision I made on that Sunday afternoon, October 10, 1948, as one of the most significant decisions of my entire life.

### ***The Sixth Event: Invitation to Preach My First Gospel Meeting***

The sixth event, and one that might have very easily been overlooked in my reminiscing, also happened because of my preaching at Frostproof. It began on Sunday morning, January 23, 1949, after I had been preaching at Frostproof for about three months. A woman I had not seen before and whose name I do not recall, came to the services for the first time, and at the close of the sermon she came forward to confess that she had been unfaithful and desired to be restored to the fellowship of the church. Then after coming to the services for just two or three more Sundays, she told us she was moving from Frostproof to some place in the panhandle of Florida. A short time after this, I received a letter from a person I did not know inviting me to hold a gospel meeting at a place I had never heard of. The letter only said the church was two miles from the Florida-Alabama state line, but it did not say in which direction.

I went to Russellville after school was out for the summer and so I went for the meeting by bus to Geneva, Alabama, where I was picked up by a member of the church and taken to what turned out to be Sweet Gum Head, a rural community in Holmes County, Florida, where the meeting was held. I went there not knowing before my arrival whether it was in Alabama or Florida. This was the first gospel meeting I ever held and in some ways proved to be the most curious of all that came afterward. It was only after beginning the meeting on Saturday night, July 16, that I discovered the reason I was invited to hold the meeting sight unseen.

Sweet Gum Head was the place where the woman who was restored at Frostproof went upon leaving Frostproof. After I began the meeting, I learned that when the church at Sweet Gum Head was considering who to invite to hold their summer meeting, she recommended me, and so, on her word, I was invited. Thus, it was that this Christian sister I had known for only about one month before she left Frostproof and recommended me for the meeting at Sweet Gum Head was the cause of my holding the meeting there in 1949.

### ***The Seventh Event: Preaching the Meeting***

The meeting was scheduled for July. It ran for fourteen days and resulted in five souls being baptized, one of whom became a gospel preacher. This event, strange as it was, became one of the most important events in my life, not only because of how it happened but because of where it led.

I must notice here that the sermon I preached the day the woman who recommended me for the meeting at Sweet Gum Head was restored at Frostproof was entitled, "Where Are You Going?" Truth is often, as they say, stranger than fiction. If this woman had not heard me preach for about three or four Sundays, been restored the first time she heard me, gone a short time later to North Florida, and recommended me for a church's summer meeting in 1949, I may never have gone to preach in North Florida, and what is more significant, the course of my whole life from that point might very well have rambled off in an entirely different direction.

### ***The Eighth Event: More Meetings in Sweet Gum Head.***

The eighth event that changed the course of my life was a direct result of my gospel meeting at Sweet Gum Head in 1949. It is the composite of several gospel meetings that I held in the vicinity of Sweet Gum Head from 1950 to 1952. I was invited to preach in two more gospel meetings at Sweet Gum Head, one each in 1950 and 1951. (I was invited back the fourth time for a meeting in 1952, but I declined for personal reasons). In addition to the second and third meeting at Sweet Gum Head, I held four more gospel meetings in that section of Alabama and Florida. There were two at Gaskin, Florida, and one each at Geneva and Samson, Alabama. What this composite event of holding six more gospel meetings did was to make me known to the churches in that region, which had a direct connection with the last two of the ten events that changed my life.

All of the preceding eight events led inevitably to the last two. The ninth event was my invitation to preach for the South Appletree Street Church of

Christ in Dothan, Alabama. This church was changing preachers in 1952. Barry Anderson, who had been preaching there, was moving to Florence, Alabama. My now being well known to many in that region led to him recommending me to the church as his replacement and, as a result, I was invited to become their preacher and remained there for two years and three months. This was the first of two periods of preaching for this church, 1952-1954 and 1961-1968. (I probably did more preaching and preached to more people in my first term in Dothan than in any other comparable period of my life. I preached seven days a week, fifteen minutes Monday through Saturday and thirty minutes on Sunday, over WOOF, a 5,000 watt radio station with a range, they said, of a 50,000 watt station, in a large tri-state area of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. During this time I also held ten gospel meetings, preached 320 regular sermons, and 589 radio sermons.)

### ***The Tenth Event: Marrying Rosemary***

After moving to Dothan, I had the cherished opportunity of renewing acquaintance with Rosemary Cutts of Chipley, Florida, whom I had known and dated several years before at Florida Christian College in the 1947-1948 school year. After graduating from Abilene Christians College in Texas, she had returned to her hometown and was teaching school there. After a brief courtship she consented to marriage, which took place June 29, 1953. This is the tenth event and the most important of the



ten that changed the entire course of my life in seven years. These ten events formed a connecting chain of events, each of which is indispensably joined to the chain. If even one of these had been missing, or broken, the tenth one could never have occurred. What seems all the more remarkable about this entire chain of events is that each one was attended by extraordinary circumstances that made its occurrence possible so as to become part of the chain. Everything else in my life from the time of the tenth event is a result of the tenth.

I should surely be pardoned if anyone thinks I may be mistaken in thinking that this chain of

events took place by divine providence, which I most certainly do. There are far too many things associated with the occurrence of these ten events in the manner and order they did to attribute them, individually or collectively, to mere coincidence.

### ***APPENDIX: Granville Tyler, My Father in the Faith***

Before I began preaching on August 10, 1947, at the age of twenty, I had no experience whatever before an audience. I had never been asked to lead a public prayer, nor served at the Lord's Table in any manner, and never made a talk anywhere or at any time. I never even made a voluntary comment in a Bible class. Only one time I read the text of the lesson at the Sunday School assembly. That was my total experience at the age of twenty. The church where I grew up had no training class for young men until I left home for college. Yet, I had wanted to be a preacher surreptitiously from my earliest conscious memory as a child

I decided one day, when I was twenty, that I would go to Brother Granville Tyler, who was preaching in Russellville at the time, and ask for his advice on how I could get started. I went one Sunday afternoon to the preacher's home, but he was away preaching in the county. So I waited on the steps until he returned. I then told him of my desire and said I did not know where or how to begin, and so stating, I placed my cause in his hands. The story that follows, told by Brother Tyler in his unique manner, is a sequel to my request. It tells the story of how I got started preaching. I heard him tell it several times in different venues. When I was in the audience for the first time at some place, he would take the time to mention me and then briefly tell the story that began on the steps in front of his house that Sunday afternoon.

On one occasion, after mentioning several in the audience, Brother Tyler said: "And over here on my right on the second seat is a fellow that I have known for a good long time also, Brother Earl Kimbrough. I have mentioned a lot of times that Earl didn't have to learn to learn to preach. He was kind of like J.S. Sweeny. He just hit the ground preaching. I came home one time after a service in a meeting and Earl was sitting on the steps as you go up in the yard from the street. He told me that he had decided that he would like to be a preacher, and so forth. He said he didn't know how to get started and he wanted me to help. And I tried to do that. A short

time after that I was in a little place out at Ligon Springs. The church there was about to die and we were trying to revive it. At the close of the service somebody said, 'Brother Tyler, do you reckon you could send somebody from Washington Avenue out here to preach for us Sunday?' I said, 'Yes! I'll find somebody.' So I happened to think about Earl. The church at Ligon Springs then met on Sunday afternoon in a community building. I sent Otis Logan, who was an elder in the church there at Washington Avenue. I said to him, 'Otis, you go with Earl and lead the singing and you explain to them he is not a preacher, but he is going to make a preacher, and just explain it to them.' That night after services at Washington Avenue, Otis came back where I was standing at the door, and said, '*Granville Tyler*, don't you EVER send me with somebody and have me to apologize for him before he preaches. Earl can preach better than you can right now.' And that was just about the truth!"

I knew nothing of that conversation until I heard Granville tell it several years after I began preaching, but I have treasured it ever since, more especially because of the one who told it. Of course, I could never hold a candle to the preaching of Granville Tyler—few men could, but it is true that, in spite of my total lack of experience before an audience and extreme introversion, when I stood before that audience of some twenty-five or thirty people at Ligon Springs, I completely lost any sense of trepidation and preached for thirty minutes as comfortably and with as much ease as in later years. My subject was "Continuing in the Grace of God." I am confident the event was providential. Otherwise, to me it is inexplicable.

Aside from being the one that opened the door for my first preaching appointment, Brother Tyler baptized me when I was twelve, and I heard him preach for many years before and after my baptism. He was the first gospel preacher I ever remember hearing preach in a manner comprehensible to me. He had a way of referring to men that he had helped to preach the gospel as, "My boys." I am very pleased to be one of Granville Tyler's "boys." One regret I have is that I always lived in places too far from where he lived for us to have much contact, except occasionally. That, by the grace of God, will be rectified when we are together again in that land of fadeless day.



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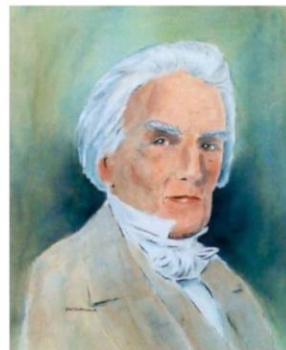


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# THE REAL PHARISEES

## (PART 1)

Andy Sochor

When Jesus warned of the “*leaven of the Pharisees*” (Matthew 16:6), He was referring to their influence. There were several reasons He warned about this. We will address these in our study. Jesus pointed out the Pharisees’ errors in their teachings and the sins in their own lives.

Some today are eager to warn of the “*leaven of the Pharisees*.” Yet too many do not understand just how the Pharisees were wrong. As a result, the label is often used improperly against those who teach and practice the truth.

In this series, we are going to examine who the real Pharisees are today. We will do this by considering the sins and errors of the Pharisees in the first century that we are to avoid.

Understand, the parallels commonly drawn today to the Pharisees are often wrong applications.

- Those who emphasize Bible authority are not Pharisees. The apostle Paul emphasized the need for Bible authority when he wrote, “*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Colossians 3:17).
- Those who preach the New Testament pattern are not Pharisees. Paul told Timothy, “*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me*” (2 Timothy 1:13).
- Those who strive to and encourage others to obey all of God’s instructions are not Pharisees. Jesus told His apostles that they were to teach others to “*observe all that I commanded*” (Matthew 28:20).
- Those who refuse to extend fellowship beyond Scriptural limits are not Pharisees. The apostle John wrote, “*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds*” (2 John 10-11). Paul also wrote, “*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition*

*which you received from us*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

The reality is there is not a single application. Those who use the term “Pharisee” to describe someone or some group generally use it a certain way – to describe those who take a conservative approach to the word of God. These are often called legalists with an emphasis on rule-keeping. However, the interesting thing about the Pharisees in the first century is that even though they had a reputation for being “sticklers” for the Law (Acts 26:5), they often took a very liberal approach to it.

The Pharisees were a complex group. Therefore, when we examine them to identify the real Pharisees today, we will see lessons that apply not just to a single group but to many different types of people. With these thoughts in mind, let us see what we can learn from the example of the Pharisees.

### ***The Pharisees’ Attitude Toward God’s Law***

One of the major stereotypes of the Pharisees is that they strictly kept the law of God. This was certainly their reputation. After all, Paul called the Pharisees “*the strictest sect*” of the Jews (Acts 26:5). However, even though there may have been certain individuals like Paul – a former “Pharisee” who was “*blameless*” (Philippians 3:5-6) – who did strictly keep God’s law, the Pharisees in general did not. In fact, they were actually very liberal in their application and interpretation of the Law. So let us consider the Pharisees’ attitude toward God’s law.

### **The Pharisees Disobeyed God’s Law**

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel (Matthew 23:23-24).*

This passage is often misunderstood and misap-

plied. The common idea is that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for focusing too much on details when they should have focused on other matters instead. Those who allege this will argue that we must follow the “*weightier provisions*” and that the smaller details are, therefore, unimportant.

However, Jesus did not rebuke the Pharisees for doing something that was unnecessary while neglecting what was necessary. Instead, He said they should have done all that He mentioned – applying the “*weightier provisions of the law*” while also being careful to keep even the smaller details.

Jesus did not tell the Pharisees they should have ignored the details so they could focus on the weightier matters. He said, “*These are the things you should have done without neglecting the others*” (Matthew 23:23). Because they failed to carry out part of the law (the provisions of justice, mercy, and faithfulness), they were disobedient to the law of God.

Furthermore, since Jesus said they “*should have done* [these things] *without neglecting the others*” (Matthew 23:23), we know that if they failed to tithe as they should, they also would have been guilty of disobedience to the law of God.

When Jesus gave His apostles the Great Commission, He told them, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20). This means that the Lord expects His disciples to do “*all that [He] commanded*” (Matthew 28:20). We are not at liberty to do as the Pharisees did with regard to the Law of Moses – keep some of the commandments and neglect others. We must strive to follow all of the instructions that have been given for Christians to keep in the New Testament. We must remember that Christ has been given “*all authority*” (Matthew 28:18); therefore, we are obligated to obey His word.

Furthermore, the carefulness of the Pharisees in keeping certain details was not condemned. In fact, carefulness is commended to us elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul told Titus, “*This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men*” (Titus 3:8). The word translated careful means “to be thoughtful” (Thayer). In other words, we are

not to be careless in following God’s word or have a casual attitude about our obedience to Him. We must be deliberate in our efforts to do what is taught in the word of God.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are not the ones who emphasize careful obedience to the word of God. Instead, they are those who fail to do what has been instructed in His word.

### **The Pharisees Tried to Do the Minimum in Serving God**

*For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20).*

Jesus said that our righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees if we wish to enter the kingdom. How could this be if the Pharisees were so careful and meticulous in trying to follow the Law?

The problem with the Pharisees was that they looked to the Law to learn what they thought was the minimum they needed to do to serve God. Yet God’s law is more than a mere checklist containing the absolute minimum we have to do to please Him. Instead, the law contains explicit commands, implicit instructions, and principles that we are to follow.

Jesus explained this by citing six commands from the Law of Moses that the Pharisees viewed as a minimum standard while ignoring the instructions that were implicit in each one. Let us consider the six examples:

**Murder.** “*You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ [...] But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court*” (Matthew 5:21-22). Murder was condemned under the old law (Exodus 20:13); but killing someone accidentally (Numbers 35:10-12, 22-25), in self-defense (Exodus 22:2), or to carry out capital punishment (Genesis 9:6) was not. What was the difference? Murder is done out of anger. Jesus’ point was that anger is not acceptable even if it does not lead to murder. When we become angry, we must refrain from acting in anger and not allow it to continue in our heart (Ephesians 4:26). Furthermore, Jesus explained that anger toward a brother can hinder our own service to God (Matthew 5:23-24). It was not enough simply to not murder. Jesus said we must overcome anger – the root cause of murder.



**Adultery.** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). Lustful thoughts are the first step on the path to adultery (or any other type of fornication). James warned that “lust...gives birth to sin” (James 1:15). Therefore, we must work at defeating lust. It was not enough simply to refrain from committing adultery. Jesus said we must overcome the lust that might eventually lead to adultery.

**Divorce.** “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:31-32). Jesus referred to the allowance that was made because of the people’s hard hearts (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:7-9) – a law that was given not to condone divorce, but to **limit** it. God intended marriage to be for life (Matthew 19:6). This is implied by Jesus’ labeling of post-divorce sexual relations as adultery. Rather than finding a “loophole” and using it to our advantage, Jesus emphasized the importance of respecting God’s intention for marriage as a life-long relationship.

**Making vows.** “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ But I say to you, make no oath at all... But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil” (Matthew 5:33-37). These people had missed the point about vow-making. The commandment was not given as though honesty was only necessary when they made a vow but unnecessary at other times. We must be truthful at all times (Ephesians 4:25).

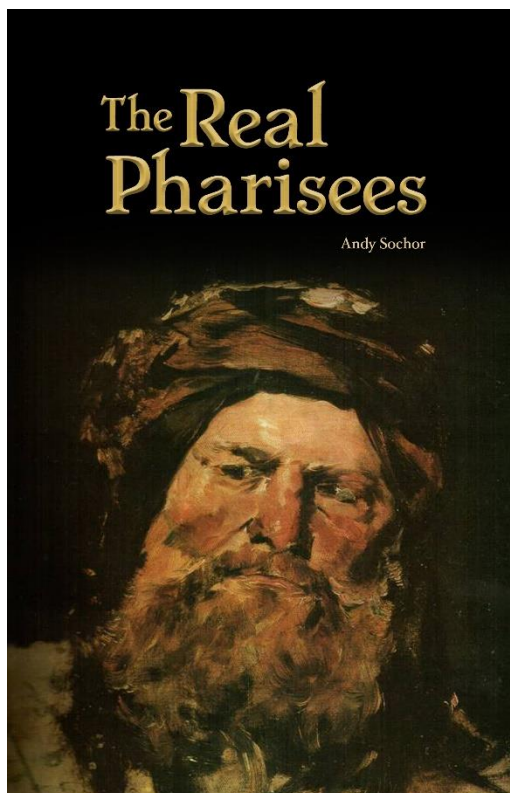
**Taking vengeance.** “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the

other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matthew 5:38-41). They had taken instructions about the punishment of crimes and used them as an excuse to get even for everything. Someone may insult, defraud, inconvenience, or become a burden to us, but none of these are reasons to seek revenge. We are to strive for peace in our dealings with others (Romans 12:17-21).

**Loving others.** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:43-45). The Law of Moses commanded them to love their neighbor (Leviticus 19:18), but it did not command them to hate their enemy. This was human opinion that had been read into the law. It was an unnecessary inference. Jesus’ point was that loving only our neighbors and friends is not enough. We must love all people.

Jesus taught that we are to strive for perfection: “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This means following the explicit commands, implicit instructions, and also the principles contained in His word.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are not the ones who strive for perfection and try to do all that the Lord has commanded. Instead, they are those who view God’s word as a “checklist” of minimum requirements with no regard to the principles and implicit instructions He has given for us.



### ***The Pharisees Desired to See Signs from Heaven***

*The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them, ‘When it is evening, you say, “It will be fair*

*weather, for the sky is red.” And in the morning, “There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 16:1-4).*

The Pharisees – along with the Sadducees – came to Jesus and requested to see “*a sign from heaven.*” They did not ask this out of sincerity; rather, they were “*testing Jesus*” (Matthew 16:1). They did this on many occasions – challenging Him in order to find something that they could use against Him.

Jesus certainly performed signs. In fact, on another occasion, they admitted that He was performing signs. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees met together and said, “*What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation*” (John 11:47-48). Not only did they recognize Jesus was performing signs, they realized that they were so convincing that if they didn’t do something to stop Him, everyone would come to believe in Him. So it was more than just that they wanted Jesus to show them a sign. They were not content with the signs He would show them, but were demanding something that would live up to their expectations.

Paul told the brethren in Corinth, “*For indeed Jews ask for signs*” (1 Corinthians 1:22). The mentality of the Pharisees had been adopted by the Jews as a whole – at least by those who did not accept the gospel. Rather than showing them signs, Paul said, “*But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block...but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

Just like with Jesus, it was not as though Paul never performed any miracles – he had (2 Corinthians 12:12). But he did not do what the Jews demanded that he do as a condition for them to accept his message. Paul continued to simply preach Christ crucified. This was a stumbling block to those who wanted to be shown a sign.

Signs were performed in order to confirm the word that was preached. The Hebrew writer said, “*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the*

*Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will*” (Hebrews 2:3-4). When Jesus sent the apostles out to fulfill the Great Commission, Mark recorded, “*And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed*” (Mark 16:20).

However, since these signs and miracles were performed in order to confirm the word that was preached, they are no longer necessary, because God’s word has been fully revealed. Paul made this point to the Corinthians: “*Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away... For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away*” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Miraculous gifts were necessary as long as God’s revelation was incomplete. But since His will has now been completely revealed, we can go to the Scriptures to prove what His will is, making signs unnecessary. Therefore, rather than seeking for signs today, we need to be content with the word that has been revealed.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are not the ones content with what God has chosen to reveal. Instead, they are those who demand to see signs from God to guide or instruct them apart from His word.

### ***The Pharisees Were Closed-Minded***

*Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:45-48).*

There are several examples in the New Testament of the Pharisees having minds that were closed to the truth. They had already decided what they wanted to believe and refused to consider anything that might challenge their preconceived notions. Their response to the raising of Lazarus from the dead may be the clearest of these examples.

Consider some important details from Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead and the response of the Pharisees to it:

- Jesus prayed – audibly so others would hear him – that this would cause people to believe that He had been sent by God (John 11:42).
- Lazarus had already been dead for four days (John 11:39), which means that this could not have been faked.
- The Pharisees received eyewitness accounts of what had happened (John 11:46).
- The chief priests and Pharisees did not deny the signs and their impact – even in a private meeting (John 11:47-48). Unfortunately, they were more concerned with holding their position of power and influence than they were with following what was right.

It is important to be open-minded to the truth. Closed-mindedness causes one to reject the truth in favor of what he already believes. Of course, we need to avoid the opposite extreme – being “*carried about by every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:14). This is not open-mindedness, but simple-mindedness. But one who is closed-minded refuses to consider the possibility that what he does not yet know may be the truth.

How can we have an open mind? First, we must be humble. James wrote, “*In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls*” (James 1:21). We must recognize and be willing to admit that we might misunderstand the truth or be

mistaken. If we are not humble enough to consider that possibility, we will not be open-minded to the truth.

Second, we must look to the Bible to find the truth. This was what the Bereans did when Paul preached to them: “*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so*” (Acts 17:11). They were not closed-minded, refusing to listen to Paul. They were also not simple-minded, blindly accepting whatever he said. Instead, they were open-minded and, after listening, consulted the Scriptures to see if what Paul taught them was the truth.

Third, once we know the truth, we must practice it and teach it. After emphasizing the need for humility in receiving the word, James said, “*But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves*” (James 1:22). Also, when we teach, we have the responsibility to “*speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11, NKJV). Even if we have practiced or taught something different in the past, we must change in order to conform to what is taught in the word of God.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are the ones who refuse to listen to the word of God and examine it to see if they need to change their beliefs or practices to conform to God's will.

[Note: Andy Sochor's book, *The Real Pharisees*, is available from GospelArmory.com]

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# RESTORATION MOVEMENT HISTORY: Unusual Happenings in Oklahoma

Jimmie Beller

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**NOTE: Jimmie Beller compiled a 300-page book called *Oklahoma Dream Makers*, a history of the church in Oklahoma. He was working on final tweaks when he passed away. This is from his book.**

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## **J. WILL HENLEY**

Brother J. Will Henley was preaching to an "oil field" congregation in Oklahoma. His first two nights ended in failure to attract and hold the attention of his hearers. It was possibly the "black gold" from the ground that held their thoughts. The third night he told a story, a true story, of a little girl about three years old, the child of a woodcutter and suspected moonshine, who had wandered from her home in the mountains of Arkansas. She was never seen again, though hundreds of men searched the forest, day and night, for many miles around. As he described the heart broken mother and family the audience was reduced to tears.

After a dramatic pause during which he looked out at the audience, quietly he launched into the story of the death of our Lord. He described the heart-broken mother and friends and the terrible agony of the cross. By then the audience had again drifted away, dry-eyed. Raising his hands as he gazed out over them he suddenly cried out, "*Oh, you hard-hearted generation, the story of a lost child, who as far as her soul was concerned, is better off, reduces you to tears, yet the story of the death of the Immaculate Son of God, who died for you, leaves you sitting there like knots on a log. How long, Oh God, how long shall your mercy be extended to this stiff-necked and rebellious generation?*"

That broke the ice of indifference and he went on to conclude a very successful meeting.<sup>1</sup>

## **J. D. TANT**

There was a little congregation at Sayre, Oklahoma, that had a terrific fight and had come to glaring impasse; both groups continued to meet in the auditorium, but at different hours of the day. And to

further underline their irreconcilable differences, they had divided everything in the building in halves, and had taken up one half of the benches and turned them around to face the rear of the one-room building. They had built a makeshift pulpit at the rear of the auditorium, and for several months had continued in this incredible condition.

Brother J. D. Tant went there for a meeting. He was called by one side or the other, but because of his former preaching in the section, and of his reputation in the church generally, the house was filled to overflowing. Most of comers got seats, but many had to stand. Tant got into the regular pulpit, preached one half of his sermon, then deliberately walked down out of it and to the other end of the house, mounted the make-shift pulpit and finished his sermon. He said "*I am doing something today that neither Jesus Christ or the devil would do. I'm preaching for this ungodly outfit at Sayre. It is clear that Jesus Christ is not here, as shown by this silly seat arrangement. He will not abide where sin is, and if there ever lived a bunch of sinners, these benches would show you are that bunch. It is also clear that the devil is not here. Why should he be? There is no point in his hanging around here; he can be off somewhere else trying to drag somebody else down to hell. He doesn't need to worry about you!*"<sup>2</sup>

## **C. ROY BIXLER**

When he was holding a meeting in Northern Oklahoma, he had baptized forty or fifty people, an outlaw began to attend the services. One evening at the end of the service the outlaw put his arm around Brother Bixler and said: "*Preacher, I believe what you say, I need to be baptized: but I've got one more*

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<sup>1</sup> Arkansas Angels, p. 99

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<sup>2</sup> J.D. Tant—Texas Preacher, p. 398.

*man to kill first.*"<sup>3</sup>

### **ELDER HEAD**

The first baptismal service in Oklahoma City was described by John Booth in 1925. He tells about how Elder Head preached in the street in front of the mayor's office with the invitation was extended, twenty-eight persons responded as candidates for baptism. This presented a difficulty. Where was he to baptize these people, and how was it to be done decently and in order?

The United States Government had stationed on the reservation several companies of soldiers under the command of Captain Sikes. Mr. Head went to Capt. Sikes and laid before him his difficulties and his desire to conduct a baptismal service without being embarrassed by the "roughnecks" of the town. The captain became immediately interested in the young evangelist and his desire to be the first to conduct a baptismal service and organize a church in the newly settled territory of Oklahoma.

He detailed three hundred cavalymen to help conduct the service and maintain order, and took personal command of the troops. The troops marched with the baptismal party, in dress parade, mounted on gray horses. The baptismal service was conducted in the North Canadian River, a nearby stream, where the soldiers stood at attention on each side of the baptismal water.

### **R. W. OFFICER**

When Officer went to the Indian Territory, settlements were few and far between, and in his journeys he often camped alone. On one of his trips, after crossing the Canadian River, he decided to camp by a spring.

Accordingly, he turned his ponies on the grass, ate his supper, hung one end of his hammock to a wheel of his wagon and the other end of it to a tree, suspended his lantern from a limb of the tree, and opened his Bible and began to read. Someone had tacked a board on the tree to which one end of his hammock was hung, bearing the inscription, "Look out for robbers," but he had not noticed it.

Early in the night five rugged, ugly fellows dashed up from the river on horseback, firing their revolvers as they came. When they reached the place where he was swinging in his hammock and

reading the Bible by the light of his lantern suspended from a limb of the tree above his head, one of them said: "Do you see that sign?"

He looked on the tree in the direction indicated and for the first time read the sign. With ready tact he replied: "Yes, I see it; that's all right. Hasn't a man a right to advertise his business? I am running this ranch now; I got here first; so you may as well shell out, boys."

One of them said: "Well, what do you want?" "I want to rob you of all your meanness and send you on in the world to be good and do good. Light and come in."

The answer struck them favorably. They were cattle men returning from a ride on the range, and "only meant to have some fun by scaring a "green-er", as they said. They spent the night with the evangelist, and within a few weeks four of the five became Christians.

Once, while riding on a train near Red Rock, Oklahoma Territory, the train was robbed by the Dalton Gang. Officer held his hands up so long that his arms ached, so he told the robber, who was doing his business in his car, that he was armed only with a New Testament and all he had was a lunch and seventy-five cents, but he would gladly give him an IOU if he would let him put his hands down.

\* \* \*

Rube married an Indian girl whom Officer and his co-laborers had helped to a respectable position in Christian society. Officer advised Rube to open a farm under the law, which gives all Indians, and men who have Indian wives the right of homestead in the Indian Territory. About the right of homestead in the Indian Territory. About two years later the evangelist went somewhat out of his way, as he was passing through the country, to see how Rube and his wife was getting on. He found a crossing of the creek in the woods, and, guessing his way, he soon came to a footpath, in which he overtook Rube's wife, with a young baby on one arm, and in the other hand a bucket of water which she was carrying home from the creek, about half a mile away. He got off of his pony, relieved her of her burden, and soon they came to a log cabin, part dirt floor, open cracks between the logs, poorly covered, and a part of a blanket for a door shutter. The wife said she did not know where Rube was, but the evangelist suspected he was spending his time somewhere in idleness, if not in some of the kind of sin. She begged him to

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<sup>3</sup> Gospel Preachers of Yesteryear (Lloyd L. Smith), p. 36.

stay all night, and said the wolves frightened her when she had to stay alone with the baby in the cabin; but he went on to an appointment, hoping to see Rube before he left the community. Sure enough, one of the first men he saw at the meeting place was Rube. After preaching, Rube, with four others, wanted to confess faith in Christ and be baptized. The evangelist took the confession of the other four and announced baptism as soon as they could get ready, but told Rube he wanted to see him privately. They walked away from the crowd, and the evangelist told Rube what he saw at his cabin, "Rube, if you want to be a Christian, you must build a better house for your wife, dig a well in the yard, and provide home comforts for your family. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5:8) Rube went away from the meeting in a serious and religious state of mind, but he was not baptized at that time.

Two years later the evangelist was at that same place again to preach, and early Saturday morning he saw Rube drive up in a wagon to the meeting, with his wife. When his wagon stopped, he called the evangelist to him, and said: "Do you see that team and harness? They are ours. Do you see this wagon? It is ours, too. I have built a good house and dug a well."

"Yes," said his wife, "and he is good to me now."

Rube said: "I brought my clothes, and I want to be baptized."

Rube was baptized into Christ, and remained firm in the faith and a good Christian. His conversion and consistent Christian life is probably the best and most effective preaching ever done in that country.<sup>4</sup>

### **JAMES J. TROTT**

Brother David Lipscomb, in "The Life And Sermons Of Jessie Sewell," demonstrated the absurdity of relying upon some spiritual "experience" to give assurance of one's salvation. It seems that a fair, honest, working farmer of a remote Tennessee county had come in contact with brother J.J. Trott, a gospel preacher. This farmer had just returned from a "revival" where he had shared his "experience" with those present. He told them that he had had a vision wherein he was taken up by a great bird to the top of

a high mountain. The bird had held him over a precipice and let him go. The man fell upon a bed of downy softness, and a feeling of his sins being forgiven him overcame him.

Brother Trott asked, "Do you mean a large bird really took you up?" "Oh, no sir, it was imagination." Brother Trott responded, "Imagine something that was not true, did you?" "Yes, sir." Brother Trott asked, "Were you really carried to the top of a high mountain?" "Oh, no sir, I only imagined I was." Again brother Trott asked, "Did you really find yourself upon a bed of downy softness?" "Oh, no sir, I only imagined that too."

"You again imagined what was not true?" "Yes sir," came the reply. To which brother Trott replied, "Then your experience consists of imagining four things you know to be falsehoods. How do you know but that the fifth item, that is, that your sins were forgiven, is not a mere false imagination?"

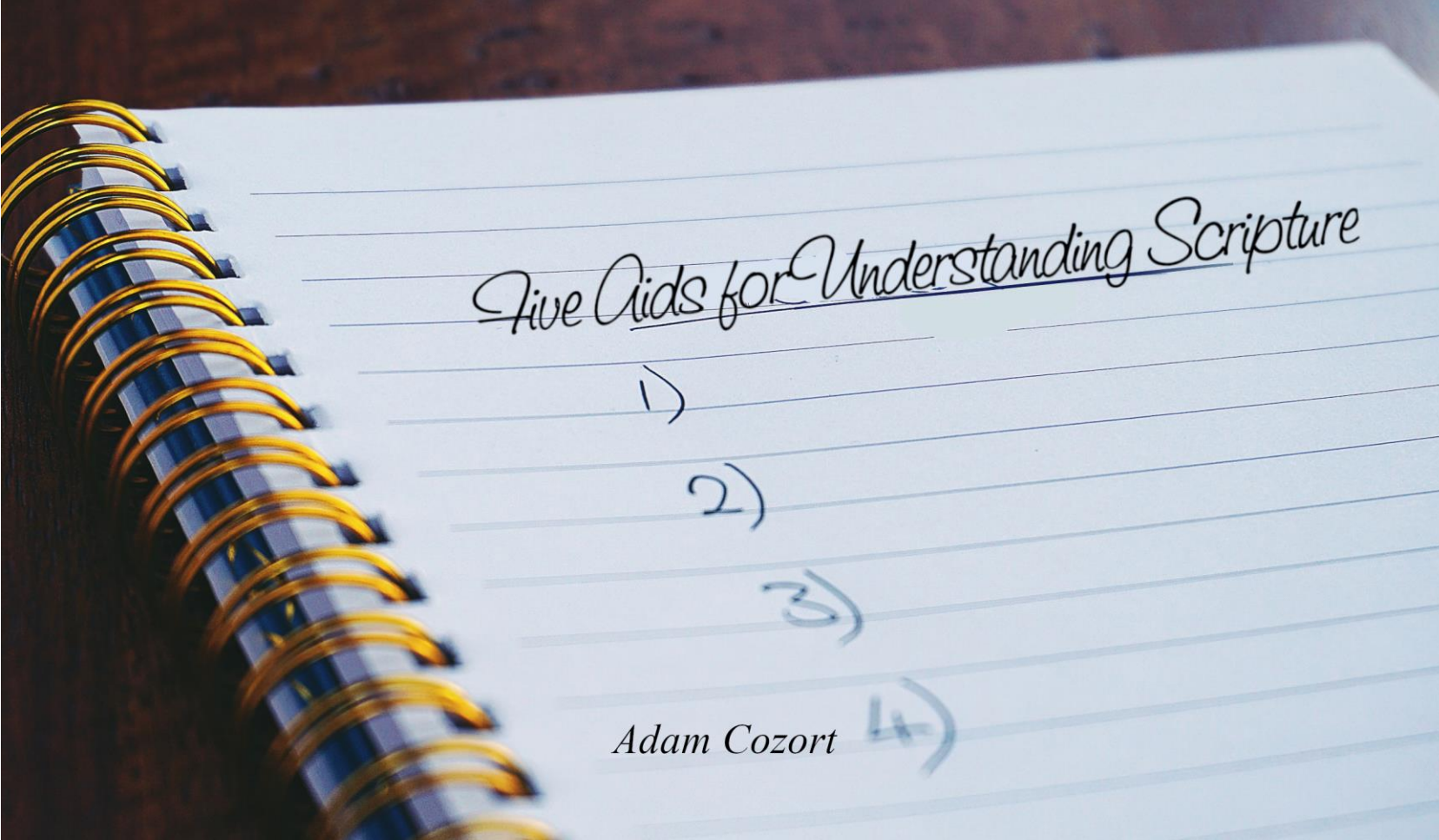
### **FOY EDWIN WALLACE, SR.**

Brother Wallace went into the Indian Territory for missionary work in the early 1890's. A note in the Firm Foundation of November, 1895 mentions the coming back to Texas of the young evangelist, Foy E. Wallace. While there, near what became Mansville, Oklahoma, he made friends with the miners by greeting them as they entered and returned from the mines. In those early days religious prejudices were rife and tempers short. Freedom of speech was an ideal not understood or practiced. The strange doctrine of a pure gospel was a new thing not understood respected. So, some of the men of the community resolved to stop that preacher. The news leaked out that they intended to ride the preacher out of town on a rail. The miners got together and stood watch at the windows. When men arose from the audience with "throw the preacher out" the miners replied, "Sit down and let the man speak." And, they backed up their authority with drawn pistols. Such was the temper of the place and times. (Gospel advocate, Mar 23, 1978, Num. 12, pg.182)

In 1910, Brother Wallace had a debate with a renowned Baptist preacher Cagle in Oklahoma. Later in hearing someone remark that Cagle was bragging about how he whipped him in the debate, Brother Wallace remarked, "W-e-l-l, I baptized his moderator, his son-in-law, two of his elders, and many of his members, nineteen in all. If he calls that victory, I am glad to concede it."

<sup>4</sup> Biographies and Sermons (F.D. Srygley), p. 341.





## *Five Aids for Understanding Scripture*

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2)

3)

Adam Cozort 4)

There are many people, both in and out of the church, who desire to know and understand God's Word better, but they are uncertain how to approach it. Understanding Scripture can seem daunting, especially when one sees the confusion and contradictions of those who think they know what the Bible teaches. However, there are some things on which we can focus that will greatly aid our ability to understand the Scriptures and interpret them correctly. None of the following is original with me, nor should it be considered "new." It is simply a regurgitation of the processes used by serious Bible students who love God and want to know what he says with accuracy and confidence.

### ***Approach God's Word with prayer.***

Someone's immediate response often includes the wonderment of whether or not they will receive special instructions or personal revelations from God if they do. Rest assured, that is not the purpose of praying before study. However, when an individual spends a few moments praying for the right attitude with which to approach the Scriptures, for wisdom in contemplating them, and patience in the process of understanding, the focus and mind-set with which that person approaches the Scriptures will be greatly improved. It is amazing what one can

learn when taking a few moments to prepare for the task about to be undertaken by going to the Source of all wisdom with humility and meekness.

### ***Understand the background of the passage you are studying.***

One of the greatest aids to understanding any passage of Scripture is to understand the background of its writing or statement. To whom was it written or said, when, and why? There are several tools (a Bible dictionary, sermons, and study Bible helps) that can help a great deal with such studies. It helps to understand whether a book or statement is given under the Old Law or the New Law, is given to Christians or non-Christians, is given at a time of peace or conflict, is given with the purpose of informing, correcting, or condemning. With that understanding, one can approach the study of that book or passage from the proper perspective in which it was proffered. Understanding the background of the writing is often half the battle in coming to the proper conclusion.

### ***Keep the passage in its context.***

The failure to use this approach has been the fatal flaw of many Bible students throughout the centuries. It is recognizably convenient to throw together

passages of Scripture from every corner of the Bible to make a point or present a doctrine; but often it is found that some, if not many, of the passages used were actually saying something quite different than what they are being made to say for the sake of someone's argument. The value and strength of an argument from Scripture comes, not from the number of places you can go to make the argument, but from showing that the argument you are making is the one being made by the original author. That can only be done by showing the argument in its context. If one does not understand why the statement of a passage of Scripture is being used in a particular location, it cannot with any validity be proclaimed that the use of that passage is rational or necessary. This does not mean it is wrong to ever cross-reference passages of Scripture in understanding God's Word, but one must be able to prove from the context that they are referencing the same thing in the same, or similar, way.

### ***Take the time to look up words.***

Most Bible readers have become well versed in approaching the Bible as they would crossing a creek, jumping from one word they know (or think they know) to another while skipping those wet areas about which they are unsure. Unfortunately, such an approach is like looking at a picture with a bunch of holes in it and trying to decipher what it would look like whole. One of the greatest tools the Bible student has is the understanding of words. When studying a book that has been translated from other languages (the Bible was not originally written in English, you know) one must be willing to look at the words that were originally used to fully understand the intended communication. English is a very imprecise language: we will use 20 words for the same thing, and then use the same word in 5 different ways. If we want to truly understand the Scriptures, we have to be willing to take the time to understand the wording that has been used and why. Lexicons, dictionaries, and concordances are great tools to help with this. Can it be time consuming? Yes, but such is most every worthwhile endeavor.

### ***Do NOT assume anything.***

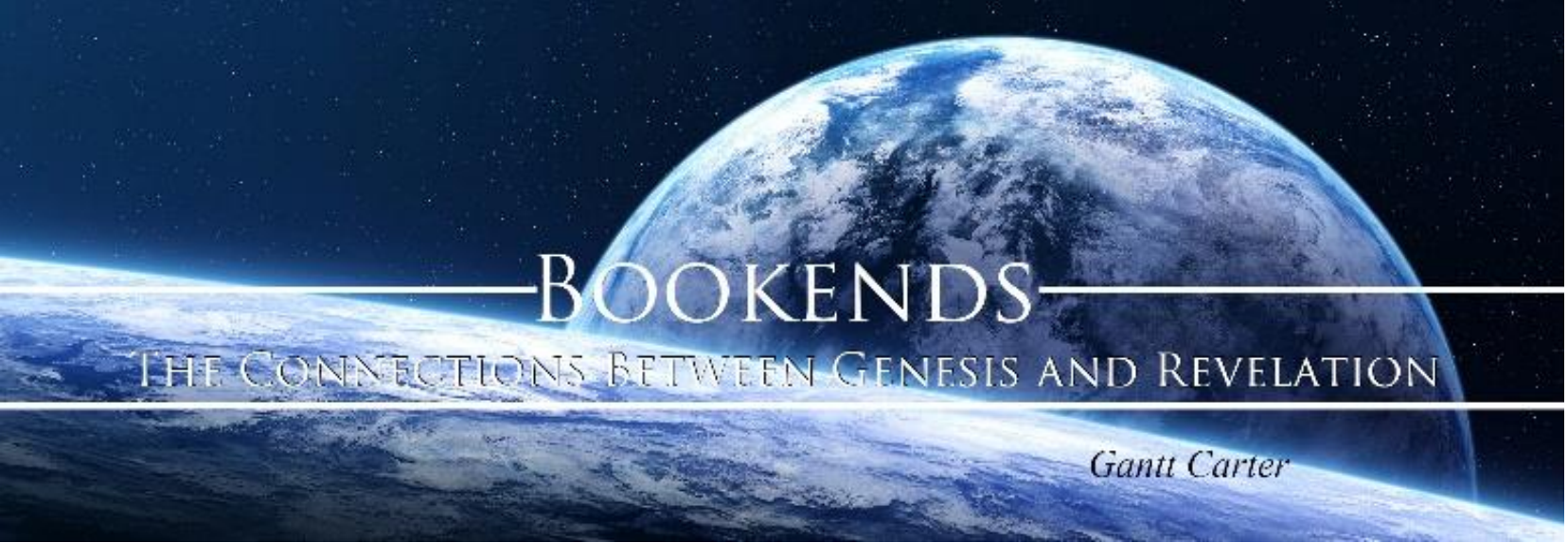
The single greatest hindrance to most people's understanding of the Bible is assumption. They read God's Word assuming they already know what it says, therefore instead of studying to find out what it says (known as "exegesis"), they study trying to

fit everything into the window of what they have already assumed to be the case (this is called "eisegesis"). Some people have assumed they already know the truth because that is what their preacher said. Some preachers have assumed they know the truth because that is what another preacher they love and respect said, but assumption does not equal truth.

Do not enter your study of the Scriptures assuming you already know everything (or anything) about your proposed study. Instead, approach it from the perspective of someone seeing it for the first time. Do not assume a passage to be literal or figurative until you can prove from the context it is such. Do not assume that what you have always heard about the meaning of a passage of Scripture is true until you have verified it from the words and context itself. Do not assume that God "meant to say" something other than what He said. God is very good at saying what He means and meaning what He says—do not assume that we need to make excuses for God. If our assumptions and God's statements do not match, it is not God's Word that needs to change. It instead requires the removal of our assumptions.

If we will take the time to implement these aids into our studies, the things that can be understood and transferred to others will be astounding. Anyone can understand the Bible, but it must be approached correctly. A lackadaisical approach will reap a weak and useless understanding of Scripture. But a zealous endeavor to know truth, using correct methods and logical approaches, will reap great rewards.

*"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of the Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy at any time was produced by the will of man, but holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20-21, MEV).*



# BOOKENDS

## THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN GENESIS AND REVELATION

Gantt Carter

Have you ever read the Bible “from cover to cover?” You may have noticed that there is an ultimate story that flows from beginning to end. The story that begins as recorded in Genesis 1 reaches its end as seen in Revelation 21-22. Although, in many ways, the end is just the beginning – the end in the beginning, or the beginning in the end. The God of heaven and earth, the King of the universe, is not the type to be shocked or caught off guard. He had a plan all along for His creation, and He continues to have a plan and to carry out that plan in His wisdom and power (see Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:8-12).

Genesis 1-2 describes God creating the heavens and the earth, and in Revelation 21-22, John sees a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Isaiah 65:17-18; 66:22-23; 2 Peter 3:5-7, 11-14). From Genesis to Revelation; from creation to recreation; from the world to the new world.

*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).<sup>1</sup>*

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Rev. 21:1).*

Due to Satan and humanity’s sin, the good world that God made became corrupted and perverted (Gen. 3:1-19; cf. Rom. 8:18-24). Created to serve as God’s image-bearers, spreading His glory in ruling the earth (Gen. 1:26-29; Psalm 8:5-8), humanity now began to fall into ruin and dishonor. One large consequence of this all is that humans lost access to the tree of life in the garden (Gen. 3:22-24). However, because of King Jesus, we now get a glimpse in Revelation of all that was lost in Eden being restored and more so in God’s new creation. From

creation to recreation; from the world to the new world; from paradise lost to paradise found.

John sees a new Eden in this closing vision (Rev. 22:1-2). The new Eden is a city, not just a garden (21:2, 9-27; 22). The city seems to double as a temple, but the temple is the very presence of Deity (21:3, 22-26; 22:3-4).<sup>2</sup> The heavens and earth are now the dwelling place of God, as they are filled with His glory (cf. Psalm 72:19; Habakkuk 2:14).

In Revelation 22, God’s servants are worshipping (v. 3), seeing Him face-to-face (v. 4), and reigning forever (v. 5; cf. 1:5; 3:26-27; Rom. 5:17). Genesis records God creating us for these purposes and privileges (Gen. 1:26-29; 3:8). “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev. 21:3).

In Genesis, we see the tree of life in the middle of Eden (Gen. 2:9). After Adam and Eve sin, God keeps them out of the garden, so they no longer have access to the immortality-giving tree (3:22-24). The tree of life is in this city John observes, and thus, God’s people now have access to this precious life-giving tree (Rev. 22:2, 14, 17, 19; 2:7).

“A river flowed out of Eden” (Gen. 2:10), and it then divided into four different rivers (10-14). In the new heavens and new earth, a single river of life flows from the Divine throne and the tree of life blooms on either side of this river (Rev. 22:1-2). The leaves of the tree of life, now large enough to grow along both banks of this one river, are for the healing of the nations (22:2; cf. Ezekiel 47:7-12).

A wedding/marriage occurs after God makes Eve (woman) for Adam (Gen. 2:18-25). The new

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version

<sup>2</sup> The temple motif can be traced throughout Scripture from Genesis 1-3 to Exodus and Ezekiel to John, Ephesians and Revelation, and more.



Jerusalem comes down “out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). The creation is celebrated with the loveliness of a bride, and that beauty then pictures the recreation itself.

In the creation of the world, God made the sun, moon, and stars that we know and enjoy (Gen. 1:14-19). There will no longer be a need for such in this city of God (Rev. 22:5). The light of the glory of God will shine instead as all the light!

*“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev. 22:23-26; cf. Gen. 1:3-5; Isaiah 60:19-22; Zechariah 14:6-7).*

God responds to Satan’s temptation and humanity’s rebellion with a series of curses or ongoing consequences (Gen. 3:14-19, 22-24). We made note earlier of the way sin was like a Pandora’s box, bringing with it so many terrible things into God’s good world. Pain, anxiety, trouble, temptations, sorrows, and more entered that day and remain even to this day. But one day God will change things for forever! “No longer will there be anything accursed” (Rev. 22:3; cf. Isaiah 55:12-13). Mourning, crying, and pain will no longer exist. The King of glory “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more” (Rev. 21:4).

The father of lies (John 8:44) came into the original Eden and tempted Eve (Gen. 3:1-6). The coming age and city will not allow anyone or anything like that into its borders (Rev. 21:8). “But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). We are to make sure we are not among those described in these verses. Instead, as His servants, we are washed in the blood of the Lamb and living in faithfulness to His blood-stained covenant (Rev. 1:5; 2:7). While Revelation, especially these last two chapters, is a very comforting document, it certainly has its share of warning (cf. Isaiah 66:22-24). Some of these are indirect, others are more direct.

*“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to*

*them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19).*

The one sweet spot in Genesis 3 is the promise of the coming One, the One later identified as Israel’s Messiah. Satan would continue to attack humans, but the Messiah will defeat him (Gen. 3:15). He will be born of a woman (cf. Rev. 14; Gal. 4:4-5), and He will endure suffering and wounds (see Rev. 5:8-9; 13:7-8). He will be the One to restore the beauty and goodness of God’s creation.

May we take heart against the brokenness of our current world. The pain, the sin, the decay, the death; it is all not the way God intended or the way anything is supposed to be. There is coming a day when it will all be over and gone. As the case with all hopes, our hope is toward the future (Romans 8:24), but our hope in God will not disappoint us (Romans 5:5). The day is coming when God will right all wrongs and bring restoration to all that sin has wrecked or distorted. Thanks be to God through our Deliverer, Jesus, the Lord of all!

*“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.*

*For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.*

*And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3).*

Jesus’ own resurrection points to the ultimate new creation and the redemption of our own bodies (Rom. 8:11, 23; Phil. 3:20-21). We are called to join in this, even currently, as we are united with Him in immersion (Rom. 6:1-6), and then as we labor (“not in vain”) in Him (1 Cor. 15:58).

In the end, the sovereignty of God triumphs over all else, over sin, Satan, and death. He comes, walks on the earth, lives among us, faces death head on, and rises as the Supreme Ruler over all. The invasion of sin and death is only temporary; His plan will come to fruition, and He will fulfill His will.

*“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).*

# THE BAPTISM OF KIRBY

John Krivak

*And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

*(Mark 8:34-37, NASB)*

No one was more surprised than Kirby; he wasn't looking for this—but something was happening that he could not deny, even though he had resisted. He did not want to be religious. It started with little, innocuous happenings—a clip heard on the radio, a meme on social media, a snippet of overheard conversation between relatives or people at work. Coincidences? Jesus was at the center of it. *Jesus!* Other people thought about Jesus, not Kirby—ever.

It all began to add up, as though some voice were speaking through the strange mix—a voice that seemed to know him. The messages were connecting, in a compelling yet mysterious way, speaking to what Kirby's life needed at that exact moment. *Jesus!* Kirby began to listen to the clues and hints. Were they leading to something? Was there something he had to learn? It felt like the Voice was calling—daring, challenging, urging gently. No one else could know what secret things were engaging his inner privacy. It would not make sense to anyone else. Or, would it?

Later he would recognize it as the power of faith. A strange courage inside rose above the fears accumulated across a lifetime, the obvious embarrassment that he—Kirby!—would face. What would the others think if they knew? There is no way to explain that would make sense. All a-jitter inside, he

called the one person he knew that might help with this.

Kirby heard the gospel. It was difficult to get his mind around it. The Bible described Jesus as God who became human, and His words and deeds proved that. Yet Jesus was crucified when forces of evil conspired together. At one glance, a pathetic victim who was overpowered—but to those with better insight, Jesus wanted this! He was making a deliberate sacrifice for others. The sins of all humanity were placed on Him and, somehow, the flawless sacrifice of Jesus could neutralize all those sins. Even after death by crucifixion, Jesus emerged in triumphant power by resurrection.

No one but Kirby knew how that message reached him, how the troubled course of his life met Jesus on the Cross. He felt the heavy weight of his own sins and saw them in the terrible mix that had put Jesus to death. *Jesus!* "Kirby, if Jesus gave His life for us, what would you think God expects back from us?" The only possible answer was obvious. "Kirby, are you ready to give your life in a sacrifice so total that it really is a death?" Reading 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, his Christian friend explained that Jesus made a total self-sacrifice: "*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf*" (NASB). Jesus acted first, in the hope that people would answer with their own reciprocal self-sacrifices. That two-way exchange builds the relationship with God that is called the New Covenant. Those who die with Jesus have "obeyed the gospel." He bore His Cross, and so we take up our own crosses.

Kirby could hardly believe it when he heard himself say yes. The time was right and he was answering the call from God. "Kirby, to die this death of

yourself for Jesus means you need to be baptized. As you are immersed under water, it is like the burial of your ‘old self.’ In repentance, you die to the sinful way of life because you now know Jesus as your Lord. Baptism is not only a burial signifying death. As you emerge from the water, God raises you in a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus. Your sins are forgiven because, in baptism, you are joined with the Cross-death of Jesus, and His blood washes you clean. And God places His Spirit in your heart as a gift—just as Acts 2:38-39 promises: *‘Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”’*

The two stepped into the water. Kirby confessed that the Lord of his life, from now on, was Jesus. “Now, Kirby, when the water closes over you, you will be totally alone with God. In that moment, focus on just two things. First, think of Jesus on the Cross, giving himself for you totally. Second, determine that you will answer by totally giving yourself for Jesus.”

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Notice that Kirby’s baptism did not only take him to water. *It took him to Jesus.* After this baptism, Jesus had not died alone. Kirby died with Jesus. He answered the Cross-death of Jesus with a total self-sacrifice of his own.

The meanings of baptism are extensive. One need not have a fully developed theology at the time of conversion. Sometimes, as new Bible knowledge grows, “re-baptism” seems desirable because of concerns that the earlier ignorance may have resulted in a deficient baptism!<sup>1</sup> Maybe that baptism, therefore, was invalid? For example, what if one is baptized yet has no awareness that the Holy Spirit is received as God’s gift? That clearly seems to be something that could be learned later, without invalidating the baptism. Occasionally we meet people who have been immersed more than once, perhaps several times—in hope that one of these was adequately informed enough to be valid!

Before going ahead, we might pause to consider

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<sup>1</sup> The founder of the Christadelphians, Dr. Thomas, was baptized many times as the result of gaining new knowledge (some of it biblical, some not-so-biblical).—*Editor.*

the “re-baptism” described in Acts 19:1-7. Paul meets a group of disciples who have no awareness of having received the Spirit! Recognizing a serious deficiency, Paul diagnoses the root cause with their baptism. And so, he inquires and discovers they had received the baptism of John the Baptist—a baptism that did not impart the Spirit for two possible reasons. First, because John’s baptism found its meanings before the death and resurrection of Jesus had taken place. Christian baptism, arising later in time, would be anchored in meanings that attach to these “gospel” events. Second, because John’s baptism was antecedent to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (John 7:37-39). Paul urged a new baptism—not simply because their theological awareness was deficient—but because John’s baptism had been made obsolete. It was a Spiritless baptism (except when John baptized Jesus!). When finally these disciples are baptized into Christ, the Spirit is received. How differently might Paul have responded, we might wonder, had he found that they actually had experienced a valid Christian baptism—yet still were unaware of having been given the Spirit? I do not believe Paul would have sought for them another immersion. He would simply enhance their deficient knowledge with fresh teaching.

While some meanings of baptism may not be required in advance (and so, may be taught and learned later), it stands to reason that other meanings are essential to valid baptism. Why? Because without them, an inadequate response to the Cross/gospel results. Specifically: the demand that a convert give his life for the Lord who first did that for him. “Obeying the gospel” means more than getting-wet-all-over (even if done in response to God’s command); it means being crucified with Christ Jesus—nothing less.

This is the pivotal moment of decision—for or against Christ, and the demands of His Lordship! It is not optional; nor can it be held off until after baptism. This is so crucial that Jesus urges us to refrain from consenting until after we “*count the cost*” (Luke 14:25-35). There is no opportunity given for slow and incremental progress toward such commitment; it is prerequisite! This is the “pearl of great price,” the “hidden treasure” that can be had only at the cost of all that one possesses (Matt. 13:44-46).

The Cross-death of Jesus requires a death from us! This “death” was physical for the Lord, indicating a self-sacrifice that holds back nothing (2 Cor.



5:14-15). Our “death” may leave us quite alive, but still demands total self-sacrifice. Paradox: dead yet still alive? Oh, yes—absolutely paradoxical! This is why Paul can say *“I die daily”* (1 Cor. 15:31) and also why he can urge from us a *“living sacrifice”* (Romans 12:1). Appropriately, Jesus refers to this conversionary death of self as “cross-bearing”: *“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:27). The ancients knew that one carrying his cross was going to just one place: death! Taking his cue from Jesus, Paul describes his own spiritual experience as “crucifixion” (Romans 6:6; Gal. 2:20, 5:24, 6:14). Yet, after being crucified Paul remains paradoxically alive: *“I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.”*

The “obedience” that leads to salvation does not merely reach the water of baptism, it reaches Jesus.

In baptism, we not only are immersed in water. In baptism, we answer the Cross with a death of our own. I would never baptize any who have not consented to die with Jesus. And without hesitation, if any look back and see this conversionary-death as an omission in their previous baptism, I would surely re-baptize: *“for he who has died is freed from sin”* (Romans 6:7). This is different among other theological meanings that attach to baptism. They can be learned later. But this one belongs to the collection of requirements that we always insist upon before a person may be baptized: hearing the gospel, responding in faith, repenting of sins, and confessing the Lordship of Jesus. I don’t mean to complicate things (this ruins our “five finger” methodology), but giving your life for Jesus should also be set forth as a requirement prior to the final step of Christian conversion: baptism. *“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him”* (2 Timothy 2:11).

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# CHURCH DISCIPLINE

## UNDERSTANDING FELLOWSHIP

Jamie Beller

In upcoming articles, the subject of Church Discipline will be considered. Specifically, the practice, purpose, and process of the withdrawal of fellowship will be examined. However, before we can appreciate the burden of withdrawing fellowship, we must first appreciate the beauty of fellowship. From time to time my dad, Jimmie Beller, and I would discuss the topic of fellowship and the withdrawal of fellowship. Dad would frequently say, "Jamie, what meaning does the withdrawal of fellowship have if there is no fellowship?" To this day I recall dad's question, and concur each time the topic of fellowship and the withdrawal of fellowship are considered.

### THE DEFINITION OF FELLOWSHIP

By definition, the term fellowship, as defined by Webster, is "...the state or relation of being a fellow or associate. Companionship of persons on equal or friendly terms; frequent and familiar intercourse." Within Scripture, the word *fellowship* is most often translated from Greek word *koinonia*. Thayer defines *koinonia* as "Association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." Brother Curtis A. Cates observed the following:

[Fellowship] means partnership, working together agreeably, having one common goal toward which we strive in harmony together. It means peace, which is the absence of conflict (Rom. 5:1)...Think of the homogeneity involved in the fellowship of Christ-minded brother and sisters. IF there is no agreement, there can be no fellowship!

A common term often used with regard to fellowship, is "unity." David declared, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Commenting on

such, brother Dan Winkler writes,

Note: harmony is possible for brethren are "to dwell together." Then too, unity is possible for brethren are to dwell together "in unity." Such arrangement is both "good" and "pleasant." Some things are good but not pleasant. Some things are pleasant by not good. However, when brethren dwell together in a sphere of unity with a spirit of harmony, such makes for a relationship that is both good and pleasant (Dan Winkler, Harmony Among The Heirs of Heaven, Huntingdon, TN.: Practical Publications, 1986, p. 1).

It is rather premature to emphasize and expect the practice of withdrawing fellowship if we have neglected to first emphasize, encourage, and expect fellowship and unity that are good and pleasant.

### THE DEMANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

Years ago, while engaged in a conversation with another preacher, the question, "With whom are you in fellowship?" was asked. Those participating in the conversation were surprised when the preacher replied, "I am in fellowship with anyone who believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Sadly, such a view is a common misunderstanding and misconception concerning fellowship that is prominently espoused in the religious world, and sadly, among some brethren. Commenting on a similar thought, brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. notes,

This statement [fellowship all believers in Christ, JGB], would be all right if every believer in Christ were a baptized believer, an obedient believer and a continuing practitioner of Christian principles. But those are not the concepts the proponents of this view [Fellow-

ship All Believers in Christ, JGB] hold so tenaciously. To them a believer in Christ may be all the foregoing or he may be none of the foregoing. They would designate as a believer in Christ the “faith only” advocate. They would count as a believer in Christ the person who simply gives intellectual assent and lip service only to the Deity of Jesus Christ.

While believing Jesus Christ is the Son of God is certainly essential to fellowship with God and His people (John 8:24), does believing such satisfy the demands of fellowship as set forth in Scripture? Consider the words that John declared in 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Not only does this set forth what is demanded for fellowship to exist, the text also sets forth what is demanded for fellowship to continue. John declares, “If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). Thus, the demands for fellowship to exist, and for fellowship to be maintained cannot be satisfied without “walking in the light.” When one refuses to satisfy the demands of fellowship, they forfeit the delights of fellowship.

### ***THE DELIGHTS OF FELLOWSHIP***

Perhaps no passage expresses the delights of fellowship more than 1 John 1:7. Writing to those who enjoyed fellowship with the Father, John declares, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). As much as the demands of fellowship are found within this passage, so too are the delights of fellowship.

One delight that is afforded to us as “we walk in the light as He is in the light” is that “we have fellowship one with another.” First, we have fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ (see also 1 John 1:3). That we have fellowship with the Father reminds us that we are not alone, and, as the Psalmist declared of the Shepherd, “thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4). Next, we have the delight of having fellowship with others who have fellowship with the Father.

While much more can be said about the delights of fellowship, brother Winkler offers the following, which will serve as a summation for this particular

section. Brother Winkler states:

With God above him and brethren beside him, the faithful Christian does not walk alone...With “biblical fellowship” entailing such a close relationship, to more deeply appreciate and more thoroughly understand such, should enhance harmony among fellow-Christians (Winkler, p. 72).

The delights of the fellowship we have in Christ are the delights of walking together, worshipping together, and working together with God.

### ***CONCLUSION***

Can we truly appreciate the difficulties associated with having to withdraw fellowship “from every brother that walketh disorderly” if we do not first appreciate the delights of being in fellowship when we are “walking in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7)? Can we truly appreciate the delights of being in fellowship as we are “walking in the light as He is in the light,” if we neglect to understand the demands of fellowship? Can we truly appreciate the demands of fellowship when the very definition of fellowship has often been reduced by some as “just getting together for a covered dish luncheon or a potluck dinner” (Taylor, pg. 9)? If we are to appreciate these, we must not neglect the study of fellowship.

A greater appreciation and understanding of fellowship would help greatly in clearing up many of the challenges and contentions that exist. Finally, as brother Taylor notes, “If Christians really realized the full benefits of Christian fellowship, they would want to take every opportunity to be present for every worship period...We need to study Christian fellowship in order to create a deeper bond of Christian closeness among those of like precious faith” (pp. 10-11). Certainly, an understanding and appreciation of fellowship will help make “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:1) a worthwhile and enjoyable goal indeed.

*“...we have fellowship  
one with another...”  
(1 John 1:7)*





# SCARS

*Keith Stonehart*

You know, Hindsight is 20-20... When we read from John chapter 20, We know the resurrection comes that morning. The first disciples didn't.

In our text, Christ has been crucified. He has been buried. But He has risen from the dead.

Can you imagine what they were thinking on Saturday night, after their messiah had been executed on Friday?

It's hard to believe, and as we see reading from John 20:19-31, not all of Christ's followers blindly accept the news of that he has risen from the dead. No, some needed proof and specifically, Thomas did.

He demanded to see Jesus' scars before he would ever believe, but why the scars?

Why not just see *him*?

We gather every Sunday morning to celebrate our risen savior, and as all Christians through the ages, we celebrate the death and the burial and resurrection of Jesus. In that great work Jesus—Jesus alone—conquered death and offers us salvation... No, death could not hold him... but it did change him.

The sin of the world laid upon him as a sin offering left its mark. It left our savior SCARRED.

All of us have scars. Because you can't live this life without being hurt. And scars are the proof.

Thomas demands to see the scars upon the hands of Jesus. He is full of doubt, and when he is told by one of the other disciples, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas responds with honest and sincere doubt. He has a "got to see it to believe it" attitude. Thomas

looks at the other disciples and says, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

### ***What do these scars mean?***

For Thomas, it serves as proof of the Resurrection. Thomas has a nickname. It is "Doubting Thomas." He earns that nickname because in our New Testament lesson, he expresses doubts. "Unless I see the scars...I won't believe."

But this is like referring to the patience of Job. Job is a long book in the Old Testament and Job lost his patience very early in the book. He spends most of the time in that book very impatient.

So, it is with Thomas. Throughout most of the written record we have about this man, Thomas is a man of great faith and belief. It is Thomas who is the first to say to Jesus after the Resurrection, "My Lord and my God."

Is it really SO unacceptable for Thomas to express doubts?

There is a difference between trust and gullibility. There is a difference between being a person of faith, and a sucker. After the Resurrection, God made sure that people served as witnesses. Actual witnesses who saw with their own eyes and felt with their own hands. (1 John 1-4)

It was important that there would be people like Thomas who could express doubt and demand evidence, and once confronted with that evidence, believe it. We think of the resurrection sometimes as a one-day event, but it actually is a season of several

days.

In the Book of Acts, we read there was a 40-day period between the time Christ rose from the grave and the day he ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:3). It's enough time for Christ to see and to visit a number of people. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:3-8):

*"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living [at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians], though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles"*

These scars became part of the fabric of evidence that the Resurrection was not a rumor, or a figment of imagination brought about by grief and denial. The Resurrection was real.

To Thomas, that is what the scars of Jesus meant—the Resurrection is real.

What do these scars mean to us? For us, it serves as a reminder of the humanity of Christ. There is something about scars that seems to make a person "more human." We are sometimes suspicious about people who seem to be "too perfect": about children who don't have some signs of scraped knees, about teenagers who don't show any signs of acne, about models whose hair is perfect the moment they step out of the ocean, about people who are in their "twilight years" who have no signs of graying hair or wrinkling faces.

There is something about our scars that makes us real, believable, trustworthy. Maybe it is because we know that life hands out its damaging blows to all people of all ages, of all backgrounds.

Most often the most painful scars are the ones that no one else can see... The let downs... The disappointments... The destruction of trust ... The betrayals.... The broken hearts...

My body, is not the only part of me with scars... My soul is covered with scars also. Years of poor and selfish choices that brought me only destruction causing injury to my inner-self and damaging the relationships of those that cared for me. Inner scars are hard to heal, and sometimes can leave

you the most damaged – but they don't have to!

They don't have to leave you with a dead, nerveless and numb voids where feelings used to be – If you let them, they heal slowly, leaving you available for repair.

You see, the flesh is weak. It will break, bleed, and heal quickly leaving you with a mark that MAY fade over time – but it will never fade away completely.

The spirit however, the spirit is MUCH harder to break. While it is absolutely vulnerable as we allow it to be (and I pray that we do leave ourselves open to an extent), it heals much slower. Allowing us NOT to become callus, cold, and indifferent as it heals – but rather we become discerning, introspective, patient and WISE... if we allow ourselves.

Because our God understands the let downs, the disappointments, the destruction of trust, the betrayals and the broken hearts left in the wake of sins destructive storms ... Because he bears the scars of the same cause—we truly have a brother in blood.

AND HE IS THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN HEAL US.

*Psalm 147:3 – "He makes the brokenhearted well and puts oil on their wounds."*

It is sometimes easy for us to accept the divinity of Christ, and to forget the humanity of Christ. But Christ was both divine and human.

In Philippians, Paul said (2:6-7):

*Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."*

Those scars remind us that Jesus remains human, just as he remains divine.

Those scars remind us that Jesus felt pain, just as we feel pain. Those scars remind us that Jesus suffered, just as we suffer. To Thomas, the scars meant evidence of the Resurrection. To us, the scars remind us of the humanity of Christ.

But what do these scars mean to Jesus? Isn't it strange that the Resurrection brought Christ back to life but left Him scarred?

Here is Jesus, the man, appearing to his friends and showing them the scars that his life, his suffering, and his death, inflicted on him.

Isn't it amazing that, in whatever occurred at the time of the resurrection the scars were NOT obliterated?

rated? They remained. They are still there. We have a permanently scarred God.

And he comes, scarred, to be with us with whatever scars we bear, with whatever wounds we carry, and with whatever doubts we harbor. Isn't that incredible?

Isn't that an amazing demonstration of God's love for us? That he would continue to carry the scars, the reminders of the pain and humiliation he went through?

Think about what it means for Christ to have scars on his hands. Our hands are the one part of our body that is almost always in view. We can't see our ears unless we look in the mirror. We see our feet if we intentionally look down. But our hands are almost always before us. No matter what we do, we usually see our hands as we do it. That is why in the Old Testament, some people would wear small boxes on their hands. Inside the boxes was a small parchment with a portion of Scripture. In Deuteronomy, God told the people (Deut. 6:6-9):

*"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."*

This way, if a person reached to steal something, there was the Word. If a person went to hit a person, there was the Word. If a person went to touch someone in an adulterous way, there was the Word.

Now what does Jesus see when He reaches out for us? He sees the scars on his hands... Therefore, when Jesus extends his hands to judge, He sees the

scars on his hands that gives him the right and the authority to do so.

When Jesus reaches out to bless or comfort, He sees the scars on his hands that serve as a reminder of what it's like to be us and to know how desperately we sometimes need that comfort.

And in the end when Jesus reaches out to receive us, He will see his scars that bought and PAID for us!

## Conclusion

Thomas needed to see the scars in Christ's hands. Those scars remind us of the humanity of Christ. Those scars remind Christ of his love for us.

Those Scars are the proof that gives me HOPE — that he died, and was buried, and was resurrected, and now sits at the right hand of God, and bids us all to come and die to ourselves, to Be baptized for the remission of our sins — and to live faithfully to him.

Because we can...

**HIS SCARS TAKE MINE AND YOURS AWAY.**

The body and the spirit will always be diametrically opposed — as one gets weaker and corrupt, the other gets stronger and pure...at least that's how it's supposed to be...

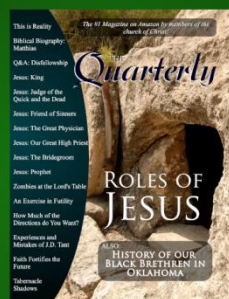
The truth is, we are defined in PART by our scars ... OR we can be defined COMPLETELY by our scars — that is up to each of us...

For me, living with the knowledge that I was loved enough to have my scars taken from me gives me something none can live without — HOPE.

Because in Christ, I am scarred no more... because I am loved forevermore

Psalms 30:2 "LORD my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me."

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## WHEN BALES MET TELLER: THE STORY OF THE BALES-TELLER DEBATE

Andrew D. Erwin

In October 1947, a four-night debate on the existence of God took place on the campus of Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas. The event forever linked the names of James D. Bales and Woolsey Teller. The Bales – Teller debate is considered by many in the churches of Christ to be *the* classic Christian – Atheist debate of the twentieth century.

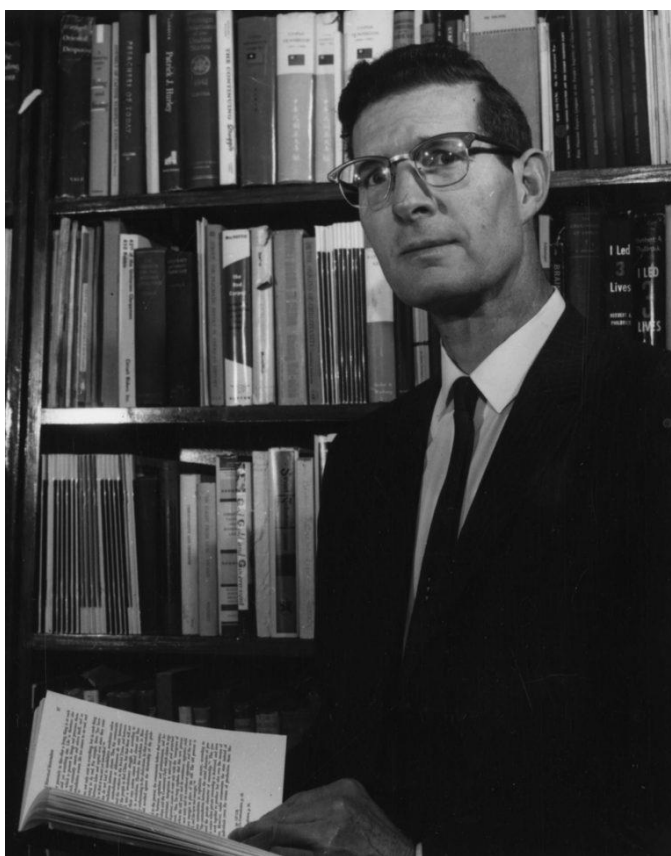
Debating with atheists was nothing new to preachers in the churches of Christ. The definitive event of Alexander Campbell's preaching career is considered by many to be the debate he had with the atheist Robert Owen. For Bales, this debate was also a definitive milestone. He was but thirty-one at the time. And while quite young, Bales had already attained a Ph.D. from the University of California, had written *The Roots of Unbelief*, was Editor of *The Thinking Christian*, and head of the Bible Department at Harding College. He would go on to become one of the most prolific writers among preachers in the last century. His legacy is one of learning, educating, writing, debating, preaching, and controversy.

Woolsey Teller entered this debate with high credentials among his peers as well. He was the second president and one of the founders of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. He was also Associate Editor of *The Truth Seeker*. By the time of the debate, he had written two books for which he is still respected among atheists today: *The*

*Atheism of Astronomy* (1938) and *Essays of an Atheist* (1945). He was an acclaimed authority in the field of astronomy by atheists of his day. He was a noted lecturer and champion of his cause.

### **Summary of Teller's Affirmative Arguments**

Teller's proposition was as follows: "The Universe is the Product of Non-Intelligent Causes." Teller had two nights to affirm this proposition with three speeches each night. In summary, Teller's affirmative arguments would be: "Man is a better thinker than God, a better planner than God, a better listener than God, more caring than God, and more merciful than God; therefore, how could there be a God over man when man is superior to God in all these ways?" His plan of attack was to prove man to be the highest form of life known to man. If man is the most intelligent being, and man did not create himself, then man could not be created by another being. Teller hoped to establish this point and then build upon



James D. Bales

it the hypothesis of evolution as the explanation for man's existence.

He would begin by arguing that all scientists of any credibility were materialists. Throughout the debate Teller attempted to present theologians as unlearned, illogical men who believed in fairy tales. Teller wanted to prove that any educated person would believe in evolution – even citing Woodrow Wilson as an example. He sought to use ridicule and

sarcasm throughout his speeches.

In his first speech he would refer to WWII, droughts, boll weevils and germs, all while asking how God could let that happen. Basically, he argued: “I wouldn’t let that happen. How can God who is more merciful than me let that happen?” Teller would even say that God has been conducting a germ war on humans through the various bacteria in the world. Teller would accuse God of being unmerciful for allowing cancer and such like. Teller would also criticize the human body in his first speech. He said the human body was “a mess.” He stated that God should have given us a zipper so that we would not have to be cut open for surgery. He charged that God should have given us teeth when we were born which would never fall out. He criticized our arteries for hardening. Teller criticized our intestines for being too long and our gall bladders for producing gall stones. He accused God of not having the intuitiveness of giving us spare “replacement parts.” He would say of this, “Fine planning by the Man in the skies.” He questioned why the worm could grow a new head, but man could not grow new arms and legs. He criticized God for not having us hatched from eggs, instead of being carried in the mother’s womb.

Teller criticized the earth for its climates and the moon for its light. He stated how selective breeding was evidence for man to out-do God in something. He was arguing essentially: “If man can out-do God in anything, how could God be higher than man?” He criticized animal life, saying how many more insects there were than humans, even asking, “Is God more interested in insects than in you?” Teller also criticized parasites for being in the world, implying no man would have created such parasites as the tape worm. In Teller’s second speech he focused on the human eye (he argued in his first speech that man could out-do God with the telescope and microscope), the mind, and astronomy. He argued that God should have put eyes in the back of our heads.

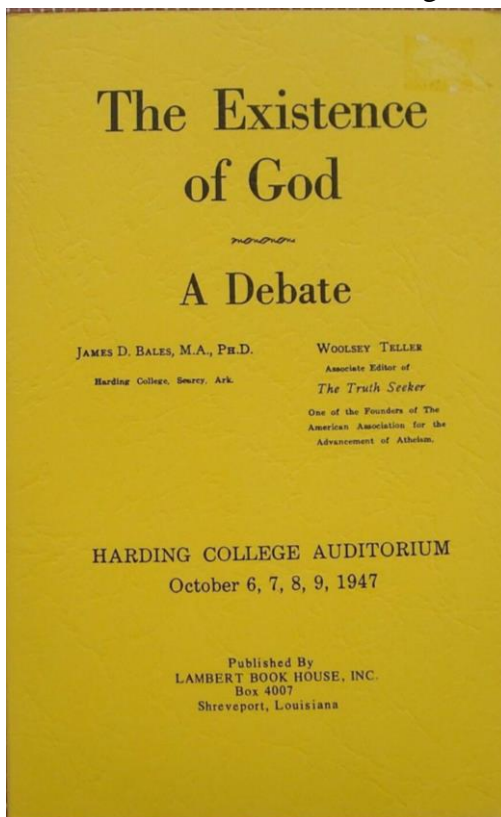
In Teller’s third speech he ridiculed Arkansas and challenged them to allow evolution to be taught in their schools (sadly, the doctrine is now taught in their public schools). Teller’s challenge seems to be the reason for his agreeing to the debate. He was trying to convince the people of Arkansas to be “free thinkers.”

In Teller’s fourth affirmative speech he would spend more time on evolution, specifically the evolution of fish, the horse, and the cockroach. He also argued that man has in his vertebrate the evidence of once having a tail (Bales would cite Douglas Dewar in answering this claim). Teller would also argue that God should have put man on all fours. In Teller’s fifth speech he argued that the male nipple was useless. He also argued that God was not smart enough to think of the wheel. He stated that God should have given us wheels instead of legs. In Teller’s sixth and final speech, he gave another insult to Arkansas. He would criticize the number of libraries, daily papers, etc. He referred to them as hillbillies for not having or reading Darwin’s books.

### ***Summary of Bales’ Rebuttal Arguments***

Bales offered several noteworthy rebuttals to Teller’s arguments. Over the course of the three nights devoted to the

Teller’s proposition, Bales addressed every argument Teller pressed. Bales pointed out that Teller’s few accusations of disorder did nothing to negate the many obvious accounts of order in the universe, the earth, and the human body. He pressed Teller for facts to sustain his proposition. After ample time had passed for Teller to support his proposition with facts, Bales pointed out that evolution was a doctrine based on an anti-God bias rather than fact. Bales was also well-prepared with credible references which Teller could not address. Such references were necessary to prove not all educated people agreed with Teller. Bales cited how many in Teller’s camp were themselves conflicted on what to believe. Not all of Teller’s educated men believed as Teller did. Perhaps the strongest rebuttal Bales gave



was in the form of seven questions which he asked in his first negative speech. The questions are as follows:

- 1.) What reason is there to believe that spontaneous generation, that is the development of life from non-life, ever took place?
- 2.) Ought we to become atheists?
- 3.) Name one form of life which can begin and complete its life cycle without receiving anything directly or indirectly from some other living thing. In other words, name one form of life which is entirely dependent for its food, etc., on the inorganic environment.
- 4.) Does the term "free thought" or "free thinker" imply that thought is in any measure free?
- 5.) How did matter become intelligent enough to deny that the universe is governed by intelligence?
- 6.) How do you account for the order and intelligence which are manifested in such a being as man, if the universe is the product of non-intelligent forces?
- 7.) Is there any rational account as to why matter in motion should have worked out theism in my brain and atheism in yours?

Teller never touched these questions with any real force. For some, he did not answer at all. In fact, he did not even address them until his first negative of Bales' affirmative. By so doing, Teller was able to disregard another speech by Bales. When Teller did attempt to deal with some of these questions Bales was able to point out the contradictions in his answers.

### ***Summary of Bales' Affirmative Arguments***

Bales seemed to be his strongest in the negative. In the beginning of his affirmative speeches, it seemed like he was still arguing in the negative. Teller did pick up on this and alleged that Bales was not proving his proposition.

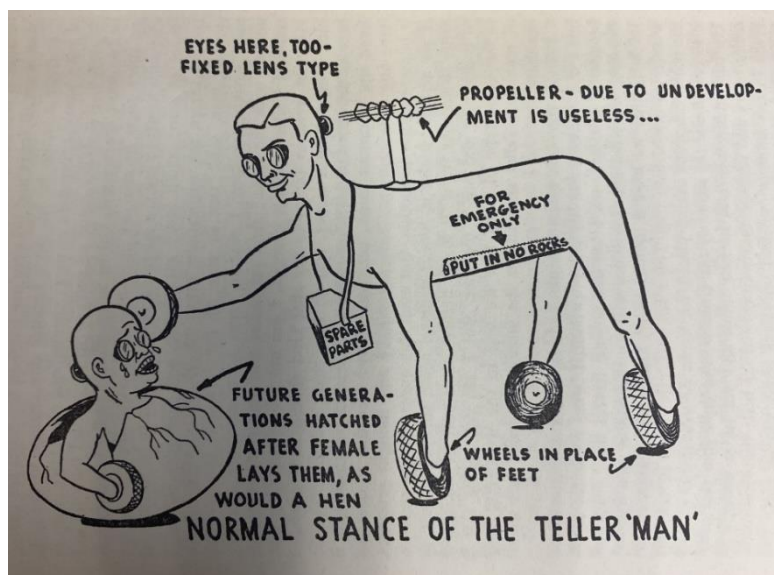
It was in Bales' second speech of the fourth and final night, however, when the debate was settled decisively. Such moments are truly historic, for not every debate has such a clear and decisive point of victory. The moment came when Bales rebutted "Teller's Man." Teller had stated that the human body was "a mess." He ridiculed God for not giving us a zipper, replacement parts, being on all fours instead of upright, birth by hatching from an egg, one set of permanent teeth at birth, wheels, wings, and lenses for eyes with eyes in the back of our head. At this point Bales displayed a chart with a

baby hatching with permanent teeth and a monstrous looking creature on all fours with wheels, a zipper, etc.

Bales illustrated the folly of man's wisdom when compared to God's wisdom. Teller had ridiculed God, made fun of the Christians present, and even the state of Arkansas for not

being as intelligent as he. Yet, Bales made Teller look silly simply by illustrating his *own* arguments. Teller had come to make a mockery of our religion and all who would maintain the existence of God. He left the debate looking like a fool who had said in his heart there is no God.

The doctrine of evolution could not be sustained then; it cannot be sustained today. Let us take courage in the truth of God's existence. He exists and rewards all who diligently seek Him.



Copies of the Bales-Teller Debate are available from Mark McWhorter at just \$5.00 each while supplies last! Contact him via email at [MTMCVB@centurytel.net](mailto:MTMCVB@centurytel.net)





# Who were the ESSENES?

*Richard Mansel*

There were three major philosophical schools in Judaism. The Pharisees and Sadducees are recounted in the New Testament while the Essenes are discussed exclusively in the extra-Biblical writings of Josephus, Pliny, and Philo.

However, the discussions of the Essenes in these accounts are brief and somewhat contradictory. We don't have much to go on in uncovering their culture and religious practices. Nevertheless, we can examine them briefly from the evidence we possess.

The Essenes prospered in Palestine from the late second century BC to the late first century AD.<sup>1</sup> They largely vanish after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, at the hands of the Romans. At their core, they were a people of quiet devotion and reverence.

They were steadfast and honest in word and deed. "No one among them swears; a word is regarded as more binding than an oath; and one who swears is despised as one not deserving of confidence."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, they produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contained the oldest copy of the Old Testament, excluding Esther, in human existence. So, they

blessed the world in their short tenure.

## ***Location and Culture***

"Pliny wrote that they lived west of Lake Asphaltites. Some scholars associate Pliny's reference with Qumran, others with a location above En Gedi."<sup>3</sup> They didn't have a land of their own but they lived throughout the country. "Philo says they lived in villages and avoided the iniquitous cities."<sup>4</sup>

Philo said that there were four thousand Essenes.<sup>5</sup> In order to become a member one had to endure a probationary period of two years.<sup>6</sup> During that time they lived the Essene way of life. But they had to remain outside the community.<sup>7</sup> Even after they became members, they couldn't participate in common meals for two years.<sup>8</sup>

When they were admitted they had to commit to "tremendous oaths," which included "promises to forever hate the unjust and fight the battle of the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Essene>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Essenes>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40387637?seq=1>

<sup>4</sup> David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 2:619-628.

<sup>5</sup> Freedman.

<sup>6</sup> Freedman

<sup>7</sup> Freedman

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Essene>



just.”<sup>9</sup> “Whereas these men shun the pleasures as vice, they consider self-control and not succumbing to the passions virtue.”<sup>10</sup>

Women were unable to join the Essenes. Josephus says, “without doing away with marriage or the succession resulting from it, they protect themselves from the wanton ways of women, having been persuaded that none of them preserve their faithfulness to one man.”<sup>11</sup> Most have interpreted that to mean they were celibate.<sup>12</sup> However, Josephus identified a second group of Essenes that did practice marriage. On the other hand, Philo firmly says that “no Essene takes a wife,”<sup>13</sup> and that marriage was a threat to their communal life.

Yet, they would adopt children from outside the community to raise in their lifestyle. Otherwise they could never have survived the generations.

Their ascetic lifestyles were not just words.

They replace neither clothes nor footwear until the old set is ripped all over or worn through with age. Among themselves, they neither shop for nor sell anything; but each one, after giving the things that he has to the one in need, takes in exchange anything useful that the other has. And even without this reciprocal giving, the transfer to them [of goods] from whomever they wish is unimpeded.<sup>14</sup>

Their ideas on money set them apart as a people. Pliny says that they lived “without money.”<sup>15</sup> Philo says, “they stand almost alone in the whole of mankind in that they have become moneyless and landless by deliberate action.”<sup>16</sup> They lived a lifestyle of simplicity.

Since [they are] despisers of wealth—their communal stock is astonishing, one cannot find a person among them who has more in terms of possessions. For by a law, those coming into the school must yield up their funds to the order, with the result that in all [their ranks] neither the humiliation of poverty nor the superi-

ority of wealth is detectable, but the assets of each one have been mixed in together, as if they were brothers, to create one fund for all.<sup>17</sup>

Their extreme frugality led to a surprising rejection of olive oil. They felt it was defiling.<sup>18</sup> “They consider olive oil a stain, and should anyone be accidentally smeared with it he scrubs his body, for they make it a point of honor to remain hard and dry, and to wear white always.”<sup>19</sup>

Both Philo and Josephus said that they rejected slavery.<sup>20</sup> Philo also notes that they avoided weapons or they refused to manufacture them.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Josephus claims they did carry weapons in self-defense<sup>22</sup> and that John the Essene was an officer in the war with Rome.<sup>23</sup>

### **Religious Practices**

Philo says they worshiped God “not by offering sacrifices but by resolving to sanctify their minds.”<sup>24</sup> It’s unclear if they rejected sacrifices in general or that it didn’t take priority with them.

Josephus says they “send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices employing a different ritual of purification. For this reason they are barred from those precincts of the temple that are frequented by all the people and perform their sacrifices by themselves.”<sup>25</sup>

They would pray towards the sun before dawn “as if entreating him to rise.”<sup>26</sup> But scholars doubt they were sun worshipers (cf. Ezekiel 8:16).

They took a host of ritual baths and the purity of the water varied with whether they were a full member or seeking to attain that level of membership.<sup>27</sup> If a senior member was touched by a junior member, they had to bathe in order to be clean again.<sup>28</sup> They would also bury their feces so as not to offend God and they refrained from having bowel movements on the Sabbath.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Freedman

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, Jewish Book of War, Book II, Chapter 8, 120.

<sup>11</sup> Josephus, Jewish Book of War, Book II, Chapter 8, 121.

<sup>12</sup> [jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pharisees-sadducees-and-essenes](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pharisees-sadducees-and-essenes)

<sup>13</sup> Philo, Hypothesica 11.14

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.land-of-the-bible.com/The\\_Essenes](http://www.land-of-the-bible.com/The_Essenes)

<sup>15</sup> Freedman

<sup>16</sup> Philo, Quod Omn 77

<sup>17</sup> Josephus, The Jewish War, Book II, Chapter 8, 122.

<sup>18</sup> Josephus, Jewish War, 2.8.4, 123-127.

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.land-of-the-bible.com/The\\_Essenes](http://www.land-of-the-bible.com/The_Essenes)

<sup>20</sup> Philo, Quod Omn 79, Josephus, Antiquities 18.1.5, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Philo, Quod Omn 78.

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, Jewish War, 2.8.4, 125

<sup>23</sup> Josephus, Jewish War 3.2.1, 9-12.

<sup>24</sup> Philo, Quod Omn 75.

<sup>25</sup> Josephus, Antiquities, 18.1.5, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Josephus, Jewish Wars, 2.8.5, 128.

<sup>27</sup> Josephus, Jewish War, 2.8.7, 129, 138.

<sup>28</sup> Josephus, Jewish War, 2.8.10, 150.

<sup>29</sup> Josephus, Jewish War, 2.8.9, 148.

Ritual baths preceded dining. They considered meals sacred<sup>30</sup> and they would offer prayer before and after eating.

After a year's probation, proselytes received their Essenian emblems but could not participate in common meals for two more years. Those who qualified for membership were called upon to swear piety to God, justice toward men, hatred of falsehood, love of truth, and faithful observance of all other tenets of the Essene sect. Thereafter new converts were allowed to take their noon and evening meals in silence with the others.<sup>31</sup>

They believed in the "immortality of the soul and regarded the body as a prison house."<sup>32</sup> They "believe that the flesh will rise again and then be im-

mortal like the soul, which, they say, when separated from the body, enters a place of fragrant air and radiant light, there to enjoy rest."<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Essenes were a unique people whose pursuit of purity led them to extremes. However, we know they were devout and sincere. Their disappearance after the destruction of Jerusalem is a mystery since they didn't live in the city.

We wish we knew more about them and that the information we have wasn't contradictory. All we can do is to knit together the pieces to see what is created.

"The Essenes left upper-class lifestyles for huts in the harsh wilderness of Judea, a measure of their extreme devotion to the Bible."<sup>34</sup> That's something all godly people can admire.

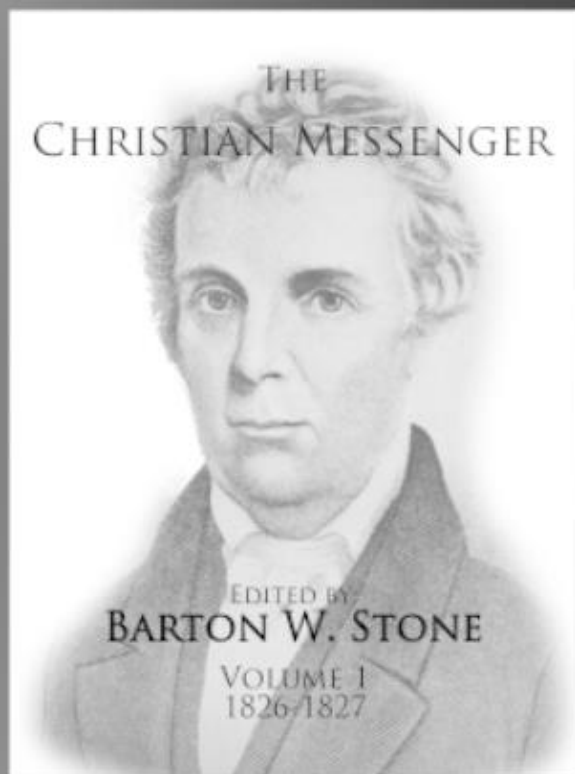
<sup>30</sup>Josephus, Jewish War 2.8.5, 129.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Essene>

<sup>32</sup>Freedman, cf. Josephus, Antiquities, 18.1.15, 18.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Essenes>

<sup>34</sup> [faithgateway.com/the-way-of-the-essenes/#.YJmmfehKjIU](http://faithgateway.com/the-way-of-the-essenes/#.YJmmfehKjIU)



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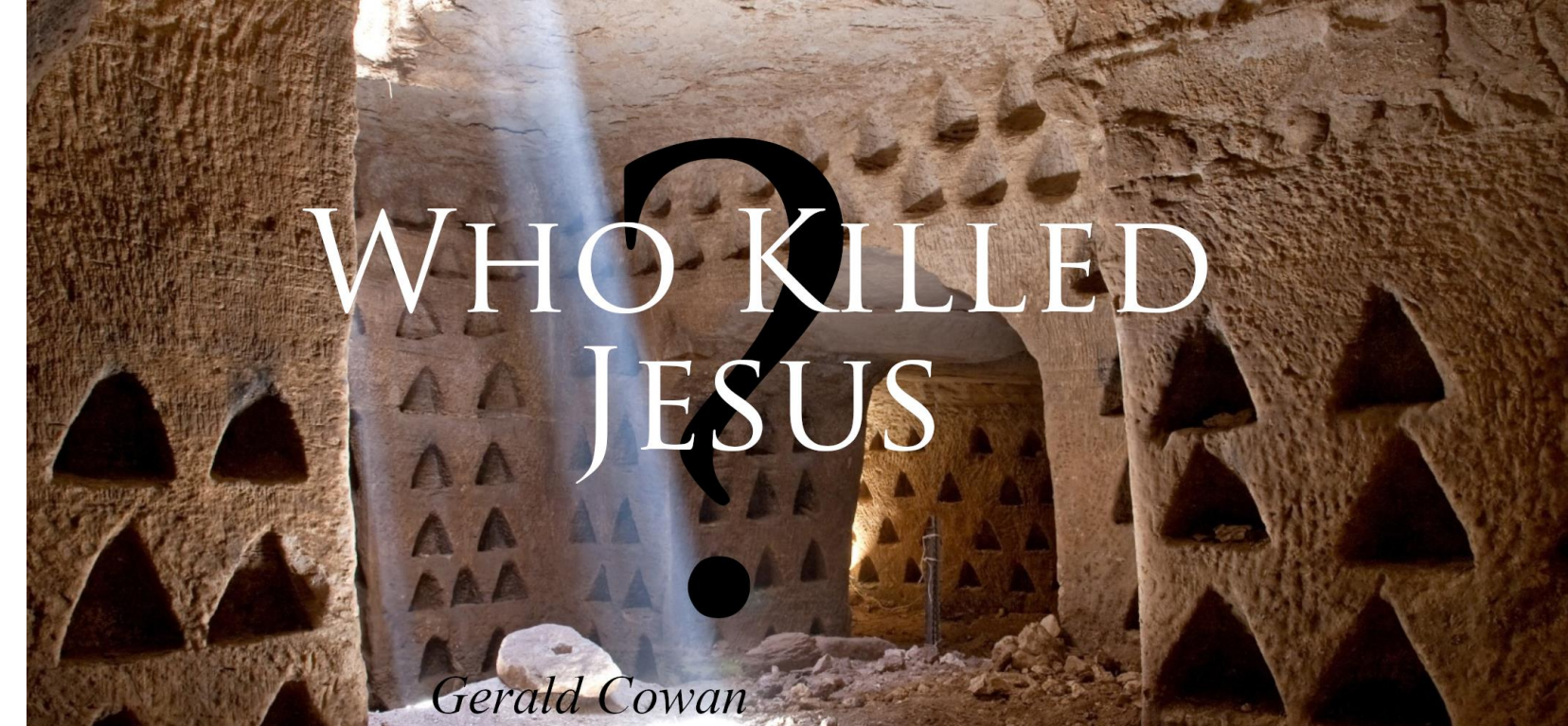
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# WHO KILLED JESUS

*Gerald Cowan*

Many, perhaps most, sermons about the death of Jesus focus on the way in which he died — crucifixion, called by some the cruelest, most terrible and degrading form of execution. That is probably not true, but talking about graphic details of crucifixion would be terrible to hear or to talk about, even to think about it or get a mental image of it. It might be profitable for us to hear and see in our minds just what the Lord was willing to suffer and did suffer in order to provide salvation for us. — I could describe it for you in such graphic and gory detail that you might need psychiatric counseling after hearing it, but I won't do that, at least not now. I intend instead to share with you a simpler, more mundane approach, a kind of "whodunit" murder mystery: who did it (not how they did it), why they did it, what they hoped to accomplish by it and the results or consequences — what they actually did accomplish by it, the results of it.

I'm not going to do a take-off on Bill O'Reilly, who made a lot of money from his "Killing ..." series (ten or eleven books so far), including "Killing Jesus," which I have not read. The simple format for this sermon essay is: (1) What happened (including how it was done), (2) Who did it, (3) Why it was done, and (4) What impact has it had on the world. There may be one or two relevant questions to follow it. The major part of the lesson will be **Who did it**. There are five categorical parties who did it.

## **WHAT WAS DONE? JESUS WAS KILLED.**

A contemporary governor in one of our States and a former cabinet member under a different administration might say it doesn't matter now who did it or how it was done; the relevant fact is he was put to death, killed. The why is also important; the how is not.

Was it a justified homicide, the execution, as of a criminal who deserved to die? If so, what crimes did he commit? You would not be able to find one thing Jesus did wrong to anybody, to the state (of Israel/Judah), or to the Roman occupiers.

Was it a necessary killing for the general good of society, as then High Priest Caiaphas said (John 11:49-51)? If so, explain what socially detrimental or destructive things he did? Of course it is easy and common to complain when one is prevented from doing whatever he wants or is accustomed to, when a desired privilege or custom is withdrawn and prohibited — that is called hurtful to the loser. Jesus went about doing good — good, not bad, evil, or hurtful (Acts 10:38). He was a helper, a healer, a builder, an advocate of social benefits and spiritual benefits.

Was it simply murder, the unjustified killing of a man who was unloved, unappreciated, unwelcome, and unwanted by his competitors? Was it jealousy or envy? Jesus was getting more vocal support, more public support which meant less support and allegiance to traditional officials and rules. As He in-



creased, the ordinary powers of politicians decreased. John the Baptist understood that it should be that way even for him, and he gladly accepted it as an indication that his own mission was properly fulfilled (John 3:30). Then, as now, politics and economy use religion as a way to control society. So, yes: **It was murder, first degree planned murder involving many “accessories after the fact” in addition to the main perpetrators, the actual murderers.**

### ***Who Did It? Here Are The Possible Culprits, The Culpable Killers.***

Whether directly or indirectly, literally or figuratively, as accessories, abettors, and profiteers who allowed themselves to be used, the following five categories are the ones responsible for Jesus' death.

#### ***WHO KILLED JESUS? THE JEWS DID IT.***

Governor Pontius Pilate spelled it out precisely and correctly: the Jewish authorities, including high priests, priests, political/religious powers such as the ruling Sanhedrin who were jealous of power and envious of the influence of Jesus over the minds of the common people. They saw themselves as vulnerable and being pushed aside because of their obvious infidelity to God and their lack of concern for God's people (Matthew 27:18). Several months before his death Jesus began to predict it and prepare his disciples for it (Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, and 20:18-19). He knew, and the disciples knew, that the powers among the Jews were seeking to kill him. Jesus accused them of wanting and seeking his death (John 7:19, 8:37-40, John 11:8, 16; also John 14, 15, 16, 17). After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Peter accused those present at Pentecost of killing him (Acts 2:23, 36). He doubled down on the accusation later (Acts 3:13-15, 4:10). Not all Jews then and forever — and certainly not now — approved or participated directly. They did not actually kill him. They did not nail him to a cross. They were not legally permitted to put him to death (John 18:29-31). But they were accessories; they were responsible for the death of Jesus. They judged him and condemned him as worthy of death (Mark 14:64). They delivered him to the Roman

governor and demanded that he be crucified (Acts 13:26-29). They manipulated the governor Pilate so that he was (or felt that he was) compelled to kill Jesus for them. Point of interest: the Jews were persuaded by their leaders to accept responsibility; “*Let his blood be upon our heads and the heads of our children.*” (Matthew 17:24-25). This led to all Jews being vilified and referred to as Christ-killers, guilty of Deicide — “*killing God.*” (a nonsense judgment since God is not mortal, God did not die — God cannot die. Jesus died, but God who was in Jesus did not die). Vatican Council II (on October 28, 1965) under Pope Paul VI, gave collective absolution: the Jewish people as a whole could no longer be condemned of collectively of killing Jesus. On March 4, 2011 then-Pope Benedict XVI gave blanket exoneration of the Jewish people, denying them any guilt in the death of Jesus. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu lauded the Pope for releasing Jews from guilt for Jesus' death. But the Catholic Church and the Jewish government are not able to absolve

and exonerate the Jews for their part in killing Jesus. The guilt of the Jews of that time for the death of Jesus stands irrefutable.

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*Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth...you, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain. —Peter (Acts 2)*

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#### ***WHO KILLED JESUS?***

##### ***THE ROMANS, GENTILES, NON-JEWS DID IT.***

Why? Pilate admitted he had power (prerogative and authority) to release Jesus and protect him from the Jews and also had power (authority) to crucify him. He believed the evidence showed Jesus to be innocent of the charges against him — he knew it was a travesty of justice, a wicked and illegal thing that was being pushed by the Jewish authorities. He tried to “pass the buck” to Herod Antipas who was ostensibly in authority over the Jews and responsible to determine what would happen to Jesus. But Herod was not about to antagonize the Jews — he was already disfavored by the Jews because he had killed John the Baptist whom the people generally considered to be a prophet of God (Matthew 14:5). Perhaps he could hold Jesus accountable for his having to execute John the baptizer, whom he hated for exposing and condemning his adulterous marriage to Herodias, his brother's legal wife. If Jesus had been willing to satisfy Herod's curiosity and

desire for miracles to be done for him Herod might have spared his life, but failing that he simply sent him back to Pilate (Luke 23:7-12).

Pilate's own wife had warned him to "have nothing to do with this righteous man" Jesus, perhaps foreseeing that whichever way he went with it would be disastrous for him — one of the times a wife gave good advice to her husband. Compare it to bad advice given by Eve, by Job's wife, and by Jezebel the wife of King Ahab. To save his own position and probably his own life after being threatened with charges of sedition against Rome Pilate capitulated to the Jews, gave them what they wanted. The Romans did the scourging, physical abuse, and actual crucifixion.

### **WHO KILLED JESUS? GOD DID IT.**

This troubles people. They seem to think it means God produced a son to be source and supply for the needs of others who would survive at his expense. Pagans have always and still do sacrifice their own children, produced simply to be sacrificed (and think it is an honor to them to be offered to God that way). People mistakenly think God produced a son and then deliberately murdered him.

Why would God kill His Son, His one and only miracle-born Messiah, His promised Christ — the One He promised and then took thousands of years to produce, the One who was to be our Redeemer, Lord, and Savior? How could a dead man be our Leader, our Lord, the Head of his living people? Why did God order and require the sacrifice of His Son? Because sin that poisoned His creation of mankind had permeated the whole of humanity. An effective remedy was required that mankind could not devise or offer: a human being perfect and sinless to be given for all imperfect sinful humans. A newborn infant cannot suffice, though pagans often suppose it can. The sacrifice must be rational and voluntary. No man on his own could qualify to be the effective sacrifice for his own sin, much less for sin of others — especially the collective sins of all others.

In foreknowledge and determinate counsel God Himself predetermined the plan by which the sacrificial remedy would be made, prophesied, predicted, specified by God (Acts 2:22-23, 4:27-28). Death was set as the only sufficient price. Nothing less than death could suffice. The method of death was predicted, not predetermined, predestined, and pre-

scribed — a tree, a cross. God provided the man to be sacrificed and the man proved himself to be acceptable and worthy. It was an act of love, grace, mercy (Ephesians 2:3-5, 8-9). God was not responsible for the sin, corruption, and fall of man. Man had infected himself, ruined himself, put himself outside the approval and acceptance of God. God loved His creation and wanted to save it, so He devised a plan by which it could be saved, restored to Him, and preserved for His heaven. God himself set in motion and produced the plan of salvation, but it required and included the death of His Son Jesus. God killed him — not directly but decisively by setting the requirement and providing it.

### **WHO KILLED JESUS? JESUS DID IT TO HIMSELF.**

In Marvin P. Dalton's Song **What a Savior** it says: "*Once I was straying in sin's dark valley, No hope within could I see; They searched through heaven and found a Savior to save a poor lost soul like me.*" Not so! God did not have to try to find someone who might qualify to be the needed Savior. God's one and only miracle-born son, Jesus, was the pre-determined one, prepared and ready to serve in that capacity. When the time was right God sent him into the world with a pre-set mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), that His own redemptive law and plan for human redemption and salvation could be fulfilled (Galatians 4:4-5).

Jesus did not volunteer to be the sacrifice. Not like Isaiah who, when he heard God say, *Who will go for us, whom can I send?* said, "*Here I am. Send me.*" I will go. Let me go (Isaiah 6:9). Not like David who, when a warrior was needed to face the giant Goliath and king Saul was trying to assess the probability of success, stepped forward to say, "I will go, and God will see to it that I prevail against this godless threat to the people of God" (1 Samuel 16:32-33, 37). Do you know that Jesus could have refused to be the sacrifice for human sin, that he could have said NO to God's appointment? He said he would, and was, giving his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). He had authority (power, prerogative, permission) to give and lay down his life (John 10:17-18). Nobody, including Governor Pontius Pilate, could take his life unless God granted and allowed it to happen (John 19:11). When his disciples wanted to fight to protect him, Jesus said if he asked, God would spare him and send more than twelve legions of angels to protect him (Matthew

26:53 — not “to destroy the earth and set him free” as another of our songs puts it). He prayed earnestly and fervently to God — not once but three times, prostrate on his face weeping and sweating blood — that if another way of redemption could be found he would be spared sacrificial crucifixion and death (Luke 22:41-44). But he submitted to the will and plan of God. He yielded himself and freely gave his life, joyfully gave his life (Hebrews 12:1-2) — all we can say is, “Hallelujah — what a Savior,” and thank God now and forever for love, mercy, and grace that has saved us and keeps us saved for heaven (Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-9).

### **WHO KILLED JESUS?**

#### **WE DID IT, YOU AND I DID IT.**

OK, so you didn't use a hammer and spikes to nail him to the cross, you didn't wield the whip that tore the flesh of his body, you didn't laugh and mock him during any part of his trials, you didn't spit on him or ridicule him as a failed redeemer who couldn't even save himself much less save you, you didn't make a bargain with his enemies to betray him and haven't gained thirty pieces of silver for betrayal, you haven't steadfastly denied that you have or even want to have anything to do with him, you didn't agonize over innocent blood that stained your hands, you didn't end your own miserable life because of your failure to preserve his — no, you didn't literally or physically kill him. He died because of, and in order to provide redemptive escape from the sins of all mankind — from the beginning (with Adam and Eve), to his own time (about 1 to 33 AD, on the current calendar) to the present, and all time yet to come on earth.

About 30 years or so after Jesus' death apostle Peter wrote to remind people that *Jesus bore our sins in his body on the cross* — sins of Peter and others of that time — and it is true today: we can say *our* sins were foreknown and included in the sum of human sin for which Jesus was sacrificed and died. You may be among those who say they are perfect, do not sin and never have sinned, but you'd be lying about that — another sin! (1 John 1:7-10). Other than Jesus himself there has never been a perfect accountable human, man or woman, who did not, does not, or cannot sin (Romans 3:10, 23) — *everyone, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*. More than that, those who know the truth and sin against it anyway, those who mock and reject Jesus today and refuse to accept and obey him

— including those who say, “I never asked him to die for me and I don't want to be obligated to him for something I never wanted from him” — are spitting on him now, holding him up to ridicule and shame, effectively crucifying him again (Hebrews 6:1-6, 10:23-27 — please read these verses and heed the warning contained in them).

### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO THOSE WHO KILLED HIM AND THOSE WHO ARE FIGURATIVELY KILLING HIM AGAIN?**

Of course God and Jesus Christ himself are exempt from blame or guilt — theirs was an act of love, mercy, grace, and salvation. Be thankful for it! I can tell you what God and Christ want for all those sinfully guilty of killing Jesus — including you and me. The Lord wants and urges all who are still able to repent, obey, and accept salvation. Before he died Jesus prayed that God would bless and sanctify everyone who would and will believe in Him through the words taught by his apostles and oracles and repeated by his people until his return. (John 17). Even while dying on the cross he prayed God would not deny access to salvation for those ignorant people who were in the very act of killing him (Luke 23:34).

What will be done to those who refuse to receive forgiveness and salvation from Jesus Christ? They lose any hope, any possibility of heaven. They will lose any possibility of remedy, rescue, restoration, and escape from the punishment and consequence of their refusal — no purgatory, no second chances, no remission of sins in any part. There will be NO EXIT and NO ESCAPE from hell.

### **CONCLUSION:**

It doesn't really matter, does it, who was responsible for killing Jesus — who did the literal crucifixion? It is clear that Jesus died on the cross as “the Lamb of God who can take away the sins of the world.” Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith and of our salvation (Hebrews 12:1-2). You, I, and all others who are able to hear this message are urged to repent the sins that killed Jesus, to stop continuing the killing and the reproach — to validate and claim for ourselves the sacrifice that is able to save our souls.

All that remains to be said in this sermon now is: Has he taken away *your* sin and given *you* the promise of eternal life in heaven with him?



# IN THE PROCESS OF TIME

## Part One: The Beginning

*William Howard*

We are all under time and traveling in one invariable direction toward the future. This is a trip consistent and precise. There is no speeding nor pausing nor turning backward. We are perpetually on a pace of sixty seconds a minute, sixty minutes an hour, twenty-four hours a day which make up weeks, months, years, and centuries. We are ever moving forward. Even if we changed the way we measured time we are still moving through it. If we rid ourselves of clocks and calendars, we would still be aware of its existence by its passing. This is not solely observed by growing older or things turning to dust. A greater amount of time must transpire to notice such results. There are millions of things happening in short order. The word here is “order.” An action is simply followed by the next in the order each occurred. All happens in time. Let us look at a simple sentence: “Stanley got up, ate lunch, put on a jacket, and walked to 68th street for his piano lesson.” The passing of time is demanded by the series of actions.

It is understood that Stanley did not do everything simultaneously or that time was not involved. Stanley got up before he did anything else in the sentence and each action happened through time. As time passed this is what Stanley did in turn. So, we look to ourselves. We exist in time and are subject

to it. Everything we do is done at a point in time and all language expresses it. Verb tenses represent past, present, and future. The language of the Bible communicates time quite well with verbs of all sorts even though God is not subject to time as we are.

Does time exist? Of course, it does.

Does time exist with God? That is like asking the question: Does the earth exist with God? Not only does it exist with God it exists *because* of Him. He created them. Let us look at time and God.

*Psalm 90:2: Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

*Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

God is eternal. He has no beginning nor end. We can easily understand those words, but to think about the meaning of them can soon become incomprehensible. God has always been. How is that possible? Everyone and everything I have seen has a beginning. Everything I have seen has an end – including the earth and stars. You are made in the image of God and therefore have a beginning because you were made. Being made implies a point of beginning. But you are in the image of God and will



have no end. Your body is mortal and is subject to death. Your soul is not. You are immortal. Angels and demons are created just like you. They had a beginning as well. None of them are self-existing. They were created by God. When were they created? I do not know. In Job 38:4-7 God asks Job questions no one could know except God (or those present when He did them). These point to the fact that Job does not know because Job was not there.

*“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

Who are the sons of God who shout for joy? As God describes this scene there appears to be many witnessing the creation of the earth as He is creating this material realm.

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (Genesis 1:1). Those few words speak of time. The word “beginning” is an expression of it. In Romans 5:6 are these words, *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*. The words “in due time” mean that waiting had to be done by all including Christ. *What if God,*

*wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?* (Romans 9:22). Longsuffering implies something done over time. In 1 Corinthians 15:24 Paul writes the following: *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*. The word “end” also ex-

presses time. Both Genesis and 1 Corinthians speak of actions done by God in order of time. If these things are done in time and God did them or has yet to do them in time, then God works in the framework of time. Does that nullify or contradict God being from everlasting (Psalm 90:2)? No. He works in time, but it has no effect on Him. He is the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9). That title denotes time, and time can do nothing to

*But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.  
(Galatians 4:4-5)*

Someone eternal. The word “eternal” would have no meaning if time did not exist.

God is omnipotent (all powerful). But He cannot be all powerful if He is not omniscient (all knowing). And He cannot know everything if He is not omnipresent. That means He is everywhere in full power and knowledge. It also means He is everywhere in full power and knowledge. He is not limited as we are but deals with time because He placed His creations in time.



# DOES GOD APPROVE OF WOMEN LEADING IN WORSHIP

Bradley S. Cobb

A Christian woman is a blessing to her family, to her friends, to her brethren, and to her Lord. In the Bible, we can read of Christian women like Lydia, who showed hospitality to fellow-Christians (Acts 16); like Phoebe, who is called an “assistant” (Romans 16:2, MLV) or a “patroness” (Thayer) of the brethren; like Priscilla, who is called a “fellow-laborer” who had risked her own life for another Christian (Romans 16:3-4); like Lois and Eunice, who passed on their faith to a young man who became a missionary named Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5); and countless others whose names are not recorded in the Bible, but whose work helped to encourage and strengthen the saints, while also helping to convert sinners to Jesus Christ.

If not for the influence of Christian women, many of you would not be Christians today.

There are some, however, that would say, “That’s not good enough!” Like Aaron and Miriam of old, there are those who try to argue that the ones leading have taken it all on themselves, and that *they* are just as qualified to lead. These people run to Galatians 3:28 and say that “In Christ, there are no more male and female distinctions!” Let’s take a look at that passage, and we’ll also look at some others as we consider the role of women in the church of Jesus Christ.

## ***“Neither Male Nor Female...”***

As is often the case, verses (or even phrases from inside a verse) are pulled from their context and applied to things that they were never meant to apply to. We could mention several examples, but for the sake of staying on-topic, we’ll just stick with the point at hand. Look with me at Galatians 3:26-29.

*For you are all children [literally “sons”] of God by the faith in Christ Jesus, because as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Again, note verse 26, which literally says “sons” instead of “children.” Under the Old Testament, it was the son—not the daughter—who received the inheritance. Slaves did not receive inheritance. Gentiles definitely did not receive the inheritance. Yet, in Christ, all these groups have access to the inheritance through Jesus Christ.

Those who try to rip “there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” in order to “prove” that both genders are authorized to perform any and every role/function in the church miss the point. Male and female absolutely still existed, literally, in the church. Jew and Gentile absolutely still literally existed in the church. Free men and slaves absolutely still existed literally in the church. Therefore, Paul isn’t speaking about the literal distinctions being done away with.

What he’s saying is that in Christ, EVERYONE can be an heir of the promise made to Abraham. He’s not talking about roles in the worship—otherwise he completely contradicted himself 10 or so years later when he told Timothy that God placed the leadership in worship upon the shoulders of male Christians (1 Timothy 2). He’s not talking about roles in the family—otherwise he contradicted himself 10 or so years later when he told wives to

“submit” to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24). Just like becoming a Christian didn’t make a slave no longer a slave—see the book of Philemon—he still had a specific role to fulfill, being in submission to his owner (who might or might not have been a Christian).

When we consider the context in which Paul says “there is neither male nor female,” we are required to come to the conclusion that it means there are no class, gender, or race distinctions of any kind that would keep someone who has truly put on Christ in baptism from receiving the inheritance from God through Jesus Christ.

There is nothing at all in the context about worship roles in the church.

***Let your women keep silence...it is not permitted for them to speak;***

Turn to First Corinthians 14. I realize that it’s 40 verses long, but please take a moment to read that chapter. It really is important.

Now I want you to take notice of three main points throughout this text. **First**, I want you to look at the context—what is it that Paul writes about here? He writes about spiritual gifts (miraculous gifts) including prophecy (v 1 and others), speaking in tongues (v 2 and others), interpreting tongues (v 5, 13), revelation (v 6), miraculous knowledge (v 6), inspired teaching (v 6), praying in tongues (v 14), and leading a song (v 14, 26). These are all roles of **speaking in the worship assembly**. They are what is generally referred to as **leadership positions in the worship**. This is the context.

**Second**, take special notice that it is specifically in reference to the assembly of the church, when it comes together for prayer, singing, teaching, and encouragement. Verse 4 shows that the purpose of prophesying was to “edify **the church**.” Verse 5 says that speaking in tongues, when there is an interpreter to relay the message, is so that “**the church** may receive the edifying.” Verse 6, Paul says “**brethren** [Christians], if I come **to you**,” that is, to them all gathered together. Verse 19 says “**In the church...**” Verse 23, “if **the whole church comes together** in one place...” Verse 26, “**Brethren**, when you **come together...**” Verse 28, “if there is no interpreter, let him keep silence **in the church...**” Verse 33, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in **all churches of the saints**.” Verse 34, “Let your women keep silence **in the churches**.” Verse 35, “It is a shame for a wom-

en to speak **in the church**.” The context is when Christians are gathered together for worship to God and receiving instruction from His word.

**Third**, I want you to, even more so than the others, pay super-special attention to this next point. Paul says that the women are not permitted to “speak” in the church. That word translated “speak” appears a whopping **twenty-four** times in this chapter. Let’s look at them:

- (verse 2) He that **speaks** in an unknown tongue does not **speak** to men, but unto God: for no man understands him; however, in the spirit he **speaks** mysteries.
- (verse 3) He that prophesies **speaks**...
- (verse 4) He that **speaks** in an unknown tongue...
- (verse 5) I wish that you all **spoke** with tongues, but rather that you prophesied: for the one who prophesies is greater than he who **speaks** with tongues...
- (verse 6) brethren, if I come to you **speaking** with tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I shall **speak** to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?
- (verse 9) unless you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is **spoken**? For you shall **speak** into the air.
- (verse 11) If I don’t know the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that **speaks** a barbarian, and he that **speaks** a barbarian to me.
- (verse 13) Let him that **speaks** in an unknown tongue...
- (verse 18) I thank my God that I **speak** with tongues...
- (verse 19) In the church, I would rather **speak** five words with my understanding...
- (verse 21) In the Law it is written, “With other tongues and other lips will I **speak** to this people...saith the Lord.”
- (verse 23) ...and all **speak** in tongues...
- (verses 27-28) if any man **speak** in an unknown tongue...if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him **speak** to himself and to God.
- (verse 29) Let the prophets **speak**...
- (verses 34-35) Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for

them to **speak**, as also says the Law...it is a shame for women to **speak** in the church.

- (verse 39) covet to prophesy, and do not forbid to **speak** with tongues.

Do you notice the trend there? The same word is used over and over in this chapter, and it is a reference to speaking in front of the congregation by inspiration (tongues, prophecies, songs, revelations, etc.).

Now, God had given some of the female Christians in Corinth the ability to prophesy (see 1 Corinthians 11:5), and Philip had four daughters who prophesied as well (Acts 21:8-9). But even though they had the miraculous ability to do those things, God stated plainly that they were not permitted to use those gifts when the church was gathered together. And if God was that strict on women speaking in the assembly when they had miraculous capabilities to do so, how can anyone possibly think that He's lifted that restriction now that they don't have the miraculous gifts?

Though the context is miraculous, the principle still remains (and fits perfectly with what Paul said in 1 Timothy 2, that we looked at last week), women are not permitted to speak (that is, to lead in any aspect of the worship) in the church.

Now, look again with me at verses 27-28 of this chapter.

*If any man speaks in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course (or, one at a time); and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, **let him keep silence in the church**; and let him speak to himself and to God.*

Other than the him/her distinction, this is the exact same wording as for the woman in the original. Whatever it means for the man here, it means for the woman in verse 34. This man is commanded to keep quiet **from speaking in tongues** if there is no interpreter. It doesn't mean he's not permitted to lead a prayer in the normal language of the people at the close of the service; it's talking about the speaking in tongues. In short, **THERE IS A CONTEXT!**

So, when Paul says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches," he's got reference to leading in worship. The chapter gives all the different "speakings" that are under consideration—praying, preaching, teaching, interpreting, speaking in tongues, leading a song. "Speaking" in the assem-

bly is a role that God has placed upon the shoulders of male Christians.

But it's almost as though Paul expected that statement about women exercising their gifts in the assembly to be taken badly by his readers, because right after saying it, he says:

*What? Did the word of God come out of you? Or did it only come to you? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I am writing to you are the commandments of the Lord.*

Then he says, (KJV) "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." A more literal translation might be, "If any man is actively ignorant [in this matter], do not recognize him."

My brethren, those are some incredibly strong words from God. Those who reject God's commands regarding who is permitted to lead in the worship aren't really spiritual; they are actively ignorant, rejecting the commands of the Lord; and they are not to be recognized as being right with God.

### **Conclusion**

Being right with God isn't just something nice to be, it is absolutely *essential* to our holiness and happiness and hope. You can't be wrong with God here and expect to be right with God at judgment! My friends, a home with God Himself is there for you if you will submit to His authority and do your best to follow His commands. That might sound domineering, but it's like saying "just obey the law, and you'll be fine." The law of God says that those who believe in Jesus have the power to become children of God (John 1:12). These believers have to put their belief into action by repenting of their sins, confessing that Jesus is the Christ, and being baptized in submission to His will. Only those who have done these things are made citizens of that heavenly kingdom! And after you become a citizen, "just obey the law, and you'll be fine." When you mess up, when you sin, when you fall away, God is merciful and will forgive you when you go to Him in prayer, confessing your sin and repenting of it.

God loves you and wants you to be saved.



# And He Went Out, Not Knowing Whither He Went

*Bill Howard*

This is the age-old story of God's instructing Abraham to leave those things familiar to him, his home, his kin, his friends, and his land to embark upon a journey to an unknown destination. Except for one aspect, this had to be a challenging and disquieting charge. In today's world with all the technical advances at our beck and call, this would be a difficult thing to accept, though many have to do it because of jobs, etc. It is still a daunting task. Nearly five thousand years ago, faced with the explicit guidelines which God gave him, Abram (his name at that time), at the age of seventy-five, readied his family and holdings and did as God directed. It was not possible that Abram could know all the incidents which would be encountered as the journey was initiated.

We can only imagine what all this would entail in those primitive times. He then, as we would today, had questions which one would wish to be answered. However, not once did Abram question God. "Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). This was God's instruction at the time, nothing else. "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (Genesis 12:4-5).

This had to be a formidable challenge for Abram. One could imagine the preparations alone would be overwhelming. Without knowledge of the end result, surely he had some thoughts about why me, why now and where to? But these things were of no significance to Abram; he did as God directed. So what was the one aspect that caused Abram to have no qualms about obeying God's word? The writer of the Hebrew letter brought this up again nearly three thousand years later. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8).

It was his faith in God that led him to obey without hesitation or question. He didn't know the entire story, but he knew the ending. God had made a promise to him, and he knew it would happen just as God had promised. God said to Abram: "And I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3). At that time, Abraham could not possibly know the fullness of the meaning of what God was telling him. Only later would the efficacy of this grandiose blessing, the most magnificent of all time, be revealed.

A great many events took place as this journey transpired. We will not dwell much on those things at this point because the significance of this part of the story concerns faith, faith that led to obedience and eventually the reward of obedience. The Hebrew writer on the importance of faith points out two important factors relating to the subject: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). To have faith means enjoying belief in and hope of eventualities which we desire, yet are not presently visible. The Apostle Paul understood this truth: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). Faith is a necessity in our relationship with the Creator. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). From the beginning, the time of Adam and Eve onward, faith has been and is a necessary tenet in our being if we are to be approved of God. Adam and Eve did not have faith in what God said to them; consequently they were disobedient, sinned, and were cast out of the Garden of Eden: the consequence of not having faith in God and His word.

"There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless, a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. He

owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area” (Job 1:1-3 NLT). There are many things about Job to which we are not privy. However, we do know that he was an extremely wealthy individual and enjoyed a high position in society. The King James Version says that Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. From this reading, there is no question about his standing. He feared God, took no part in evil, was without blame, and very wealthy. By today’s standards, he would be reckoned among the wealthiest people in the world. However, his wealth and position is not our primary consideration in this writing; we want to delve into his life to see what kind of individual he really was. Of note is that he had children who evidently were not like their father. Their revelry was of concern to him, and like fathers of the Patriarchal age, he made sacrifices for them. “Jobs sons would take turns preparing feasts in their homes, and they would also invite their three sisters to celebrate with them. When these celebrations ended, sometimes after several days, Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself, ‘perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.’ This was Job’s regular practice” (Job 1:4-5 NLT). As was his wont, Satan desired to annihilate Jobs holdings, destroy his bliss, and snatch him away from his belief and faith in God. He accused God of “making a hedge about [Job]” to protect him. He said take all he has away, and he will curse you to your face. God gave Satan permission to do as he would with Job except to take his life. Job suffered many things in this ordeal. He lost everything he had, including his children. He had sores and illness beyond belief, his friends accused him of being repaid for his sins, and he was thrown out of town. His wife, at one point, suggested that he curse God and die. Through it all, Job never turned away from God. When all was said and done his wealth and holdings were restored two-fold. “So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). His faith, as with Abraham, saved him. He had no idea of what all would take place in his life; he suffered pain and loss beyond comprehension, yet through it all he clung to his faith in God. He didn’t know how it would all end,

but he knew God was in control.

“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:11-13). What a tragic commentary on the condition of mankind, probably a little more than a thousand years after God had created mankind, the conduct of man is so reprehensible that God regrets even making man and is determined to destroy it all. There was this one exception, Noah and his family were righteous in the sight of God, and He would make a way of escape for them. God instructed Noah: “Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.” God gave further instructions concerning the construction of the three-story ark and what he was to bring aboard. He informed Noah that He would bring a flood on the earth to destroy all flesh and that everything that is in the earth shall die. He intended to cause it to rain for forty days and forty nights. “The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. The waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days” (Genesis 7:11b, 24). According to different calculations, it took Noah and his three sons a hundred and twenty years to make the ark and prepare it to withstand the flood waters. They did as God directed and were successful; they safely rode out the flood in the ark. When the waters receded, Noah and his family went forth and began their work of rebuilding and repopulating. For all of the years that the ark was under construction, Noah knew only that there was to be a destroying flood upon the earth. He was not aware of all that would take place. He knew not how long their stay in the ark would be, but he knew one thing for certain: What the end result would be. He had faith in God and did His bidding, and he and his family lived to bring about another beginning.

God’s word, the Bible, is replete with the history of those who had faith in Him and did as He directed and were blessed: Also, history of those who chose not to believe and did not obey His word and paid the price for their failure. We will consider one more journey before we bring this to a close: A journey as none other ever taken before, and one

that will never be repeated.

This journey had its onset during the time that God decided to create the Universe and all that is in it. In the Gospel of John, we learn something of this beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4). A bit further in his gospel he wrote: “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (vs. 14). About seven hundred years before John wrote his gospel, a Prophet of God Stated: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). As Matthew was writing of history in his gospel, he referred to that prophecy of old. “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23). This miraculous birth occurred in Bethlehem of Judea; the Angel Gabriel had told Mary her newborn would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Thus the journey which started in the heavens amidst the glory of God’s realm had its beginning. The Son of God, born of a virgin, made the journey from heaven to earth, by way of this miraculous birth, amidst the most humble of surroundings. The Word became flesh and dwelt among man. This journey which Jesus Christ the Son of God made was miraculous in its beginning. It had never happened before and was not to be repeated again for the same reason.

As with Abraham, Job, Noah, and others there was a reason for the event that took place. In this instance, there is an astounding purpose that brought the Son of God to earth. As Matthew said: “thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus embarked upon a thirty-three-year journey on earth, living a life none other had experienced nor would any do so ever. He came to do God’s bidding and to fulfill the prophecies of old. He would teach of new things which would replace the old, perform miraculous feats bringing the dead back to life, make the blind to see, heal the sick and the lame, spread happiness and cheer, and perform un-

countable miracles which proved He was the Son of God. The world was in sin and estranged from God; there was a need for a way whereby man could turn back to God and be reconciled to Him. Jesus is that way (John 14:6).

As he began to teach and gather disciples, there were those who did not believe in him. There were times he was in danger, times he was hungry. He had no home and no place to lay his head; he possessed nothing other than the clothing on his body. He suffered from the treachery of those who opposed him. People lied about him, accused him of blasphemy and refused to accept him as the prophesied Messiah and ultimately was betrayed by one whom he loved. Jesus knew all this was to take place, but he continued his teaching, healing and miracles. He had a mission to fulfill: He was on a journey to accomplish his task and do the bidding of his Father and sacrifice his life for the benefit of sinners. “God so loved the world that he have his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). “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). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

When the appointed time came for Christ to complete the journey, His task, “He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee” (John 17:1). He prayed to the Father saying: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was taken from Gethsemane by the mob and led away to be crucified. He was taken before the High Priest where false witnesses lied about Him, and the next morning on to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Again, He was falsely accused of blasphemy. Jesus was silent when questioned and when the crowds screamed for his crucifixion. After Pilate scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. He was beaten, spit upon, struck with reeds. This happened just as Isaiah had prophesied. “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6). Then the soldiers

stripped Jesus of his clothing, and a crown of thorns was placed on his head. He was taken to Golgotha and nailed to the cross. He suffered, nailed to the cross, enduring the cruelest of all penalties: the brutal savage crucifixion. From the sixth hour to the ninth, there was darkness over all the land. His final words: "it is finished." Jesus wasn't speaking of His life; He was saying that what He came to do, He had done, He had accomplished the reason for the journey from Heaven to earth. He had endured many disheartening situations during his time on earth. He had to have a dread of the barbaric suffering and ultimate death, but he knew what the final outcome would be. He had faith in the Father and did as He asked. He had taken upon himself the guilt of all mankind and made a way for man to be relieved of sin and have fellowship with the Creator, Almighty God.

These journeys mentioned, and others as well,

have proven to us that we need have no fear about taking a journey when God is walking with us. We may not be aware of all we will encounter along the way, but we can surely know the final outcome. Jesus made the final journey of man a way of escaping sin and Satan and dwelling in the presence of God in timeless eternity in that haven that is called Heaven. Believing in Christ, desiring to turn away from all our past and repenting, telling mankind of our faith and then being baptized for the remission of all sin, life begins anew, and God will make you a member of His family, a resident of His kingdom. Jesus said: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). "And I will make of thee a great nation," the family of God.

## God's Beauty

*We bask in the warmth and beauty of God's creation,  
while the colors of nature encompass the nation.*

*With His color palette and paint brush in hand,  
He splashes dazzling beauty over all the land.*

*Such blazing hues are rampant from meadow to sky,  
Makes us aware that our loving God is always nigh.*

*These are harbingers of His love and compassion,  
as we dwell in His Kingdom and revel in His passion.*

*He fills our lives with His abundant blessings,  
This He promises; leaves no reason for guessing*

*His promises, all exceeding great and precious; we know,  
as we strive in His Kingdom to learn and to grow.*

*Our cleansed lives we offer in devoted faithfulness,  
Because of our love, and not from needless duress.*

*Giving up the things of the world; not considered loss,  
with faith and anticipation we take up our cross.*

*Assured by our Father that we are Heaven bound,  
as we work in His Kingdom we are on solid ground.*

*In that certain end when we have bridged the divide,  
we shall receive that reward, dwelling at God's side.*



# Women of Faith

## (and other secrets of the genealogy)

John Krivak

This article honors our women of faith. Although Luke is rightly recognized for highlighting the role of women in the Jesus story (and John reserves the truest self-disclosure by Jesus for the Samaritan woman at the well), we turn to the Gospel of Matthew—surprisingly to the genealogy in the first chapter. Usually a boring record reckoned according to male ancestry, here we wonder at finding four women. Why are they included here?

Each of the four is marked in the historical record by very public shame, which makes it all the more surprising that Matthew includes them at all. The first is Tamar (1:3), who disguised herself as a prostitute to get impregnated by her father-in-law, Judah (one of Isaac's 12 sons). The second (1:5) is an actual prostitute—Rahab the Harlot (it is said that we often follow Rahab with “the harlot” as though it were her last name!). The third (also in 1:5) is Ruth who is an outsider to the chosen people of God, Israel. She was from the despised Moabites (under a ten-generation exclusion, Deuteronomy 2:2-3). The fourth (1:6) was known for a scandal so infamous that she is not even mentioned by name—she is called “the wife of Uriah” and her name is Bathsheba. King David impregnated the wife of one of his loyal soldiers and arranged his murder (2 Samuel 11-12). Each of the four, it seems, for being marked with shame, might have been left off the ancestry of Jesus!

Looking closer at the four, each shares in common a second trait—private honor before God. Public shame (in the eyes of people); yet private honor (in the sight of God)—because each is a woman of faith!

Tamar played the harlot with Judah, but recognizing his own shameful involvement and his broken

promise, he was forced to concede: “*She is more righteous than I*” (Genesis 38:26, NASB). Rahab, harlot or not, acted faithfully with the spies of Israel and so facilitated the conquest of the Promised Land. Ruth kept faith with her Israelite family, even after widowhood ended her obligations. Bathsheba, at first a powerless pawn caught up in a rivalry between men, takes action to secure the dynasty of David over Israel for her own son, Solomon. God extends His blessing to each of these women of faith.

Public shame; private honor. By invoking within the genealogy of Jesus each of these four women of faith, Matthew has set up his story for the appearance of a fifth woman. She will wear the same characterization as the others. Her name is Mary. Though betrothed to Joseph, he is of a mind to break off the relationship. For, although he had no sexual relations with her, Mary is pregnant. Public shame—yet God honors her as mother of His own Son!

The unfolding story of Jesus, as told by Matthew, will also generate characters who are precisely opposite. In public, they carry honor (before people). Yet they carry shame that is private and hidden and secret (seen only by God and by Jesus). These are the villains of the Gospel, the Pharisees!

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on*

*the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:25-28).*

It is by these different characterizations of honor and shame that we understand this saying of Jesus: *"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:20).

Yet Matthew elevates one character who, *par excellence*, resembles the women of faith—Jesus. Public shame? He is the targeted enemy of the elite within the religion of God—an obvious scoundrel. He involves himself with the dregs of society—with the poor, the sick, the outcaste, the sinners. Finally, Jesus is supremely shamed with criminality that merits the form of execution reserved for the worst of the worst—crucifixion. Private honor? He was God in the flesh, sinless, falsely accused, and condemned by miscarriage of justice! Private honor before God; yet public shame before the watching eyes of the public. Just like women of faith!

The genealogy holds another set of secrets for the careful reader. The lineage of the Messiah is structured around three legs of fourteen generations each (1:17). Although this count is imperfect, the real interest lies at beginning, at end, and in the two pivot points that join one leg to another. Each marks a covenant: Abrahamic, Davidic, Mosaic, and the New Covenant. Three originate in ancient times, and one will emerge by the end of Matthew's Gospel.

The New Covenant advances, in a friendly way, the ancient covenants with Abraham and David. However, it intends a rather hostile takeover against the Sinai covenant with Moses. The Old Covenant will soon be obsolete. Its enduring failure is marked in genealogy with reference to *"the deportation to Babylon"* (vs. 11-12). Because Israel broke the Covenant, God sent Babylon upon Jerusalem and its Temple in wrathful judgment. The year was 586 BC. The chosen people now faced humiliating exile. In the Gospel, the stubborn ones who refuse to let go of this fading Covenant, these are Pharisees—wearing public honor, yet God sees their inner shame: *"You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME"* (Matthew 15:7-8). In His last visit to Jerusa-

lem, Jesus will speak the final doom to the Old order (Matt. 24). It will fall in 70 AD when Rome becomes Jerusalem's new Babylon.

From ancient times, God wanted to embrace all nations—not just Israel. The estrangement from God (in Eden) and from fellow mankind (at Babel) was to be ended through the Abraham Covenant. Jesus will do that. The New Covenant will replace the Old narrowness, with inclusivity broadened to take in all nations (28:19). The Abrahamic Covenant retains validity. It carries vast significance into the NT, and not merely as the root in a historic development. This covenant remains active, yet this escapes most of us. Test your awareness with this: Paul declared a particular reason why *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us"* (Galatians 3:13). Do you know why? You will find an answer in v. 14 that will surprise most of us: *"in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Galatians 3:14). Abraham surpasses Moses in enduring importance.

The Davidic Covenant promised that the kingdom—that started with David—would continue eternally, without end (2 Samuel 7; Psalms 89 and 132). Given the inherent instability of all human political systems, this covenantal promise is stunning! A dynasty that lasts forever? Actually, the Davidic dynasty was toppled after four centuries (which is still remarkable). However, did this not mean that God had broken His "forever" promise? Some thought so (Psalm 89:38ff.). But, no, for God had written a "punitive clause" into the covenant (2 Samuel 14:7; Psalm 89:30ff.). It would come into play if the dynastic sons of David became unfaithful. Punishment would follow that might even vacate the throne, for a time. Even so, God backed His promise with surety—even after a vacancy of six centuries—to keep a "son of David" on the throne into eternity. Jesus came to restore the Davidic Covenant: *"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'"* (Matthew 4:17). His kingdom was Davidic, a resumption of the ancient dynasty! Yet Jesus extended dominion beyond Israel. Now "King of kings and Lord of lords," Jesus carried *"all authority in heaven and on earth"* (Matt. 28:18). And, because of immortality, His rule continues into eternity:

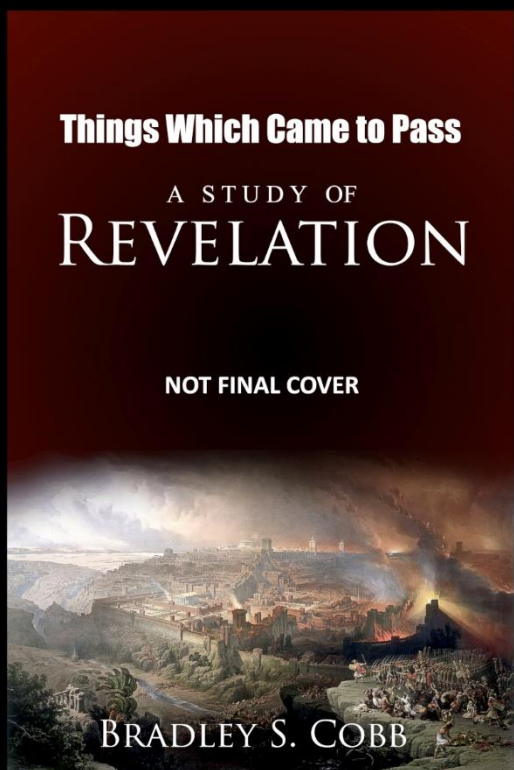
*Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:29-33)*

Jesus would bring stunning fulfillment to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. He would replace the Old Covenant with the New. By the end of Matthew's Gospel, that New Covenant emerges only in a suggestive hint:

*While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and*

*gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. (Matthew 26:26-29)*

Women finding honor, in faith. Covenants enduring long centuries, by faith. God works powerfully through time; powerfully through people. It all converges on Jesus—ancient projects brought to fulfillment, and the start of something New! Who would expect—from Mary's baby—that the Messiah would emerge? And what reader would expect—from Matthew's genealogy—a Gospel to emerge brimming with profound meanings? Indeed, God works in mysterious ways!



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# F.B. SRYGLEY'S WINTERS IN FLORIDA

(1911-1939)

## Part Two

*Earl Kimbrough*

### ***Florida: Another Time and Place***

During the time of F.B. Srygley's nearly three decades of winters in Florida, the environment, conditions, and inhabitants of the state were so vastly different from what they later became that his ministry cannot be fully appreciated without considering that it occurred in a time so much like another age that it almost seems that it was also like another place. In reality Brother Srygley's winters in Florida were at a transitional time when the "old Florida" of horses and buggies was slowly changing to the time of travel by automobiles and airplanes. Strangely enough, those three decades were each almost evenly divided into three distinct periods that together made a giant leap from the image of Florida as a southern, colonial backwater state, to the time when it would forever after be seen as a sun-kissed ocean playground, the tropical jewel in the American crown.

Regarding Florida until the end of World War II, historians say: "Florida remained largely the same

as it had been during colonial times. For years its economy was driven primarily by agricultural industries such as sugar and cotton [plus citrus and cattle]." In 1907, Brother W.A. Cameron wrote about a trip he made from his home in Largo to hold



W.A. Cameron

a gospel meeting at Frostproof in the southern part of Polk County, which is in the center of the state. He said: "I found a settlement of about a hundred and fifty people, situated on the sand hills of South Florida, surrounded by large, beautiful lakes of water, which abound with as fine fish as man ever caught. Citrus-fruit growing, fishing and hunting, and cattle raising are the only means of a livelihood in that section, but for the most part the people seem to be contented and happy." That with some variation might describe all of peninsula Florida south of the Suwannee River,

during the first decade of Brother Srygley's winter ministry in that region.

All of that changed in the 1920s, called "The Roaring Twenties" in the nation as a whole, when Florida was experiencing a rapid increase in its

population. An emerging American middle class is credited with the elevation of Florida from what has been called a Spanish "colonial sauna" to America's playground. Henry Ford's Model-T, a growth in the nation's infrastructure, increase in wages, more time for leisure, recreation, vacations, and travel all played a part. As a result Florida was experiencing a land boom. Developers were buying up large tracts to build hotels and homes to accommodate the influx of people. From 1920 to 1925 the population increased by as much as 300,000.

However, the great Florida Land Boom began to diminish in the 1920s, and coupled with the Great Depression that raged during the last decade of Brother Srygley's winters in the state, meaningful growth was greatly hampered for the next fifteen years, until World War II. Nevertheless, the benefits of the Florida Land Boom and the bubble it produced in the state had a lasting impact and was significant in shaping the state's future. Many things Brother Srygley mentioned in his reports from Florida reflect the transition that was taking place in the state during his winters there from 1911 to 1939. It was not until after World War II that Florida entered another land boom that produced the Florida of urbanization and the Space Age that is observed today.

A study of the history of the Churches of Christ in Florida in many ways reflects the history of the state itself and of its people in the time when F.B. Srygley was making his winter evangelistic journeys there. Much of this was more than 100 years ago. While his Florida ministry was in the early years of the twentieth century, it was still in the remnants of pioneer times for the Churches of Christ in America, especially in Florida. Almost all of the earliest congregations of peninsula Florida had their beginnings with small groups of Christians led by self-employed preachers that worked at secular jobs all week and preached the Word to small groups of Christians on Sundays.

### ***Churches of Christ in Florida Before 1911***

It is not our plan to give a history of early Churches of Christ in Florida, but we have tried to give a limited view of the churches during the time of F.B. Srygley's winters in the state, especially in the Central West Coast region where he did most of his Florida evangelistic work during nearly thirty years. There is an excellent history of the Churches of Christ in Florida written and compiled by J.C. Townsend and Geraldine McLeod Thompson, from

which we have borrowed some things in our essays on *F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida*. The book is entitled, *A History of Churches of Christ in Florida with Other Related Stories, 1869-1949*. It was copyedited by Fred Thompson, who in his Editor's Preface gives the following remarks about this history.

"This book provides a heritage to Christians living in Florida today, a history of men and women who boldly declared the Word and worked tirelessly to see new congregations established. It tells of gospel meetings that lasted for weeks during which tens, even hundreds, obeyed the gospel. It tells of preachers who came in horse and buggy, who walked for miles to reach preaching appointments, who worked on the railroad or farmed to support themselves, and who ignored threats from Ku Klux Klansmen when they dared to teach black brethren.

"They girded their loins with truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, shod their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. They took the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, and made known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. Thanks be to God for those who love the gospel of Christ enough to declare it at any cost to a lost and dying world."

With the beginning of "The Roaring Twenties," soon after the end of World War I, "the state entered a great 'Land Boom' sparked by expanding infrastructure that made travel easy for the growing middle class, and also increased migration to Florida." This was hampered by the Depression of the 1930s, the last decade of Brother Srygley's life. Each of these periods ("Old Florida," "Land Boom," and Great Depression) not only had a bearing on his preaching in Florida, but also had a great effect on the mostly small and scattered Churches of Christ that were beginning to increase in size and spread out to other sections of the state.

There were very few Churches of Christ in Florida before the beginning of the twentieth century and almost all of these began in the 1890s. What is thought to be the oldest Church of Christ in the state, known as Joppa Christian Church, was established at Trenton in 1876. The name "Christian Church," in those days and well into the twentieth century, was used by churches that were actually the

same as Churches of Christ. Our concern in this period of the history of Churches of Christ in Florida is for the status of the churches before and up to the time F.B. Srygley first came there in 1911. Before that time and after his coming, especially in the earlier years, pioneer conditions generally prevailed in the Florida Churches of Christ. So when he first began preaching in the state, Brother Srygley found Churches of Christ, Christians, and gospel preachers not far removed from pioneer like conditions.

The Church of Christ at Largo in Pinellas County, the church most closely associated with F.B. Srygley's winters in Florida, began in 1892. J. Early Arceneaux of Dallas, Texas, came to the West Coast of Florida that year to preach the gospel. "He rented a team of horses and a buggy to make the trip and held a [tent] meeting at Largo." Before that a few Christians in the area of Largo met in various homes to worship, but they do not seem to have organized as a church before Brother Arceneaux's meeting. W.A. Cameron of Valdosta, Georgia, held meetings at Largo as early as 1902. He moved to the city in 1907 and remained until 1924 when he moved to St. Petersburg.

After Brother Cameron moved to St. Petersburg, H.C. Shoulders of Kentucky became Largo's second preacher. These were among the preachers with whom Brother Srygley was associated during his preaching in Florida. Tarpon Springs in Pinellas County was the primary place where he stayed in his winter visits. He seems to have worshiped and preached at Largo when not preaching in other parts of the Central West Coast region. When Brother Cameron began preaching in Pinellas County, he said when he entered that field there were "only six loyal churches in the state south of the Suwannee River. Now [1907] there are fourteen. I have planted eight and Bro. Arceneaux one. Kissimmee ceased."

There were a few other preachers in Central Florida that were contemporary with the early work of Brother Cameron, yet he was apparently the only one supported by the church. This was in his work at Largo. All the other preachers were mainly self-supporting. Some were farmers, others worked on the railroad, or at others contemporary occupations. Brother Srygley's ministry in the state fits well into the history of the Churches of Christ in Florida in the early part of the twentieth century. This is so much the true situation that it is not easy to write about his Florida ministry without including more

about the churches, the preachers, and the environment with which his winter visits in Florida were associated. However, for the balance of this history of *F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida* the record will be especially devoted to him.

### ***F.B. Srygley's Florida Excursions***

Having given a sketch of F.B. Srygley's life and noticed a few things about his unique character and manner of preaching, we will now carry on our main purpose for this writing, which is concerned with Brother Srygley's winters in Florida. It was the marriage of his second daughter, Maggie May, that encouraged him to first come to Florida in 1911. After her marriage to Dr. Irving Belcher in 1909, she lived in Tarpon Springs, Florida, in northern Pinellas County. Her husband was a member of the pioneer family of William Alexander Belcher. When I preached at Largo in the 1950s there were some Belchers that were members of the Largo church, but I do not know their precise relation to the husband of F.B. Srygley's daughter. I remember especially Sister Lillian Belcher and Sister Sally Belcher. They were active and faithful members.

F.B. Srygley made his journeys to Florida on the Dixie Flyer passenger train. At the time it was said that "the Dixie Flyer was the nation's premier service from the Midwest (Chicago) to the sunny Florida vacationland." At Jacksonville, Florida, it divided into two sections that ran to Miami and to Tampa and St. Petersburg. A notice in the *Gospel Advocate* for January 12, 1911 told about what apparently was Brother Srygley's first trip to Florida. It said: "Brother F.B. Srygley and his daughter [probably his unmarried daughter Birdie] left this city [Nashville] on Wednesday, January 4, for Florida, where they expect to remain for several weeks. The train on which he went was wrecked about one hundred miles south of Macon, Ga., but fortunately none of the passengers were killed or seriously injured."

Brother Srygley also reported the incident, characteristically inserting a humorous note about this tragic event. He wrote: "I reached Tarpon Springs, Fla., on January 6, after considerable excitement and delay over a railroad wreck in Georgia. The section of the train, the Dixie Flyer, on which we were riding was ditched some ten or twelve miles from Tifton, Ga., near five o'clock Thursday morning. No one was hurt except the fireman, who was caught under the engine, which was overturned. We finally got him out after about two hours' work, with



his leg broken and one hand considerably burned. The cars were turned up against a bank, which left the passengers and their bundles piled up a little too much on one side of the car for comfort; but we were happy to get out alive and with no bones broken."

This began a series of short reports to the *Gospel Advocate*, simply labeled 'Florida Notes,' that became a feature of the paper during Srygley's annual visits to the Sunshine State. Srygley thoroughly enjoyed his Florida visits because of the weather, the agriculture, and the semi-tropical scenery, but more especially because he could spend most of his time preaching the gospel. The visits were working vacations. From the beginning, it became his custom to use his time in Florida to hold gospel meetings at various places, from as far north as Gainesville, south to Oneco, and inland to Lakeland during the time of his winters in the state.

Most of the Churches of Christ in the Central West Coast region of Florida during this time were weak and struggling. Some met in homes or rented halls and many had problems of one kind or another, some caused by economic conditions, and others by doctrinal and personal differences. Brother Srygley sought to strengthen the churches spiritually and numerically through his preaching and to help them solve their difficulties with his wise counsel. In this way, he added new converts to their numbers, built up weak members, and encouraged beleaguered preachers. Many of the spiritually thriving congregations of Florida's West Coast today are building on the pioneering work to which Brother Srygley, along with other hard-working and sacrificing preachers, made a significant contribution to the cause of Christ in the state.

His reports and other writings about his Florida visits, published in the *Gospel Advocate*, would provide an important original source for the history of the Churches of Christ in Florida in the early twentieth century. Regrettably, the "History of Churches of Christ in Florida," published in 2003 (referred to earlier), makes only one reference to Brother Srygley's work in the state, and that just names him among several preachers who held meetings at Lakeland in the 1940s. There is another reference to him in the book, but it is in regard to the conversion of W.A. Cameron that took place in Valdosta, Georgia, in 1892, some twenty years before Srygley's Florida ministry. It just says: "The young

railroad man heard the gospel for the first time in the early part of 1892 when F.B. Srygley came to preach in Valdosta."

Brother Srygley became well acquainted with the gospel preachers who labored in the part of the state where he preached between 1910 and 1940, often staying in their homes. At Largo, he became closely associated with W.A. Cameron and they became the "best of friends." In 1939, Srygley said: "I have known Brother Cameron intimately for nearly twenty-five years; but I first met him only casually at the latter part of a meeting which I held perhaps forty years ago in Valdosta, Ga. After my daughter married and settled in Tarpon Springs, Fla., I went down on a visit. I got to Tarpon Springs on Saturday night. My girl had written to Largo that we would be there Sunday, but the letter got there Saturday night, and had not been received. Brother Cameron was then living in Largo. We went to the meeting, and when I stepped into the building he was teaching a class in the Bible-study period. The congregation had had opposition to the Sunday school, and so they changed the name and taught the Bible. Brother Cameron said: 'There is the man who taught me the simple Gospel of Christ.'"

This refers to the time when Brother Cameron was a young man working for the Georgia-Florida Southern Railroad in Valdosta, Georgia. Brother Srygley had gone to Valdosta from Nashville for a meeting in the early part of 1892. It was in this meeting that W.A. Cameron, he said, for the first time heard the simple gospel. On Wednesday afternoon, March 2, 1892, he, his wife, and brother-in-law were baptized by O.M. Griffin. That same night Brother Cameron made his first effort to preach the gospel and thereafter became one of the most significant evangelists in Florida. In eleven years, from 1897 to 1908, he traveled 30,000 miles and preached the gospel in fifty-six towns, much of which were in Florida. That was in the time before automobile travel became common for preachers.

Brother Cameron lived in Largo for about seventeen years, preaching for the church there, before moving to St. Petersburg where he lived the balance of his life. He was born four years after the Civil War and died in 1959 at the age of 89. The statistical total of his ministry of nearly seventy years was 11,000 sermons, over 2,000 baptisms, thirty-six churches established, and 110,000 miles traveled. This is said about him to show that while he

preached regularly for churches in Largo and St. Petersburg, he also did extensive evangelistic work in Florida. He worked closely with Brother Srygley in his winter ministry in Florida. And in converting this young man, who soon made Florida his mission work, Brother Srygley had an indirect influence on the gospel in Florida a few years before he himself began his winter ministry in the state.

It was during his first visit with his daughter and her husband in Tarpon Springs that Brother Srygley first preached in Largo, also the first time he ever preached in this state. About his first visit to Largo and his association with Brother Cameron, he said: "I remained there and preached several days, and made his home my home. We have from that day to this been the very best of friends. He has been in my home only one time, but I have kept up with him all these years. We perhaps have differed on some things, but it has not broken our friendship."

Describing his first visit to Largo in another report, Brother Srygley wrote: "On Sunday morning I came to Largo, where I found Brother Martin [J.E. Martin of Bradentown] just beginning a meeting. Somewhat against my judgment, I preached for him Sunday night. I have heard him twice. This is the home of Brother Cameron, and he seems to have the work well in hand. While they have had a little trouble in the past over what they call the 'Sunday school,' it is all over now, so far as I know. There are great possibilities for the Largo church, if they remain united and faithful and teach the word of God diligently to their children. It would indeed be a pity for them to waste their powers fighting each other, when there is so much to do around them."

In his next report, Brother Srygley said: "I am still at Largo. Brother Martin began a meeting here, as stated before, on January 8; but he was not very well and insisted that I take the meeting off his hands, so I have been doing the preaching since January 12. We had no additions till the night of January 19, when there was one confession, two more the next day at the water, and up till now there have been ten added to the congregation as they are usually counted, seven confessions, two united with us on the Bible who were immersed Methodists, and one restored. I went over to Tampa and preached twice on Sunday, and had one confession there. Brother Cameron preached here on Sunday and Sunday night, and I got back last night. I promised to return to Tampa just as soon as this [Largo] meet-

ing closes, but we hope to have several more additions here."

After the Largo meeting ended, Brother Srygley went to Tampa as promised. In reporting that meeting, he said: "I closed the meeting at Tampa on Sunday night. We had no additions, but the audiences grew better to the last. The meeting only lasted nine days. It would have lasted longer; but there are other places I want to visit while I am in Florida, and so we closed. This is the home of Brother G.B. [George] Hoover, and he and his wife have worked hard and patiently for the establishment of this congregation. The congregation owns the church property. Some time ago the brethren bought a lot in a very good part of the city, put up a tent on it, and used it as a place of worship for a while. They have a very nice little frame house, all paid for, and it was paid by their weekly contributions without begging through the papers. I think they appreciate what they have more and are using it to better advantage than they would if it had been built for them by others. Brother Hoover has learned the Spanish language and frequently holds meetings for them. I went out with him to a Spanish service on Sunday evening; and while I did not understand a word he said, I was pleased to see a number of little Cuban children, with a few grown ones, listening to him as he told the old story to them in their native tongue."

After leaving Tampa, Brother Srygley went over to St. Petersburg where he visited "Brother T.A. Smith," a friend from Tennessee who was wintering in Florida. Smith was partially paralyzed, but as the church in St. Petersburg was becoming "very progressive," he had gathered a few members to meet in his home each Lord's day to worship God "as it is written." "That afternoon, Brother Smith's wife went through the neighborhood announcing that Brother Srygley would preach that night in an unfinished dwelling that belonged to one of the members. Using planks between chairs for seats, a good audience came to hear the preaching. We continued the meeting one more night, and our audience was even better than the night before." After this, Brother Srygley preached nearly a week in Dade City. From there he went to Bushnell for four days. The Bushnell meeting would have lasted longer, but there was a cold spell and the brethren were so worried about their cucumbers freezing that it adversely affected the meeting. Writing about this Brother Srygley said: "Well, the 'cukes' went through Tuesday night,

but I felt that the meeting was considerably frosted. Wednesday night it was worse on the 'cukes' and the meeting, too, and so " took the meeting in and allowed them to give their entire time to the 'cukes' and other garden truck."

Brother Srygley next preached a few days in Oneco, "five miles south of Bradenton, in Manatee County." He spent ten weeks in Florida, ending up in Gainesville where he stayed with Perry Colson and preached eight days. "I am glad I spent some time with Perry Colson," Srygley wrote after returning to Nashville. "He was a friend of my brother F.D. Srygley, and the brother-in-law to my father in the gospel [J.H. Halbhook]. It was Brother Colson that carried my brother to the Suwannee River on the fishing trip about which F.D. wrote so beautifully in the *Gospel Advocate* in 1898 while he was on a trip to Florida. O, the beautiful days that are past! How sweetly they linger in my memory! But there is glory in the future for those that are faithful until death. I am now at home with my family, but my trip to Florida lingers in my memory as a sad, sweet dream. I made some friends while gone that will be my friends, if I am true, till death; but while there is joy and gladness in friendship, there is sadness in the thought that all the ties that bind us to this earth must be broken by death. In the midst of life, we are in the shadow of sorrow. Florida as a winter climate had not been over-estimated, if the past ten weeks are a sample." Other preachers living in Florida in these early years, mentioned by him, include F.L. Prince, at Staccato [probably in the Keys]; R.B. Stanford and S.W. Colson, at Trenton; Leon Colson, at Bell; John Pearl Prevatt, at Gainesville; and Charles Adams, at Chiefland.

### ***F.B. Srygley's Love of Florida***

F.B. Srygley loved Florida from the time of his first visit in the winter of 1911. He enjoyed the small bands of Christians who were then struggling to get a foothold for the gospel in the state. He continued his regular editorials in the *Gospel Advocate*, which he wrote and sent to Nashville while he was in Florida. He also frequently made reports about his experiences in Florida. He told about things he saw and heard, about what he did, both socially and in preaching the gospel, and about what he thought and how he felt about these. He never failed in his remarks about Florida to express himself freely and frankly, true to his disposition. The things he said about what is sometimes called "old Florida" often

gives the reader an insight into conditions in the state as they were spiritually and materially more than a hundred years ago.

One of his first comments was about the state in general. "The climate here is right, oranges are plentiful, the birds are singing sweetly, and I see no reason why we may not all be happy; and we would be if it were not for sin, the one and only cause of trouble." He was more than pleased with the climate, not only because it was "right," but because, "This is a great climate for winter meetings." He said: "I have been here (at Largo) with this meeting now for sixteen days, and it has not been interfered with a single time by even a sprinkle of rain." A month later he said: "I am still delighted with this climate. It is spring in midwinter." However, he didn't think much of the land and found the water in the Gulf of Mexico somewhat lacking. "Brother M.H. Northcross (at Eagle Lake) opened his window while I was there and said: 'All that land out there looks very poor, doesn't it?' 'Well,' he said, 'it does not deceive its looks, either.'" As to the Gulf, he said, "I have been wading in the Gulf of Mexico. They call it 'surf bathing' down here, but I felt as though I needed a bath when I got out of this salt water."

He enjoyed most of the things he ate in Florida, some of which were new to him. When he went to Oneco, south of Bradenton to preach, he tasted some of Florida's fruit for the first time. "Here I ate my first guavas, and I like them, as I do nearly everything that grows in this beautiful country." "On my way back [from Oneco] I went over to Passagrille, and we had crabs for dinner. I let nothing back me out, so I ate them [for the first time] as though I had been raised on them; but I confess that I felt relieved when I finished what they brought me." However, he said, "[The crabs at Passagrille] looked very much like crawfish to me, and I never was any hand to 'crawfish' in my life."

Florida at the time was a developing region of the country, and Brother Srygley could not help but take notice of it. He said: "The main thing is to get the tourists to blow the town, sell them lots, and make enough money this winter to do next summer. It has been said: 'They live on sick Yankees in the winter and fish in the summer.'" "Everything seems to be on the market except the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean." "But there are more opportunities to spend money here than in almost any other place, if one is determined to keep up with the pro-



cession." "Everything seems to be in a rush here. The houses are all full of people and nearly everybody has an automobile."

As Brother Srygley praised the amenities of Florida, he was concerned about the people. He said: "The devil, the 'digressives,' and the sectarians should not be allowed to capture this country without at least a struggle." Of Tampa in particular, he said the greatest hindrance to the truth is not prejudice but indifference. "Nobody seems to care much what you preach, when or where, just so you do not bother them." "Any kind of religion is welcome in Florida, provided those who believe it will buy land and settle here."

Brother Srygley's attitude toward Florida and its people changed little, if any, in his annual visits. He had many friends in the state, he loved his brethren there, and to the end of his life, he spent much of his time in the state trying to save lost souls, strengthen Christians, aid troubled churches, and glorify God by preaching the simple gospel of Christ. It was not his manner to confine his preaching to the pulpit, and he likely spent more time preaching the truth to individuals or small groups in the home than to churches. If the time of his annual visits are all totaled, Brother Srygley probably spent five or six years in the state, most of it in preaching the gospel almost continually to churches and individuals. He held many gospel meetings at a time when meetings continued through two weeks or more. When we consider not only the time, but the nature of F.B. Srygley's preaching in public and private, there is no way of telling the great amount of good he did in the state during his winter visits.

### ***Stories of Events in Florida***

In addition to writing randomly about the state, its people, and the church, Brother Srygley sometimes wrote interesting and informative stories with practical lessons. During his first winter in the state, he wrote about a weed that grows in the South, which naturally includes Florida. In writing about the Florida soil, he said: "Much of the soil in Florida is not soil at all, but simply white sand, and very porous and poor. It is well that it is, for they say that when it does rain 'it never quits'; and if the land were not like a sieve and let the water through fast, it would all be afloat in the rainy season. There are some hammocks and bayheads that are very rich and one brother told me he saw a careless weed that, after it was cut down, he believed he could have put

his head in the hollow. Now that may be like the preacher who said he could dam the Jordan River with his foot, and the man he told that to said he would go farther to see that foot than he would to see the Jordan. That brother's head may have been a greater sight than the weed; still, I did not see anything wrong in his appearance."

Another story Brother Srygley told that has a Florida connection is about some people that were plentiful in the state who believed that saved people could speak in tongues. Describing some of the "Holiness" people he encountered in Largo, he wrote: "They had a Japanese to come up here and listen to their jabbering, and he told them he thought one girl spoke the Chinese language. So they sent her to China; but when she got there, she could not make herself understood at all, and she hurried back to civilization and home. Some were still not satisfied, and they carried her to Tampa to talk to a Chinaman who lives there; but after listening to her for a while, the Chinaman said: 'Me thinks she say nothing.' But with all this complete failure, they have not lost their zeal or faith in their ability to speak in tongues. Notwithstanding the apostle says, 'If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church,' they jabber in every meeting, if they can get them worked up to that pitch. The charitable conclusion is that they are rendered half insane by excitement and really believe the Spirit is talking though them."

Much of F.B. Srygley's writing in the *Gospel Advocate* was done in response to questions he received from his readers. They would also sometimes send him items taken from a paper or some other source, requesting him to comment on it. One such piece came to his editorial desk in Nashville from South Florida. He wrote in reply: "I received a clipping from a Memphis paper, sent to me by a brother who lives in Miami, Florida. The brother writes; 'I think this needs your attention, and I like your way of correcting people, as you do it with such a kind spirit.' I have had some compliments and some criticisms. I have not made a practice of publishing the compliments, because I have always felt that if I made a habit of publishing the compliments that I get I should publish all the criticisms. So I have tried to strike off even and leave it all out. But this compliment is so unusual that I wanted some of the brethren to know that there is one man [in Florida] who thinks I manifest a good spirit."

### ***F.B. Srygley's Last Florida Winters***

Following a long sickness in 1934, Brother Srygley went to Tarpon Springs, Florida, where his daughter, Maggie May Belcher, lived. He had been visiting the state for a few weeks each winter since the early part of the century. He went a little later than usual in 1934 due his extended sickness, and his purpose this time was more to recover his health than to preach the gospel. A note before leaving for Florida said: "When this appears in the Gospel Advocate, I hope to be in Florida. My address while there will be Tarpon Springs, Florida. The doctor thinks the mild climate of Florida will help, and he says I will be able to preach some down there; but my main business is to get stronger. I have already done more preaching than most preachers will ever be able to do. I am like the old farmer-preacher who went across the mountain to get some seed peas, and he was asked to preach a funeral. He said when he got up to preach that being as the man was dead, he would preach the funeral, but he added: 'my main business is that I am looking for some seed peas.' I fear too many of us look for peas instead of saving men."

Near the end of his stay in Florida, Brother Srygley wrote: "I am now looking forward to the end of my sojourn in Florida. I have now (April 19) been in Florida five weeks. I am counting on being back in Nashville about May 2. I had a good time since coming here. I have made my home with Dr. Belcher and his wife. Mrs. Belcher is my girl, and, of course, that fact makes me feel at home. I have preached every Sunday since coming here." Brother Srygley described conditions of the Churches of Christ in the west central part of the state during the depth of the Depression. He said churches were debt-ridden, there was some division, and efforts were being made to support preachers in spite of church debts. He added: "I did not try to settle any of these questions with any of the churches, except by preaching the truth. Personal advice given when it is not asked for is generally rejected."

Lakeland is favorably mentioned in this report by Brother Srygley. He said: "A young Brother [Thomas G.] Butler, who works for a railway company in Tampa, comes out and preaches for them on

Sundays, and the church has its prayer meetings and Bible study during the week. This church will grow despite their difficulties. Lakeland is a beautiful city of some fifteen to eighteen thousand inhabitants, with seven beautiful lakes inside the corporate limits." He was pleased to find many Christians he knew from Tennessee and other places then living, or visiting, in Florida. He counted sixty-five Tennesseans in St. Petersburg. He said: "I have been very fortunate in being able to preach in this fine climate and beautiful country, and I thank God and my friends for the opportunity of doing so. In some respect I feel better than I did before I was sent to bed last December 26."

Brother Srygley returned to Florida in February 1935 and preached in a two week meeting at Lakeland, after which he planned to stay another two weeks for more visiting. The *Advocate* said: "This will be his first meeting since the summer of 1933. He preaches twice each Lord's day in Nashville." The absence of meeting work for such a prolonged period was apparently due to his age and physical condition. The *Advocate* noted that: "His health has been improved during the past twelve months; and while holding the two week's meeting is his 'main business' on this trip, he admits that he looks forward with pleasure to the month's stay in the Southern climate."



In a recorded interview with Tom Butler in 1983, I asked him if he had known F.B. Srygley. In reply, he said: "Yes, I did and only in one meeting. And he was a tremendous man. And he made a great contribution to the work in Lakeland. In 19— I'm not sure about the year, but it appears to me now that it was along about '36 or '37, the division still existed in Lakeland. There was a little group that had pulled off from Lake Weir. Brother Srygley came for a meeting and I was associated with him two weeks. And it was during this meeting that he was able to exert influence upon the party that had pulled out of Lake Weir to make some consideration to return. And along with him, Leonard Tyler was in town working with this group, and the three of us were able to persuade that group that had pulled off

to come back to Lake Weir and to reconcile all differences. So he made a tremendous impact on my life. I enjoyed his humor because I've depended on mine to get me out of a lot of places. He knew the Bible and he was truly a great man."

### **Conclusion**

The comments by Brother Thomas G. Butler of Lakeland about his association with F.B. Srygley provide an excellent conclusion to this brief history of Brother Srygley's winters in Florida. They may be considered a microcosm of those winters there from 1911 to 1939. They show something of the great influence he had in the state on the churches, on individual members, and on preachers there in the early part of the twentieth century.

Brother Srygley not only was influential in reuniting the divided Lakeland church, which made "a great contribution" to the Lord's work, but he helped many churches in West Central Florida with various problems by his knowledge of the Bible, along with his wise and gently manner with people. The kind of influence he had on Brother Butler could be multiplied in reference to several preachers and other Christians in Florida. Brother Butler may have spoken the sentiment of many in the state when he said, "He made a tremendous impact on my life."

There is no doubt that Brother Srygley's devoted "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" during his twenty-nine winters in Florida must be considered one of the most remarkable preaching ministries in the history of Churches of Christ in the state from 1876 to the present. We believe, from a careful and prolonged study of his life and times, that *F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida* comprise at least one of the most unusual ministries of any preacher in Florida contemporary with his time in the state.

### **Appendix**

This supplement to *F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida, 1911-1939*, comes from a personal interest in the man, the particular region where he sojourned in Florida, and the time of his excursions to the state. Brother Srygley was born and reared about twelve miles from my place of birth and rearing. His home was near the community where my paternal ancestors settled in Franklin County, Alabama, before Alabama statehood. He knew my great-great grandfather, William Skinner McNatt, the first of the family to obey the gospel and unite with the

Church of Christ. This was in 1842. When my great-great grandfather died Brother Srygley wrote a memorial of him in the *Gospel Advocate*.

As noticed in this record of Brother Srygley's winters in Florida, he mainly stayed with Dr. Irving Belcher and his wife Maggie May, who lived at Tarpon Springs in Pinellas County. Maggie May was Brother Srygley's daughter. The nearest Church of Christ was at Largo and it was the church with which Brother Srygley was more often associated while in Florida, although he was almost constantly in meetings and stayed at times with other Christian families. The Largo church was one of the oldest Churches of Christ in the state. It was the writer's privilege to do his first "located work" at Largo, preaching for the church that included many of the same people to whom W.A. Cameron, F.B. Srygley, and H.C. Shoulders preached. Among my best friends there was the family of Brother Shoulder's daughter who was also a niece of Brother Cameron.

My residence and ministry at Largo was about twelve years after Brother Srygley's last winter in Florida. This gave me the opportunity of preaching where he preached and to preach to Christians that knew him well and often heard him preach.

I mentioned in the preceding history of F.B. Srygley's ministry in Florida that I have written a definitive biography of his life.<sup>1</sup> I have also written numerous articles about him that were published in religious journals.<sup>2</sup> I have given lectures about his life and work at two universities and a series of lectures about him in a seminar for preachers conducted by Harry Pickup, Jr.<sup>3</sup> And I compiled an anthology of quotations from Brother Srygley's writings.<sup>4</sup> He has been such a part of my writing and speaking life that I feel like he is a personal acquaintance of mine, although I never saw him.

I thank God and hope to meet this great man of God in heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> The Warrior from Rock Creek: Life, Times, and Thought of F.B. Srygley (1859-1940) (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply Center, 2008).

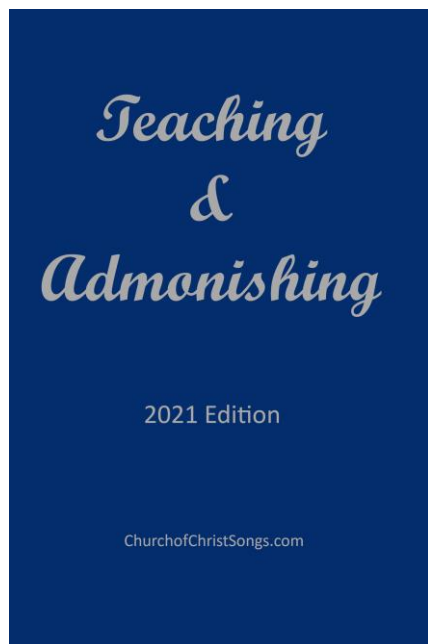
<sup>2</sup> This includes the Alabama Restoration Journal, Biblical Insights, and others.

<sup>3</sup> These lectures can be found in the brand-new compilations: *The Restoration Lectures of Earl Kimbrough*, volumes 1 and 2, from Cobb Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> My Way of Thinking: Wit and Wisdom of F.B. Srygley (Cobb Publishing, 2019).

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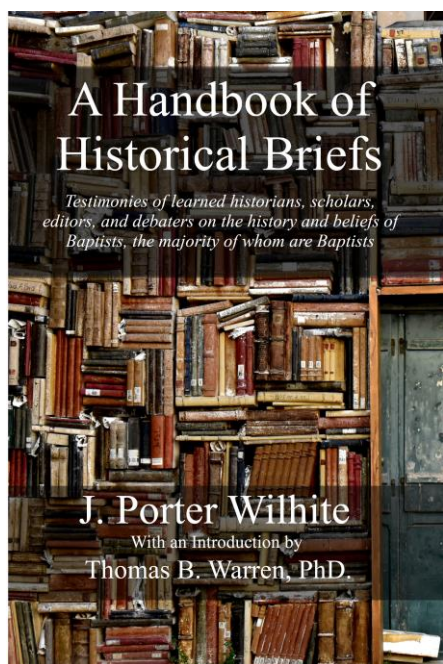


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# LIFE IN THE CHURCH

## AN EXPOSITION OF PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26

Jake Schotter

### ***A Theme Verse for the Book***

It is great to have a sense of direction when studying a book of the Bible! When looking at Paul's letter to the Philippians, we find a solid indicator of why he wrote this short yet important letter. In chapter four, Paul wrote, "*The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you*" (4:9). This verse gives us several highlights we should look for throughout this letter and its passages.

First, we see the reception of apostolic doctrine: Paul wrote, "*the things you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me.*" It is the apostle's doctrine, revealed through their teaching and writing, that has become the bedrock of the church (Ephesians 2:20). It was not that they were important as individuals, but it was the divine revelation they dispensed that made them important. When looking at any part of God's revelation to us, through these ancient words long preserved, we must see what we have for what it is: apostolic doctrine. What we have received, therefore, compels us to act in a certain way. Our relationship to what we know or are ignorant of forms the basis of our behavior.

Receiving apostolic teaching proceeds, then, to our responsibility to act accordingly: "*practice these things.*" What good is knowing something if we do not act upon that knowledge? Frequently, Paul's letters are organized in a doctrine/duty fashion, principles then practice (cf. Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). Our faith is to be active, experiential, and not just theoretical or head-based.

Finally, we see the result of pleasing the Lord. When we read and hear the Word, and respond by faithfully living it out, "*the God of peace will be with you.*" There are rational and beneficial reasons

for obeying the teaching of the Lord revealed in His Word. If you please the Lord by learning and living the word, then you will no doubt know "*the God of peace*" intimately and have the peace of God (Romans 5:1). When looking at any passage of Scripture, and especially when studying the book of Philippians, look for these elements in each passage.

### ***The Topic of Joy***

Philippians, as you may well know, is a well-loved book because it is rightfully called "the epistle of joy." This word appears 16 times in its multiple forms (cf. 1:4, 18 [2x], 25; 2:2, 17, 18 [2x], 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4 [2x], 10). Speaking to the Christians at Philippi, he tells them the church is to be a place of joy. The Philippians need to have joy!

*"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me"* (2:17-18)

On welcoming Epaphroditus, Paul advised:

*"Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Receive him in the Lord with all joy"* (2:28-29a)

*"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord"* (3:1a)

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice!"* (4:4)

Why would he mention these things to the Philippians? Why would he feel compelled to remind them so many times in such a short letter? One consideration comes from the Philippians' concern about Paul's current circumstances (1:12-20; 3:1, 17; 4:18-20). Paul tells them to not worry but to

rejoice (2:17-18, 28-29a; 3:1a; 4:4). He wants them, instead, to be concerned about the Gospel! Additionally, joy is produced by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17) and prepares us to truly enjoy our heavenly citizenship (3:20-21; Romans 12:12; 1 Peter 1:8; 4:13).

What is the impact of a congregation having joy? How does that manifest itself? We need to remember that joy is a great motivator for people to stay where they are, with people they enjoy being around. Joy is contagious! – especially in a world that severely lacks joy. It is interesting to note the importance of joy in church life and having things functioning well. According to Hebrews 13:17, the secret is to be full of joy instead of being drudges. Joy is simply good to have! Steven Lawson wrote in his commentary on Philippians,

“Joy is a spiritual grace that we all need to experience in our Christian lives. We live in a world of stress and anxiety that all too easily and subtly can steal the peace of God from our hearts. We need an abundant, overflowing joy to flood our souls.”<sup>1</sup>

### ***A Thesis for Joyful Church Life***

So, how do we get this joy in the life of the church? Paul, in the pericope that covers Philippians 1:21-30, gives us two clear answers. The first, which will be examined in this essay, will be to focus on our mindset – we need to have a desire to live with the end in mind (1:21-26). In the next essay, we will focus on our manner of living – in which we examine our duty to live with everyone in unity (1:27-30).

Paul wrote to the Philippians the following encouragement:

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your*

*proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.*

### ***OUR MINDSET: A DESIRE TO LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND (1:21-26)***

Entering this section, beginning in verse 21, we discover that Paul is continuing some thoughts he began in verses 12-18, about his circumstances. As he writes these things, he tries to comfort the Philippians while he is imprisoned. He tells them to not be surprised about his suffering, that there is no shame from suffering because of the Gospel. (1:18-20).

#### ***Paul's Ultimate Conclusion (1:21)***

*“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

Paul concludes the previous section and provides a segue way into the current one by saying, *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* This is a revealing statement from the heart of the Apostle Paul about how he views his life while living on earth.

#### **A Dramatic Statement**

“This strong pronouncement reveals the heartbeat that should be pulsating in every Christian.”<sup>2</sup> Whether anyone else lives for Christ or not, Paul says he is all-in. He is entirely dedicated to Jesus as his Lord and life. Christ is his entire existence. Not only that, Paul does not simply *exist* for Christ, but he *lives* for Christ!

While giving his farewell address to the elders of the church in Ephesus, he revealed that he did not *“consider [his] life of any account as dear to [himself], so that [he] may finish [his] course and the ministry which [he] received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). He also reminded the Romans:

*For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (14:7-9).*

Paul's dramatic statement reveals his strong feelings about living for the Lord! This is a firm decla-

<sup>1</sup> Lawson, Steven J. Philippians For You. The Good Book Company, 2017: 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 62.

ration! “Since Paul was in prison awaiting trial, he had to face the fact that it was quite uncertain whether he would live or die; *and to him it made no difference*” (emphasis mine).<sup>3</sup>

### A Devoted Statement

As the apostle is waiting for his trial and possible death, he is unwavering in his single-minded devotion to Christ. Amidst the tough situation Paul found himself in, he made this bold declaration of devotion, where he declares that Christ is his primary pursuit.

Lawson wrote, “His whole life is consumed with Christ. Everything in his life is bound up in Christ. The passionate pursuit of his whole being is to know and glorify Christ. The sum and substance of his present state is confined in Christ. Every moment of every day is lived for Christ.”<sup>4</sup> This statement reveals how tightly bound Paul was to Christ.

### A Distinctive Statement

This is what it means to be a Christian! To live for Christ and die in Christ is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Christ was the preeminent priority of his life and this needs to be the exact same priority for us as well. Not only does Christ require Himself to be our first priority, He wants to be our only priority!

Paul would write to the Colossians:

*For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (3:3-4).*

He would also write to the Galatians,

*I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me (2:20).*

These statements Paul wrote should impact our view of the Christian life, considering it is a series of life and death events. We live physically yet spiritually dead. We spiritually die while living physically. While living physically, we die to live spiritually. When we physically die, we live spiritually in

what is our hope, the resurrection. Our conversion is described in terms of life and death (Matthew 16:24-27; John 3:1-21; Romans 5-8; Colossians 3; et. al).

“He knows that his life, even in suffering, is filled with joy and fruitful labor. It’s not escape that he’s emphasizing, it’s eternal enjoyment. Paul says that in death there’s more of what satisfies him now. The ‘now’ is amazing because it’s about serving Jesus, which brings meaning and joy. But he knows that the ‘later’ is better because it involves face-to-face communion with Christ (1 John 3:1-3)... Do you see the power of this perspective? Kill me? I’ll be with Christ. Let me live? I’ll live for Christ. This is the unstoppable mentality of the apostle Paul, and it can be ours as well if we treasure Christ above all things.”<sup>5</sup>

It is the tragedy of many today who struggle with knowing the meaning of life. They don’t know how to answer the question, “What is life? What is living? For the Christian, living means Christ; dying means Christ. We are to be consumed by this passion for our Lord that our entire lives reflect this reality that something special has happened to us.

### A Delightful Statement

Paul is caught between two realities, both of which are good and useful for him, personally and spiritually. He lives between living for Christ and dying in Christ. Paul declares, first, “*To live is Christ*” because his entire life was Christ, living in and knowing Him, and there was nothing of value that could surpass that reality.

This should lead us to ask several questions and carefully contemplate how we view our lives: is Christ the single focus of your life? Have you found Christ to be everything in your life?

This is what it means to be a Christian: to live in Christ and for Christ

On the same hand, “*to die is gain.*” “Gain” means to receive a great profit. Paul says “*to die*” will be of profit to him. The reality was, as Lawson describes it, “The grave will graduate him to glory... Death will not be a tragedy but a triumph.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Barclay, William. The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians. The Westminster Press, 1959: 33.

<sup>4</sup> Lawson, 62.

<sup>5</sup> Merida, Tony and Francis Chan. Exalting Jesus in Philippians. B&H Publishing Group, 2016: 68.

<sup>6</sup> Lawson, 63-64

How is that possible? What could make death worthwhile? For many, death is the end of all experience; so how can one convince someone, as a Christian, “*to die is gain?*”

In 1639, the Puritan Richard Sibbes wrote, “What greater encouragement can a man have to fight against his enemy than when he is sure of the victory before he fights?”<sup>7</sup> The greatest profit will be to stand before Christ and to behold His glory (1 John 3:1-3). A Christian will be able to have the greatest confidence after being judged righteous because Christ’s atonement covers our utter sinfulness. Until then, we have a confident expectation. The greatest reward will be experienced when we are in heaven, in communion with and giving praise to God.

Truly, the ultimate conclusion of our lives, like Paul’s ought to be “*to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” Are we able to make such a dramatic, devoted, distinctive, and delightful confession about how we live for Christ and die in Christ?

### ***Paul’s Honest Confession (1:22-24)***

*But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

### **His dilemma (1:22-23a)**

Paul is caught between two realities, both of which are good and useful for him personally and spiritually. We have already looked at both realities of life and death. So, living for Christ creates an intense struggle within Paul. He knows Christ intimately and he longs to be with Him. Paul is also completely committed to the advancement of the kingdom and serving Christ on earth.

He recognizes his service on earth here is necessary and even views it as “*fruitful labor.*” His work is fruitful because of the Holy Spirit. He was “*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). He was confident his work would be fruitful, in part, due to the nature of the

Gospel: he wrote the Colossians:

*...because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth (Colossians 1:5-6).*

Despite this, Paul admits, “*I do not know which to choose.*” “It was not that Paul opposed the Lord’s will or wanted to be in heaven if God wanted him to continue his ministry on earth. He wanted to do both, and the two desires were equally strong and proper.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Which direction? (1:23b)**

He says that he is “*hard-pressed from both directions.*” That statement represents how he feels like he is stuck between two walls that are coming and pressing in on him from both sides. Yet, one motivation fuels the other: “Even though [Paul] throws himself with abandon into life in the present, the entire orientation of his life is toward the (absolutely certain) future.”<sup>9</sup>

Yet, Paul does admit that he has “*the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better*” (1:23b). “*Desire*” indicates a strong affection, intense longing, a burning passion in his heart to be with Christ. To “*depart*” is a reference that means to loosen something, like a ship tied to the dock, and a sailor loosens it so it can go off in the water. “Once firmly tied to this world, he sees his life is now being loosened, releasing him to heaven”<sup>10</sup>

### **His desire (1:23b-26)**

In his desire, we see, in the first place, his reason for leaving: “*for that is very much better*” (1:23b). How can this be? Several things immediately arise: being with Christ is better than living in this sinful world, we can enjoy our heavenly reward with Christ, we have a far better inheritance to look forward to and experience (1 Peter 1:3-9), we are strangers and aliens in this world (1 Peter 2:11; He-

<sup>7</sup> Sibbes, Richard. The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, Volume 4. Ed., Alexander B. Grosart. The Banner of Truth, 1983: 223.

<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, John. Philippians. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Moody Press, 2001: 78.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Fee in Lawson, 67.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



brews 11:13-16), and Christ has prepared this place for us (John 14:2-3). In 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote:

*For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven... for we walk by faith, not by sight – we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord (5:1-2, 7-8).*

Paul does not say that death is “better.” He does not say that death is “good” or even “very good,” but he expresses this to the superlative degree: to die and be with Christ, “*is very much better.*” That’s the reason: to gaze upon and praise Christ as the glorified King and sovereign Lord over the universe. To die is gain.<sup>11</sup>

Paul, then, progresses to give his reason for living (1:24-26):

*...yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.*

“Despite his greater desire to depart to be with Christ, he concedes that he is willing to remain here as a lesser option. Why? For the sake of the Philippians and others like them. He will deny himself his greater desire for the spiritual good of the church.”<sup>12</sup>

So, we see his conflict between “*very much better*” (1:23) versus “*more necessary*” (1:24). He is being “pulled back and forth between the superiority of being with Christ, and the necessity of living for the spiritual good of others.”<sup>13</sup>

Paul feels compelled to give the Philippians some assurance that he will remain with them (1:25-26). Therefore, “Paul would gladly postpone his heavenly blessings for the sake of continuing to serve earthly saints.”<sup>14</sup> He wants to make sure they continue in their growth, which is evident when you survey the letter: they needed to work on humility

(2:1-8), to be on guard against false teachers (3:2), to follow Paul’s example in opposing the “*the enemies of the cross*” (3:17-18), some needed to stop fighting (4:2-3), and some were probably attacked by anxiety and other forms of bad thinking (4:4-8). Seeing this progress will inevitably bring confidence to Paul and all the other Christians who see their improvement in following his example (1:26).

## CONCLUSION

As we study this passage in Philippians, we need to ask ourselves some questions.

Are we ready to die? Paul was prepared for such as he sat in prison... he eagerly awaited his time on earth to conclude so that he could be with the Lord.

If one of us were to die today, would we find ourselves ready to be with the Lord? How is our spiritual state? Do we have a relationship with Christ or not? Do we view death as gain?

This must be on our hearts: “*to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” Jesus Christ is the only One for whom life is worth living. Let us resolve to make sure our purpose for living is to live completely for Him!

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Lawson, 69.

<sup>14</sup> MacArthur, 80.

## SHARING

Kevin Micuch

Anyone with children knows they need teach them about sharing. Their toys, their games, their food, etc. Sharing is caring, right? But children don't seem to grasp that concept. In their immature mind, everything is about them. They are afraid of losing their things if they let someone else take hold of them, even if just for a couple of minutes.

Sharing is a more mature concept. That's why it has to be taught to the immature ones. Mature ones understand they won't lose possessions just by letting someone else enjoy them. And even if they did, that's okay too. They know people mean more than things.

This is where the old cliché, "sharing is caring," probably comes from. I'm sure you've heard of it. The more we become accustomed to the idea that life isn't all about us, the more we seek to enrich the lives of others.

The Bible gives us insight into sharing. Look at what Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy.

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (6:17-19).*

God and His promise of eternal life is worth more than anything they owned. Paul wants them to focus on God and not on their possessions.

This reminds me of the story found in Mark 12:41-44. Here, Jesus witnessed people giving money to the treasury and saw a widow throwing two mites in. Mites were small brass coins back in that time, similar to our penny. Their value was of the lowest measure, but when He saw her, He called some of His disciple over to praise what she had done. For her, those two measly mites were all she had in her possession, and she gave it anyway. This ought to be the mindset of every believer.

This is exactly what we see when the church first began in Acts 2. Many had converted after hearing the Holy-Spirit-inspired apostles speak about what

they had witnessed: Jesus' resurrected body and ascension into Heaven. After these people obeyed and were forgiven of their sins, we read:

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as any-one had need (Acts 2:44-45).*

Can you imagine? Think about receiving something you needed from your neighbor that and then receiving something they needed from you. Think of the joy they all had. It's a win-win! And after, it says they continued "*praising God and having favor with all the people*" (v. 47a). This is what a sharing church looks like.

The church began to grow, and we're given a little more insight with an example at the end of Acts 4 which you should read—very encouraging. More and more people were being added among the disciples of Christ, and more people began selling their possessions to help one another out. This is just one aspect of Christian living that sets us apart from the world.

But, what are we to make of verses like Matthew 19:24? How does this tie in? Here, Jesus says, "*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*" That sounds pretty harsh. He says this to his disciples after they witnessed a young rich man walk away because Jesus tells him to sell his things (vs 16-22). Or what about the story in Luke 16:19-31 where a rich man ended up in torment after death because he wouldn't share with a beggar at his gate, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table"? Or even Ananias and Sapphira who were struck dead in Acts 5:1-11? I hope you can see the contrast in these stories and others like them.

So, is it evil to have possessions? No, it most certainly is not. The contrast here is, of course, your attitude towards your possessions. We should share with others who are in need instead of building bigger barns for our things (see Luke 12:16-21). "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:21). In the examples above, the

hearts of these rich people weren't in the right place. You can be a wealthy Christian, *if* your heart is right with God. Like I said before, sharing is caring. When we share, it shows we care more for others' needs rather than our own. It's showing that sacrificial love for others we Christians ought to display.

See, immature minds don't like sharing. Possibly because they are afraid of losing the thing they're sharing. They seek to protect all that is theirs. This is why children need to be *taught* this idea. As we mature, we realize the things we have don't define who we are. Too, we see they aren't really even *our* things anyway. It all belongs to God, who has entrusted them to us. We must be good stewards of the blessings He has given us and share them with the people around us. We ought to store up our treasures in Heaven as Jesus says (Matthew 6:19-20).

But what does that mean? I've pondered on this passage from time to time. Have you? What is our Christ teaching here? What does it mean to lay up treasures in Heaven and how do we do it?

Going back to 1 Timothy 6, Paul is instructing Timothy on how to deal with the wealthy people in his area. In verse seven he says, "*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*" We don't take anything with us when we die. That's what a will is – a dead giveaway. It's the dispersing of what you've accumulated to the ones you left behind. So, if we don't take our things with us after death, what kind of treasures will be in Heaven?

Well, what is the one thing we can take with us into the hereafter? It's people.

People are the ones we'll see in Heaven. In our limited display of Heaven in the Bible, we see people praising God for eternity. There might be other things there too. I can't say. But people are the one thing shown to us.

Which leads me into the most important thing that we should be sharing with others. The thing that God has blessed us with the most. And that is the gospel. Letting people know they too can be forgiven of their sins and live a new life in Christ.

Yes, we should be wisely using what God has given us. Sharing with others our food, money, and other goods we've earned helps build those relationships with people and gives opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ—what He's done for the entire world.

Imagine being forgiven from a wrong you com-

mitted against your neighbor, friend, or family member. How does that forgiveness make you feel? It feels pretty exhilarating, huh? Now, imagine being forgiven of *every* wrong you've committed against God. Think back to what you felt like as you were washed clean in the waters of baptism. Share that with the people you meet, your friends and your family. Share that they too can feel that same joy you felt. Share that there is a better way to live here on Earth. It's with God.

So, what do you have that you can share with others? How can we start sharing more? I hope "sharing is caring" isn't just something we say but something we do. Let's continue putting it into practice each and every day.

**From the Author of:  
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# TOOLS FOR THE WORK

David Dean

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to “be diligent to present [himself] approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). It is this simple command that prompts us to look at various study aids available for students of God’s Word. In this article we will examine three different websites that can be used to help our study. While these tools are beneficial, they must be used with caution. Only the Word of God is the unshakable truth by which we can stand.

## The Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com>

The goal of the *Bible Project* is stated as “Helping people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus.” With an easily navigable website the group presents information in multiple formats. No matter one’s preferred learning style, this tool has something available for them. Perhaps best known for its videos, the *Bible Project* is a top-notch animation studio as well. Visual learners will be given an excellent introduction to a topic that often links to both audio and written lessons for continued study. In short, the *Bible Project* is comprised of a dedicated group of students of the Bible; they strive to understand all the connections found within the various books of the Word of God.

## Bible Hub

<https://biblehub.com>

If you have searched online for a Bible verse, you more than likely have come across the website called *Bible Hub*. A quick search within its powerful search engine will bring up your Bible reference in several different translations (this only works for single verse references). Most popular translations are included and are easily identifiable. However, this is not the most impressive feature of *Bible Hub*. Most impressive is the addition of easily accessible cross references, commentaries, and even a breakdown of the Greek/Hebrew in each verse.

If you are not interested in a single verse but rather a large section, clicking on your preferred translation takes you to the Bible directly. From there you can access a single parallel mode and see various other resources. For instance, Genesis Chapter One includes map images, a PowerPoint slide, and related graphics.

The *Bible Hub* contains a wide variety of free resources so that even the most experienced of Bible students will find something useful for their studies.

## Executable Outlines

<https://executableoutlines.com>

Originally a series of files provided in an executable DOS file, the compiled works of brother Mark A. Copeland are a true treasure. The website states that, “over 1800 sermon outlines, Bible studies, PowerPoint files, and gospel tracts [are] freely available.” Permission has been granted for free use and distribution of these files as anyone sees fit, given that they are provided free of charge.

While this website is designed more to help ministers of the Word of God, it provides an impressive number of resources on a variety of topics. Many young preachers will benefit from the outlines as they provide starting points to grow and develop your own lessons. For those who are interested in personal study, the study guides are a great start as they provide summaries and general outlines of various books of the bible. For those books not covered other resources are linked.

One could wish for an updated website and easier navigation, but these problems are small compared to wealth of knowledge available.

*In the next Quarterly we will take the time to examine different podcasts available for student of God’s Word.*

[Editor’s note: there are certainly many other worthwhile websites to aid in Bible study, including blogs. If you would like to send suggestions to add to a list of worthwhile websites for Bible study, please email us at [Editor@CobbPublishing.com](mailto:Editor@CobbPublishing.com)]





# Lost Books *of the Bible?*

*Kyle D. Frank*

I recently came across a book of the above name. The question that I have is: *Since when are any books of the Bible lost??* I thought perhaps there are some folk out there in “reading land” who would be troubled by such a title for a book. I was taught that the scriptures are quite complete. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells me

*Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.*

If the scriptures are able to make you complete....what more do we need? Our Mormon neighbors would love to hear something is missing, would they not? That would be music to the ears of those who claim they have “another testament” (a.k.a. another gospel). To this, we must solidly answer like Paul:

*I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel, only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should*

*preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema (Gal. 1:6-9, ASV).<sup>1</sup>*

That is the end of the story for those who claim books were taken out of the Bible. While on the subject, though, perhaps there might be some good accomplished by speaking of these alleged “lost books.” Let’s take a look at a couple of these books, and see if some good might come out them. Is there any historical value in them? Perhaps. Let’s pretend we are from the “Show Me” state. (Missouri, that is) **SHOW ME!!**

Several books are published, making these old timers available to Mr. & Mrs. John Q. Public; which, in previous years were only available to scholars with institutional access. One is called “Lost Scriptures—Books That Did Not Make It into

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<sup>1</sup> The ASV was the version that Paul carried—did you not know that? He mentions that in passing in one of the books, which for some escapes me at the moment. (this comment is intended to bring a smile to your face).

the New Testament,” Also, “The Lost Books of the Bible AND the Forgotten Books of Eden.” This article is neither a review, nor a criticism, just a simple peek into these books for some background and perhaps an answer as to why they were excluded from the sacred canon.

### ***The Epistle of Barnabas***

In the category of “Non-Canonical Epistles & Related Writings” the “Epistle of Barnabas” seems to be of great interest. The author/editor states this letter was of interest and considered canonical by many ancient authorities. One problem: the letter was written after the time of the “Barnabus” we know from the sacred text. It mentions the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.), but refers to the possibility of it being rebuilt.<sup>2</sup> This view seems to have been very much alive in the early second century. But then Emperor Hadrian built a Roman shrine on the site of the Temple ruins. According to the author, scholars believe this proves the book was written sometime after 130 A.D. Too bad-it would have been really interesting to have heard from the “Son of exhortation” (Acts 4:36 “And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race.” I am sure he had some pretty interesting things to say. The book talked about the relationship between Judaism & Christianity. It was considered of great importance by the leaders of the church in the second and third centuries. There must be some good in the epistle for them to see it like that. The book has 21 chapters and ends on a different note: it describes the doctrine of “Two Paths”—one being the morally upright path of “light” and the other the morally perverse path of “darkness” All mankind has to choose which path to take, with the “default” one being darkness. (“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23).

### ***Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans***

Another letter that I personally found of interest was called “Paul’s Letter to the Laodiceans”

In the book of Colossians, reference is made to a

<sup>2</sup> One writer, in an unpublished Master’s Thesis, argues that this was a reference to the Babylonian destruction of Solomon’s temple, and that Barnabas (who the thesis-writer believes is the biblical Barnabas) was alluding to it as a previous example of what was about to happen in AD70.

letter sent by Paul to the church of Laodicea in Asia Minor. Paul says:

*And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea (Col. 4:16)*

The first question is: Is this actually *that* epistle or is it one of the myriad of forgeries done by folks of that day? Good Question indeed. The letter consists of 20 verses, most of which sound like they were cut-and-pasted from Paul’s other writings—but who am I to make that definitive call? We know another letter by this name was in circulation by the early second century because the Muratorian canon warns against it as a Marcionite forgery (Marcion was considered as a heretic by most in the church of that date).

An important question is, Why would someone take verses from Paul’s other epistles and paste them together to create an epistle which does not seem to achieve any specific purpose (like advancing a specific doctrine or trying to “expose” a certain teacher or group—which is what many/most of the false letters did). The only plausible explanation I’ve found is that someone put the verses together and claimed it was the actual letter, in order to prove Marcion’s “Epistle to the Laodiceans” was a forgery. Scholars feel that this letter dates to the second or third century. Why? I don’t know.

### ***Other Non-Canonical Works***

Perhaps it would be a good idea at this point to mention some other “spurious” books listed among these works. There are a large number of “Non-Canonical Gospels” such as The Gospel of Peter, Mary, Philip, Truth, The Savior, Nazareans, Ebionites, Hebrews, even “The Gospel to the Egyptians.” There is an “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” the “Coptic Apocalypse of Peter,” “The Secret Gospel of Mark.” Why would anyone write a “Secret Gospel?” That seems to be a bit counterproductive to me, but to each his own.

Among the “Non-Canonical Acts of the Apostles” are: John, Paul, Thecla, Thomas and Peter. Others are the Third Letter to the Corinthians, Correspondence of Paul and Seneca, 1 Clement, 2 Clement, Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora, Pseudo-Titus and a multitude of others.

## Different “Canons”

Also interesting are the various lists of books certain groups considered sacred. These “Canonical Lists” include the Muratorian Canon, the Canon of Origen of Alexandria, and the Canon of Athanasius of Alexandria (Alexandria seemed to be a place of lists). The one canon I found of particular interest was that of Eusebius. Being recognized as the “Father of Ecclesiastical History” and holding prestige among the church leaders of that day, I thought it would be interesting to take a quick look at what he considered canonical. He put the books into four categories:

- 1) “Acknowledged books” those accepted by all proto-orthodox churches
- 2) “Disputed books” those recognized by some churches but not by others.
- 3) “Spurious books” orthodox books that were in fact pseudonymous and not to be accepted.
- 4) “Rejected books” outright heretical forgeries.

His first list, Acknowledged Books, starts with the four gospels we are familiar with, followed by Acts. After those are Paul’s epistles, then the first epistles of John and Peter, then the Apocalypse of John. “We (Eusebius) will set forth other opinions about it at the appropriate time. These then are the ‘acknowledged books.’”

The “Disputed Books” were the epistles we know of as James and Jude, Second Peter, and Second and Third John, “whether they come from the evangelist or from someone with the same name.”

The “Spurious Books” are the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermes, the Apocalypse of Peter, the surviving Epistle of Barnabas and the book called “Teachings (The Didache) of the Apostles,” as well as the Apocalypse of John (*again? I thought it listed above but...*). Another book he listed, which some approved of, while others denied, was the Gospel of the Hebrews, which was especially treasured among the Hebrew Christian community. These were the books he felt were known to the majority of the members of the various congregations.

He then jumps right to the heretical books, which were Gospels (allegedly) of Peter, Thomas, Matthias and some of the “Acts of” books I listed previously. No one of any standing ever championed any of those books among the NT congregations. The literary character is wrong, and opinions they express and materials they include clearly reveal them to be

far from “truly orthodox” works. For that reason alone, he felt that the listed works were entirely fabrications of heretics.

That was a list of Eusebius’ choices for inclusion or exclusion, depending on his opinions. I will try to get a clearer understanding about the Apocalypse of John (Revelation). It seems to have had a rather stormy course in the beginning as it surely has had among the different groups of the later days. Perhaps we will be treated to a good explanation as to why it was and is difficult, after we all have been home with the Lord after the end of time. I must confess (personally) that I have my list of questions that I hope to find out about after we’re home for good.

My only thought about the books not included in our Bible is to take them exactly for what they are: a man-made (non-inspired) production that should be read with just that thought in mind—just like we might read a biography, Aesop’s fables, Greek mythology, or a modern novel. While they *might* have some worthwhile information or thoughts, remember they are human writings and should be taken as just that—the writings of men.

To God be the glory in the church!!!

## Sources:

1) *Lost Scriptures-Books That Did Not Make It Into The New Testament.* by Bart Ehrman, Oxford University Press.

2) *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden* (No author listed) Published by World Bible Publishers

3) *Church History*, Eusebius Book 6, 25, 3-14

*But even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. —Paul (Galatians 1:9, NASB).*





*Bill Howard*

Reading in Luke 5, we find Jesus speaking to a “publican” or tax collector by the name of Levi (also known as Matthew, writer of the first book in the New Testament), saying simply “follow me.” The account states “he left all, rose up and followed him” (vss. 27-28). Quite likely the first question to come to mind would be: *Why would a tax collector, without question, walk away from his life to follow this person?* It is likely he had a family and a home, was fairly well set financially, and had a lot of friends who were also publicans (vs. 29). Jesus didn’t ask if he wanted to, if would he be inclined to do so, or if he had any reservations or objections. Simply: *Follow me*. He spoke in the imperative. We could surmise that with all the things Jesus had said and done in the presence of multitudes, and because his fame had spread rapidly, that Matthew would have heard of and perhaps even witnessed his activities. He could have seen or heard about the cleansing of the leper and was curious or already convinced that Jesus was more than just an ordinary man. We do know he left all and followed Jesus without any hesitation.

Probably the next question would be: *Why would Jesus choose a person that for all practical purposes*

*was disliked by everyone?* A tax collector was not the most popular of individuals, and in general was disliked and looked down upon for the role he played. For this question, we have no pat answer. It is possible there are several reasons. Maybe just the fact that he was not a fisherman, perhaps because of his being involved in a more worldly profession and was familiar with business. Maybe it was because his position required him to deal with every sort of person, and the Lord used this move to show all of mankind is equal in the eyes of Jesus. All of our speculation will not provide us with an answer. We have to be content with accepting the fact that whatever the reason for this choice, Jesus knew exactly what he was doing and why he was doing it. The one thing we can know without doubt is that all of mankind is equal in the eyes of Jesus. These are all good and reasonable thoughts and questions about the enlistment of Levi to be one of the disciples (later to be one of the Holy-Spirit-inspired Apostles) that Jesus was gathering, who would later evolve into the bearers of glad tidings which would be carried unto the entire world.

We are not privy to the exact time of the “great feast” that Levi made for Jesus, whether or not it



was immediately after his decision to go with Jesus or later; there is no way of knowing for certain, but what we do know is that a feast was prepared, and Luke writes: “there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them” (vs 29). The next verse in the narrative states that “the scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” The scribes were those Jews who copied and taught the old law. They were, to some at least, recognized as knowing and teaching that law. Jesus’ answer to their challenge is the key to the most efficacious, most monumental and unprecedented undertaking to ever bless mankind, which was soon to be revealed.

*“And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).*

There was a monstrous and detrimental sickness prevailing upon all of mankind; its name is sin. The mission of the Great Physician, Jesus, was to bring about healing for that affliction. Jesus was not dining with those people to satisfy his hunger; his association was not to engender friendship and to be like them. He had a goal to accomplish; he could be gracious and courteous with them and not be of them. Jesus said it of himself: “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11). That was his aim, the reason for his leaving the splendor of heaven and coming to earth. God, the father, appointed Jesus to achieve that aim.

*“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. 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 4:9-10).*

The Apostle Paul reminded the Romans: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus said: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

The greatest accomplishment to ever take place in recorded history occurred at the time the Almighty God decided to create the magnificent universe, the world, humankind and every other thing

that exists. Now, with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the second greatest phenomenon is in preparation. Soon the most colossal undertaking ever to be unleashed in the history of man would come to be known and would need to be chronicled throughout the entire world. God’s love and mercy would be expressed in the death of His Son as a sacrifice for the sins of all. The task of letting the world know of this would be the greatest endeavor ever launched and would require the help of an infinite number of helpers. Now we understand the reason Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow me.” It would require an army of followers to spread the good news, and Jesus needed to gather a few to prepare for the onset of the mission. He would instruct those helpers:

*“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel [the news about salvation] to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).*

Tell all about the Savior who was crucified on the cross to overcome Satan and sin. Tell about his becoming sin so that sin would lose its power to destroy mankind.

*“For He [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

Tell of his burial in a tomb and how the Father in heaven resurrected him on the third day. Relay the story of the disciples watching as Jesus was taken up in a cloud and of the two men in white apparel, who said:

*“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).*

*“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).*

What an awe-inspiring narrative to tell to others. All things were in readiness.

Jesus told his disciples: “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the

Father,” and that promise was that “the Holy Spirit would come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:4, 8). The charge Jesus gave them was that the saving gospel of Christ would go into every part of the world and encompass all the people of the world. We witness this come to pass on the first Pentecost after the ascension of the Lord returning to heaven. To celebrate Pentecost, there were people from every nation gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:5). The Apostles receiving the promised gift of God were filled with the Holy Spirit and began preaching the gospel, the good news of salvation, for the first time. We read that 3000 believers were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins and were added to the body of Christ, his church; an auspicious beginning of the gargantuan task of teaching salvation to all the world. Almost immediately, the church suffered persecution because certain of the Jews did not believe. Because of this persecution, the members of the church were scattered in all directions, and the number of believers grew. “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). The need for followers is just as critical today as at the time Jesus gathered his helpers in the beginning.

Jesus said: “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35b). Also:

*“Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).*

From that day nearly two thousand years ago when the gospel was preached for the first time to the present day, the need for workers in the vineyard of the Lord has been great. We do not receive the saving grace that makes us Christians just to harbor it within our being; we receive it to be shared with others who need to know about Jesus and his will. We need to be workers like Matthew. Paul’s advice to Timothy:

*“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

*“Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).*

Those who know not Jesus cannot be saved. Peter said: “...neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 4:16). If we fail in our responsibility as followers, how will people know about Jesus? Jesus said: “if any man will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Another time he said: “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38).

Jesus looked directly at Matthew and bid him to follow him. Matthew did and became an integral part of the most meaningful movement ever proffered to mankind: the saving grace that God has manifested to bring salvation to all who choose to accept it. Today, Jesus beckons to us through his word, “follow me,” and in so doing, we become a part of that same great movement; we are summoned to be the bearers of these glad tidings. The Apostle told the Corinthians: “For we are laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9); “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1).

*“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

We can only follow Jesus when we accept the responsibility we have to share the gospel, when we prepare ourselves for working in the vineyard of God. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Colossians 2:6). Once again, the words of Paul:

*“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

# THE TRANSITION INTO CHRIST

Mitch Robison

## ***Where the Battle is Pitched***

In rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, it was necessary for Nehemiah to give some instruction, “Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us” (Neh. 4:20). And in rebuilding the walls of spiritual Jerusalem, the church, it is necessary to staunchly defend the place of the enemy’s attack. It is for this reason we often resort to the place of baptism—because the enemy constantly attacks this position.

That there is so much controversy on this subject highlights the need for more study. The place and design of baptism is extremely important, but so is the “mode” of baptism. If one truly desires to know what constitutes baptism, he has only to read God’s word on the subject, then it becomes clear.

Look first to the case of the Ethiopian nobleman.

*So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.” So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the*

*Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:30-39)*

From this we find the following: (1) Water (8:36); (2) going down into the water (8:38); (3) coming up out of the water (8:39). And looking further in Scripture, you will find the baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:4), a resurrection (Col. 2:12), a birth (John 3:5), a washing (Heb. 10:22), requiring much water (John 3:23).

## ***It Still Reads the Very Same Way***

The din of the battle’s noise can never completely drown out the teaching of God’s word. The efforts to confuse, belittle, impugn or ignore, on the part of sectarian preachers, reminds me of a particular debate. It took place back in the hills between a rude, uneducated Christian and a self-styled “scholar” of the popular brand. After the rustic Christian had been introduced to the audience by the moderator, he opened the Book and read the words of Christ in Mark 16:16; the record of Acts 2:38-41, 10:48, and 22:16. Having read these and other verses, he sat down. Immediately the polished debater sensed an easy prey, and began a devastating assault against what he called “the doctrine of water salvation.” After a long-winded discourse, it was time for the rough farmer to make a defense in the face of such oratory and “logic.” He strode to the platform, adjusted his glasses, and painstakingly began to thumb through the Bible, not saying a word. The silence had become very embarrassing before he finally closed the book, peered over his glasses, and stated firmly: “Yep. Ever’ last one of them verses is still there, and they still read just the very same way!”

Any person who tries to dodge the force of these plain passages on baptism in God’s word will find to his utter chagrin those same passages still face him in God’s judgment. Jesus declared, “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). There was once a woman who cut out Acts 2:38 from her Bible—but she could not erase it from the word of God!

## ***Baptism Is Transitory In Its Nature***

Every Bible scholar must recognize baptism's transitory nature. Its purpose is to change the state and relationship. That change is shown in Gal. 3:26-27, *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* Now, the fact they were baptized INTO Christ plainly shows they were OUT of Christ before they were baptized! As a result, baptism changed their state and relationship. It was the means of transition from OUT to IN! Again:

*Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).*

It is evident these were OUT of Christ, separated from His death until baptized INTO His death and INTO Christ. In view of the precious blood located in Christ and shed in His death, how can one claim salvation before and without baptism which is to induct one INTO Christ and INTO His death?

## ***How the Transition Affects One***

In Eph. 4:18, Paul declares the Gentiles who had not been inducted into Christ had their *"understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them."* This state and relationship is changed on coming into Christ, for Paul said, *"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened"* when they had entered the Lord (Eph. 1:18). ALL MEN need a Savior, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). So, we may conclude that OUT of Christ, *"There is none righteous, no, not one"* (Rom. 3:10).

The terrible plight of the lost is shown in this reading: *"That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world"* (Eph. 2:12). But notice, in the next verses, the change of state:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace... that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (Eph. 2:13-16).*

Paul explains this further in another writing.

*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Col. 1:21-22).*

This is the great spiritual benefit derived from the death of Christ, and found only IN our Lord. But still we must enter into the blessing in Christ only in God's prescribed way. Paul explains this

*And you are complete in Him. . . buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:10-12).*

We find they came INTO Christ, and Paul said, *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Col. 1:14). Individuals today can have same change of state and relationship with all who have been baptized INTO the Lord!

## ***Spiritual Blessings Are IN Christ***

It should also be noted, when one has been baptized into Christ, the Holy Spirit is given in accord with the promise of Acts 2:38. In Eph. 1:13, we find that in Christ we are *"sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."* The reason for the Holy Spirit being given is stated in Gal. 4:6, *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father.'"* When we have been baptized into Christ, we are children of God. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). This change of relationship is effected in the new birth, which is "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), and is accomplished in baptism (see Gal. 3:26-27).

It's only when one has been baptized INTO Christ that he reaches every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). Therefore, it is imperative that we muster to the sound of battle when Satan's forces attack at baptism. And do you now see why Satan puts up a "last ditch stand" at this point? It is his final opportunity for victory! As long as he can prevent one from being baptized into Christ, he still has them in his territory, in a lost condition! If they escape him here, they pass on INTO Christ for every spiritual blessing, where there is forgiveness and redemption. It is not hard to see where God placed baptism.





# THE DATE OF REVELATION

BRADLEY S. COBB

Historians can tell when something was written based on the things contained in it. If they find a letter written by Abraham Lincoln, and it mentions the Emancipation Proclamation having been enacted, it is obvious that it was written *after* that event. However, if they find a letter written by Lincoln that mentions it as something he is considering, then it is obvious that it was written *before* that event.

The same thing is true of the Bible. The historical records of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther were all written sometime *after* the events recorded in them had happened. That is the way historical books are written: *after* the events have occurred.

The prophetic books of the Bible were written *before* the events they prophesy took place. If the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC is *prophesied*, then we can know without any doubt that it was written *before* 586 BC. If the Northern kingdom of Israel is mentioned as still existing, we know it was written *before* 721 BC when they were taken into captivity by Assyria.

You may wonder, *What does this have to do with the book of Revelation?*

The time period in which Revelation was written is a hotly debated subject throughout “Christianism.”<sup>1</sup> You may wonder, *Does it really matter?*

After all, some say, “So long as we agree it is inspired and it was written by the apostle John during his lifetime, does it really matter when it was written?”

The answer is: Yes, it actually matters.

## Why does it matter?

- Because some of the dates proposed for the book contradict Old Testament prophecies about the end of miracles and inspiration.
- Because the New Testament places the finalization of Scripture and the end of miracles at the same time.
- Because some of the dates proposed contradict information within the book of Revelation.
- Because the date in which it was written affects the interpretation of the book.

## There are three main views as to the date in which Revelation was written:

- During the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96).
- During the reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79).

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<sup>1</sup> We will use this word to describe all groups that claim to be Christians, because it is much easier and shorter than saying,

“the church, the denominations, and cults that claim to follow Jesus.”

- During the reign of Nero (AD 54-68).

The goal in this lesson will be to look at the evidence and see which one of these is correct.

It should be noted from the outset that each of these views relies on different evidence. One view relies almost exclusively on **non-Biblical** evidence and **supposition**. One view relies almost exclusively on their interpretation of **one passage** within the book (and that interpretation is not held by anyone outside of this group). One view relies almost exclusively on the evidence **within** the Bible and **within** the book of Revelation.

Since the Bible is the inspired word of God, we will consider various forms of **Biblical** (therefore **inspired**) evidence which will let us know when the book of Revelation was written. We will not be dealing with supposition. We will not be dealing with a unique interpretation to prove the date. We will be dealing with biblical evidence and taking whichever view the evidence demands.

### **1 Corinthians 13:8-10** **The Completion of Miracles** **and of the Scriptures.**

*Love never fails; but where there are prophecies, they shall fail; where there are [miraculous] tongues, they shall cease; where there is knowledge, it shall vanish away. Because we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is complete has come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).*

Miracles are supernatural things, done by humans, through the power of God. This includes prophecies, tongues, and knowledge (supernatural knowledge, like Christ promised the apostles in Luke 12:11-12). All of these things, according to Paul, would “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away.” All of these miracles were called “in part” or “partial.” They are contrasted with that which is “complete” or “perfect” (KJV). So this is what Paul means: When “that which is complete has come, then that which is in part [miracles] shall be done away.”

“That which is complete” refers to the completely revealed will of God. It is called “that good, and acceptable, and **perfect** (or complete) **will of God**” (Romans 12:2). It is called “the **perfect** (or complete) **law of liberty**” (James 1:25). Both of these passages use the same word and describe the New

Testament, the word of God—in other words, **the Scriptures**.

So, according to 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, when the final book of the New Testament was written, miracles would come to an end.

Why is this important? It’s important because if we can know for certain when miracles ended, then by this Biblical statement, we can know for certain when the New Testament was completed.

So the question to ask is this: *Can we know when miracles ended?*

### **Zechariah 13:2** **The Passing of Prophecy.**

*And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land (Zechariah 13:2).*

Look at the context of this statement. Just a handful of verses earlier, Zechariah gives a prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ: “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10; quoted in John 19:34-37). In 13:1, he gives a prophecy of spiritual cleansing opened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (see Acts 2). In verse 7, he gives a prophecy of the apostles abandoning Jesus: “smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered” (quoted and fulfilled in Matthew 26:31). Then, at the beginning of the next chapter, Zechariah gives a prophecy of God Himself leading the nations against Jerusalem, destroying the city (Zechariah 14:1-2—the same thing Jesus foretold in Luke 21:20-22).

In the midst of these prophecies, Zechariah records God saying, “I will cause the **prophets** and the unclean spirits **to pass out of the land**” (Zechariah 13:2).

So, sometime in the period between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by foreign nations (led by God), God would cause prophecy to cease. Taking this into consideration, along with 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, which told us that prophecy would end when the Word (the New Testament) was completed, we can know that the New Testament was completed sometime between the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem by foreign nations, led by God.

The Roman Empire destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, which was an event prophesied and orchestrated

by God Himself. But there's more...

### **Micah 7:15** **Marvelous Things.**

*According to the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt will I show to him marvelous things (Micah 7:15).*

To make sure this passage is understood in context, look at the time period that is under consideration. Micah 7:18-19 speaks of a time when God would forgive the sins of the Jews ("**our** iniquities") and the Gentiles ("**their** sins"). This could only refer to the time of the gospel, which is "the power of God to salvation...to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [or Gentile]" (Romans 1:16). Micah 7:20 speaks of the time when God would fulfill His promise to Abraham and Jacob. What promise, you ask?

*"In your seed, all nations of the earth will be blessed" (to Abraham – Genesis 22:18; to Jacob – Genesis 28:14).*

Galatians 3:14-16, 26-29 shows that this is fulfilled to both the Jews and Gentiles **in Christ Jesus**:

*That the **blessing of Abraham** might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the **promise** of the Spirit through faith... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He did not say, "And to seeds," as of many; but as of one, "And to your seed," which is Christ.*

*You are all the children of God by the faith, in Christ Jesus, because as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And **if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Therefore, the time spoken of in this section of Micah is the time of the church. Keep that in mind as you look at verse 15.

This verse says that God will do "marvelous things" "according to the days of the coming out of Egypt." What marvelous things did God do when they were coming out of Egypt?

- The Ten Plagues (miracles)
- Crossing the Red Sea (miracle)

- Water from a rock (miracle)
- Etc...

How long were they coming out of Egypt? They were considered to be "coming out of Egypt" until they entered the Promised Land, 40 years later (see Hebrews 3:9-10). This passage has often been quoted to prove that miracles in the church would last 40 years.<sup>2</sup>

This passage alone may not be as conclusive, considering that it is possible God is saying that it is "like the days when you were coming out of Egypt" instead of "according to the time period..." But it is quite interesting that the church began on the Day of Pentecost, AD 30—and if you add 40 years to it, you wind up at AD 70. The exact same timeframe given by Zechariah.

### **Joel 2:28-32/Acts 2:16-21** **In the last days,**

#### ***I will pour out from My Spirit...***

As with the other passages, let's look at the context. Chapter 1 of Joel describes a locust plague God sent against Judah, accompanied with famine, drought, and fires (1 :11-12, 19-20). The priests were told to call the people to the house of Jehovah (the temple in Jerusalem) to cry to God (1 :14).

Joel 2:1-11 describes the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. It is called **a day of darkness and gloominess** (2:2), and Joel uses apocalyptic, prophetic language to describe the overthrow of their nation (2:10).

- The earth shall quake.
- The heavens shall tremble.
- The sun and moon will be dark.
- The stars will not shine.

The main topic of the book of Joel is punishment and destruction against Judah and Jerusalem—sent by God. So keep that in mind as you look at the passage under consideration.

#### **The New Testament Application of this Prophecy**

Joel 2:28-32 is a prophecy of events **in the first century**. Peter quoted it and said it applied to what

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<sup>2</sup> Guy N. Woods, in the Woods-Franklin Debate, used this passage in this way, as did Ben Bogard (a famous Baptist debater of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) in his debate with Aimee Macpherson (pages 42-43).

happened beginning at Pentecost.

*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; [when he said] “And it shall come to pass in the last days,” says God, “I will pour out from my Spirit on all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out from my Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:16-21).*

After the Jews heard the apostles speaking in tongues (a miracle), Peter said, “**this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel,” and then he quotes Joel 2:28-32.

This prophecy begins with “it shall come to pass in the last days...” The book of Joel deals with judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem up to Joel 3:2. “The last days” in this passage **is does not refer to “the gospel age,” or “the Christian dispensation.”** “The last days,” using the context of the book of Joel (and as we will see in a minute, the context of Peter’s sermon), is a reference to the last days of the Jewish nation and Judaism.

Miracles (prophesy... visions... dreams – Acts 2:17-19), according to Joel’s prophecy, were to take place **in the last days of Judah and Jerusalem.**

### The “Last Days” of Judah and Jerusalem

Now, some might object to this, but this usage of the term “the last days,” to refer to the end of Judah and Jerusalem, is common in the Old Testament.

*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Isaiah 2:1-2).*

The last days of what, Isaiah? *The last days of Judah and Jerusalem!* If the prophecy is about Judah and Jerusalem (which Isaiah said it was), then

the “last days” must be the last days of Judah and Jerusalem.

*Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become ruins, and the mountain of the house [the temple mount] as the high places of the forest. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it (Micah 3:12-4:1).*

“Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, but in the last days...” The last days of what, Micah? *The last days of Jerusalem!* We must pay attention to context!

Since Joel prophesied that miracles are to take place in “the last days” of Judah and Jerusalem, when do you suppose they would end? But let’s get back to what else Joel says about these “last days.”

### Apocalyptic Imagery

The prophecy then goes on to give prophetic descriptions that describe the overthrow of a nation (Acts 2:19-20).

- Wonders in heaven
- Blood, fire, vapor of smoke
- Sun to darkness
- Moon to blood.

These phrases, and others very similar, are used throughout the Old Testament to describe God’s punishment on a nation. In fact, God inspired Joel to use some of this very same language to describe judgment on Jerusalem earlier in the very same chapter!

Therefore, the prophecy of miracles in the last days of the Jewish system is connected with, and ends with, the overthrow of a nation. But what nation? Remember the context! The only nation whose overthrow is described in Joel is Jerusalem/Judah. When Peter quoted this passage, the only nation whose overthrow was anywhere in the near future—the only nation whose overthrow was of any concern to the Jews—was their own.

### The Day of the Lord

The prophecy of Joel speaks of the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20). In the Old Testament, the phrase “the day of the Lord” always, 100% of the time, refers to a day of judgment



against someone—most frequently, it describes judgment against God’s chosen people, the Israelites.

As we saw with the apocalyptic phrases used by Joel, this day of judgment is connected with the overthrow of a nation. And the *context* of Joel shows this day of judgment is against the *Jewish nation*.

### Salvation from Destruction

Joel’s prophecy, after describing the overthrow of a nation, and God’s judgment coming in the last days of Judah/Jerusalem, says, “It shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

If you had just been told that the prophecy about the final days of your nation was about to be fulfilled, and that your nation was going to be overthrown, and that God was going to bring judgment upon it—what would you think when the next words are “whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”?

Saved from what? Well, the context of the prophecy would certainly make you think it was being saved from the coming destruction that the Jewish nation was going to experience. There was a time element to this prophecy. The Jewish nation was going to be destroyed in AD 70. God, through Joel, promised miracles would take place *in this time period*:

- The last days of Judah and Jerusalem.
- Before the day of judgment brought upon Jerusalem and Judah by God.

But just so we can make it a little more clear, let’s go to the end of Peter’s sermon.

*With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying “save yourselves from **this wicked generation**.” (Acts 2:40).*

Notice what Peter said: “**This** wicked generation.” Speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said that “**this** generation” would not pass until all the things He had prophesied about their destruction were fulfilled (Matthew 24:1-34, especially verse 34). In Matthew 23:34-36, Jesus said that Jerusalem would be held accountable for the blood of the apostles and prophets, and that “all these things shall come upon **this** generation.”

It was **THAT** generation, which Jesus and Peter both spoke about, that would be destroyed, and the

only way to save themselves was to turn to Jesus as the Savior. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Saved from sins, yes, but also saved from the destruction of the city and nation of the Jews.

The context of Joel, and Peter’s words, show that the miracles would take place during the last days of Judah/Jerusalem—and those last days ended in AD 70.

### Summarizing the Old Testament Evidence

Zechariah says miracles would pass from the land sometime between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. Micah appears to limit miracles in the church to 40 years (conveniently enough, covering the same time period as Zechariah). Joel says miracles would take place in the last days of Judah and Jerusalem before God judges and overthrows them (again, the exact same time period).

Taking these things into consideration, we have conclusive Old Testament evidence that miracles would cease by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Since this is true, we can know *for certain* that no book of the Bible was written after that time, because 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 said that miracles would end *after* the Scriptures were completed. If miracles ended by AD 70, the Scriptures (including Revelation) had to have been written by that date.

But let’s now look at evidence within Revelation itself.

### Revelation 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10

#### Things which must shortly come to pass.

As we discussed in the previous lesson, the book of Revelation clearly states that the events contained within its 22 chapters were going to happen very soon. John was inspired to write “The time is at hand,” which means it was very near.

We saw that when the word translated “shortly” is used elsewhere in the New Testament, it means something *imminent*, not something generations away. Remember, Paul was told to get “*quickly*” [same word in Greek] out of Jerusalem (Acts 22:18). Paul told Timothy he knew he was about to die, and therefore to “*come shortly*” [same word in Greek] to him with his cloak and parchments (2 Timothy 4:6-9).

So, since the book of Revelation says that the things contained in it were “at hand,” and “shortly

come to pass,” then the things described in it were things which were *about to happen*.

So how does this help us prove when it was written?

### **Revelation 11:8**

#### ***“Where our Lord was crucified.”***

Right now, we won’t get in to the events which take place in chapter 11, but John is very clear to say that some of the events would take place *in the city where our Lord was crucified*.

*And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

It ought to be simple enough to determine what city is under consideration. Luke 13:33 – Jesus says, “I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following, for *it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*” Jesus was tried and condemned and murdered *in the city of Jerusalem*.

Regardless of how we want to interpret the events, John is very clear to tell us that some events in Revelation (events which were *about to happen*) would take place in the city of Jerusalem.

This proves beyond any reasonable doubt *Jerusalem was still in existence when the book was written*. You can’t have events take place in “the great city” when the “great city” doesn’t exist anymore.

### **Conclusion**

There are other things we could look at which would also prove that Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, but we will save that for the next lesson when we look at the *purpose* of the book of Revelation.

The Old Testament prophesied miracles would cease prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The apostle Paul said the New Testament writings would be completed before miracles ceased. Therefore, the Bible teaches that the New Testament writings were all finished prior to AD 70. *This includes the book of Revelation.*

Therefore, this book could not have been written during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96). Therefore this book could not have been written during the reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79). Therefore, this book was written during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68).

Also, you need to realize what we have done to-

day: We have proven—FROM THE BIBLE—when the book of Revelation was written.

We have not looked at any uninspired evidence, because when the Bible says something, it doesn’t matter what uninspired men say or think to the contrary. Most commentaries on Revelation will quote church fathers, church traditions and stories, and opinions of other so-called “scholars” in an effort to prove that the book of Revelation was written near the end of the first century (AD 95-96), but they offer no proof from the biblical text itself.

When you discuss a Bible topic, do not EVER settle for “well I think” or “my opinion is this...” Go with a “thus saith the Lord!”

[Note: If time permits, we may write more on the *external evidence* pointing to an early date for the writing of Revelation. For additional study on this topic, see the introduction to Arthur Ogden’s *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets* (the introduction is available for free at the author’s website: <http://www.aogden.com/download/revintro.pdf>), liberal scholar John A.T. Robinson’s book, *Redating the New Testament*, Kenneth Gentry’s *Before Jerusalem Fell*, and Sir Isaac Newton’s section on the date of Revelation in *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*.]

*“With the opinion of the first Commentators agrees the tradition of the Churches of Syria, preserved to this day in the title of the Syriac Version of the Apocalypse, which title is this: The Revelation which was made to John the Evangelist by God in the Island Patmos, into which he was banished by Nero the Caesar.”*

*—Sir Isaac Newton*

# QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

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## ***On What We Can Achieve with God***

Man has developed ways to control blood pressure, transplant vital organs, send men to the moon, and assemble automobiles that talk... Before we ever get to God, man has conquered some impressive fields.

Let this simply elevate the reverent statement of Luke. If man can reach such heights by his own ingenuity, what can we do by faith in the Creator of man?

-Terry Rush

*The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense*

## ***On the Prominence of a Forgotten Restoration Movement Preacher***

In the year 1803, as is known to all, Barton W. Stone, and other clergymen, seceded from the Presbyterian Church, and shortly after instituted upon the Bible. David Purviance was a ruling elder in the church at Cane Ridge, and he united with Stone and the others, and was shortly after ordained to the ministry. He preached extensively and to great profit.

He was the first preacher in the Christian church, so styled, that publicly repudiated infant baptism, and insisted that the immersion in water of a believing penitent was the only baptism known to the New Testament.

John Rogers

*Biography of David Purviance (by Levi Purviance)*

## ***On Our Attitude Toward the Church***

There can be no unity as long as men think they mean more to the Church than the Church means to them. The church can live without me and it can be saved without me; but I can't afford to live without the Church and I can't be saved without it. We need to be humble servants in the Church.

J.C. Roady

*Apostolic Review*, 1938

## ***On Letting Political Theory Influence the Church***

*The privileges of this family.*—It has pleased God to bestow privileges distinguishingly great on this

his family on earth—privileges high, above all comparison. They are acknowledged by him as *his children; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. All things are theirs, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come: all are theirs; and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* 1 Cor. 3:22—Rom. 8:17.

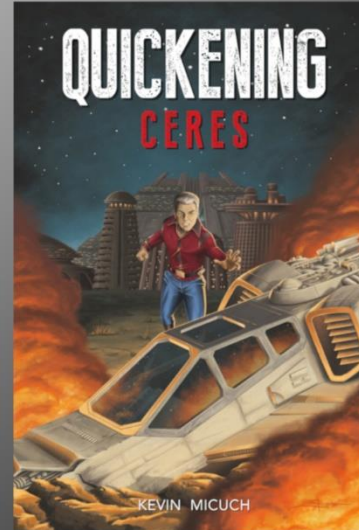
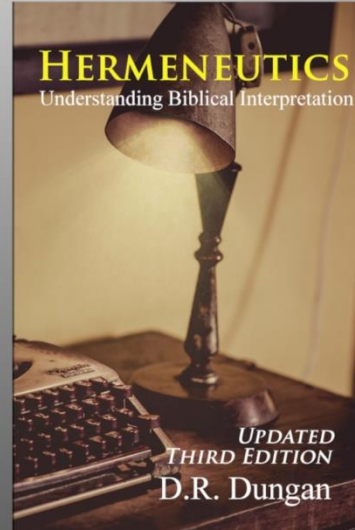
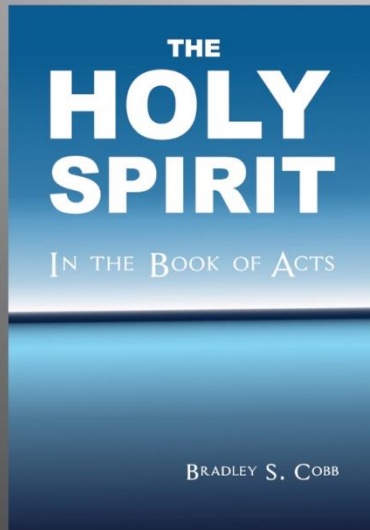
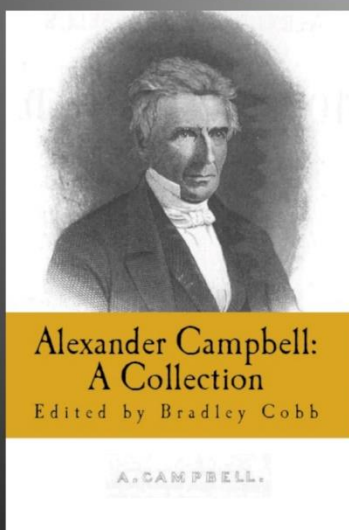
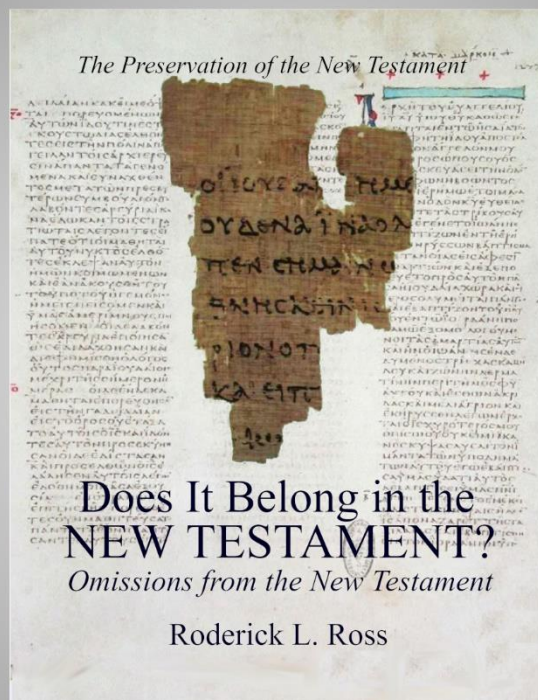
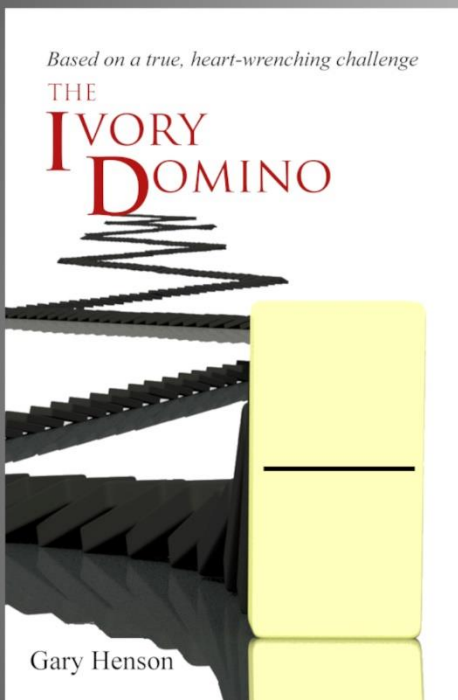
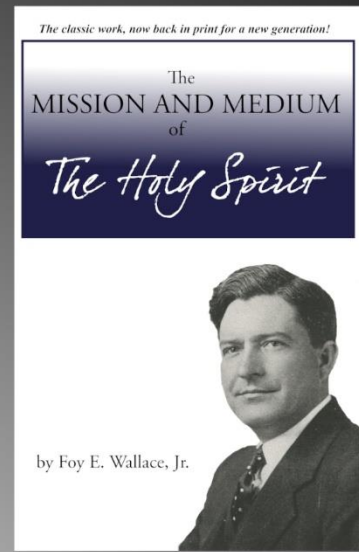
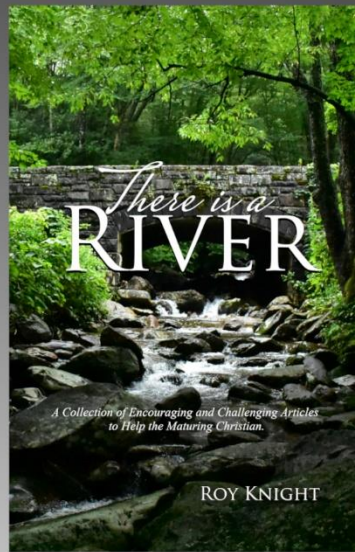
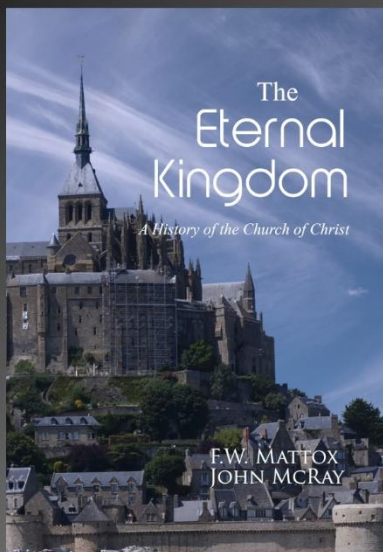
Every member of the family has an equal right to all these things by the gift of God, their common father: who then shall dare presume to debar any, even the least, from the enjoyment of them? We will state a case. An earthly father has a numerous family of children. Wishing to enjoy their company, and that they might enjoy each other, he makes a feast and invites them all on a certain day to come. They all come at his invitation. The father sits at the head of the table, and kindly invites them to sit down and partake of his provisions. They advance to the table. But says one to his brother, 'Thomas, you shall not sit down, and eat of this provision; for I consider your political opinions as subversive of our good government, and therefore deem you unworthy of this privilege.' Says a second son, John, 'I debar you from sitting down with us, and partaking of these provisions, because I view your federal notions as aiming a deathly blow at our happy constitution.' 'And you, Richard,' says a third, 'must stand back, for your democratic principles render you unworthy of this high privilege of sitting down and eating and drinking with us.' Thus in an authoritative manner they debar each other from their father's table. What must be the feelings of the wounded father? Would he not indignantly frown upon such conduct? Would he not thus speak?—'Sir, who gave you authority to debar my children from my table? Have they not an equal right with yourself to these provisions? Are they not my children as well as you? Have I not invited them? Have I made any difference among you? How dare you thus presume?'

Barton W. Stone

*The Christian Messenger*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1826)



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**Jamie Beller** loves controversy. After all, Jesus is the most controversial figure in human history. Jamie preaches in Oklahoma, and desires to help people understand the importance of fellowship, while also making them uncomfortable if they are passive Christians.

**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. His library is partially digitized online (search for “Jimmie Beller Memorial eLibrary”)

**Gantt Carter** in addition to preaching and writing, teaches people how to safely propel a piece of metal at a target.

**Gerald Cowan.** After more than six decades of preaching, teaching, and random writing while still learning what it means to offer oneself in service to God in Christ, allowing the Lord himself to direct and provide and trying to avoid judging or envying the service and achievements of others – hoping there's a bit more time to do something worthy of the name of Christ and his gospel cause.

**Adam Cozort** works with the Lakeside church of Christ in Springfield, IL. Over the last 15 years, he

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**Kyle Frank** spends his days reading, writing, texting, praying, singing, and helping others (especially

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**Earl Kimbrough** has preached for over 60 years, and has written several books on Restoration Movement personalities (including F.B. Srygley). He wrote for and helped edit *The Alabama Restoration Journal* for its 15-year existence.

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**Richard Mansel** preaches any time he has the opportunity, and enjoys reading and writing. He also wrote a novel (and if the editor wasn’t running behind, he would have got the information to include in this bio...).

**Kevin Micuch** loves interacting with people, showing them the love of Jesus Christ. He is the author of *Calvinism: Built on a Foundation of Sand*, *Pursuing Positivity*, and a novel about spreading the gospel after humans have colonized another planet, called *Quickening Ceres*.

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**Mitch Robison** preaches the gospel and does what he can to be helpful to those who are in need. He is the author of two books of sermons (*Every Man Needs Jesus Christ*, which came out last month, and *A God Who Rejoices*, from 2019) as well as a teach-

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**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.

**Andy Sochor** is the owner of Gospel Armory Publishing ([GospelArmory.com](http://GospelArmory.com)), the host of the Plain Bible Teaching podcast, a Christian, husband, father, and a preacher.

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**Bradley S. Cobb** hasn’t figured out why he can’t seem to go to an auction without needing a trailer... and sometimes an extra vehicle. Somewhat connected to that, his office also doubles as a museum for 80-year-old radios. He has also spent many hours collecting large wooden spools, only to have his son sell them (sometimes 20 at a time) to other people. Now if he can only figure out how to make the dog be quiet at night...

Coming 2022:

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