

The New Birth

A Vacation in Hell

Salvation in the
Old Testament

Salvation by Faith Alone
and the Sinner's Prayer?

What Does Acts Teach Us
About Unity?

Do You Have a Consistent
Biblical Worldview?

The Connection of Proselyting,
Baptism, and Jesus'
Interaction with Nicodemus

Wilted Petals:
Once Saved Always Saved

Ehud: Southpaw with a Dagger

A New Congregation is Planted!

Questions about the Sabbath

Hear the Children Cry

Angels: God's Messengers

Problems with Addiction

The Christian Messenger

Marriage and Divorce:
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The Quarterly

Vol. 6, No. 3



WHO'S GONNA FILL THEIR SHOES?

REMEMBERING
EARL KIMBROUGH AND
TOMMY THORNHILL

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Published Quarterly:
January, April, July, October

Cobb Publishing
704 E. Main St.
Charleston, AR 72933
(479) 747-8372
CobbPublishing.com
CobbPublishing@gmail.com

Subscription Rates:
Annual Print: \$19.99
Bundles of 10 or more receive
a 20% discount!
Digital Subscription: FREE!

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The Quarterly

VOLUME 6 – NUMBER 3 – JULY 2022

PASSING THE TORCH...

This past month (June 2022), within a day of each other, we lost two brethren, long-time preachers who both wrote for the *Quarterly*. Earl Kimbrough passed into eternity on the 19th, and Tommy Thornhill followed him the next day. Both of them had provided material that will appear in this and some upcoming issues, but they will certainly be missed. With that in mind, please read the editorial for this issue on *Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes*, as well as Kyle Frank's short tribute to Earl, and Tommy Thornhill Jr.'s tribute to his father.

When I began assembling this issue, I thought I was going to be pushing it to get enough articles. But God be thanked, I received more articles than would fit!

Make sure to check out the announcement of a new congregation planted in Canada (from our brother on the back cover), as well as the excellent discussion of the Sabbath by Charles Rose. A couple different writers deal with Lazarus and the Rich Man, but from different angles. We have the conclusion of Andy Sochor's series on *The Real Pharisees*, as well as Jim Mitchell's latest installment on Calvinism, *Wilted Petals*.

Larry Robbins (a first-time contributor) profiles his new book on the history of the church in Bakersfield, CA. Gerald Cowan examines why people don't have a consistent biblical worldview. Andy Erwin exposes the hypocrisy of those who reject baptism as a "work" yet accept the sinner's prayer.

As always, I could just list all the articles here as recommended reading, but it would be easier on you to just turn the page and look at the table of contents.

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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WHO'S GONNA FILL THEIR SHOES?

An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb

Several years ago, country superstar George Jones sang a song called *Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes*. Several legends of country music had died, and the newer (at the time) artists really didn't sound all that "country" anymore.

When George Jones died, I did a sermon asking the same question—but not about country music (I won't go into my opinion of most of what is called "country" today). Instead, I wanted people to think about who is gonna fill the shoes of brethren who have passed on.

I could name some names, and while some of you might recognize them, most of you will just see them as names. People like Bill Roderick, Harold Turner, Jimmie and Roy Beller, Jerry Dowell, Delbert Fuchs, and Billy Blakeney are some that I don't think can ever be replaced. They loved the Lord, and they loved people. Harold Turner was a walking Bible (with a seemingly complete mental concordance tossed in). Billy Blakeney, even in his 90s, was constantly energetic and excited to worship with the saints. Jimmie and Roy were constant encouragers and friends. Bill Roderick always made sure to keep the plain gospel message front and center, regardless of his sermon topic. Jerry Dowell, even in the later stages of Alzheimer's, enjoyed nothing more than visiting his brethren, and encouraging them to stay faithful or return to the Lord.

These men were not "big names" among the brotherhood, but everyone who got to know them knew there was something special about them. And when each of them died, everyone knew they had lost a great man.

But the question remains, Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?

This was brought strikingly to mind not even a month ago when on a Sunday morning, I received word that Earl Kimbrough (one of our writers) passed away at 95 years old. I never actually got to meet Earl in person (that will have to wait until Heaven). I only knew him through his writings, the emails we exchanged, and through a couple (admittedly long) phone calls I had with him. When I found out that he had some unpublished manuscripts on the Restoration Movement that he wanted to see in print, I jumped at the opportunity to help. He was nothing but kind in everything he had to say about the process and the end result. Having devoted over seventy years of his life to preaching the gospel, he serves as an example of dedication and kindness that is sorely missing in so many today.

Later that day, I texted Tommy Thornhill (another of our writers), to let him know of Earl's passing. He texted back, "Sad to learn. Another soldier of the Lord finished his tour on earth." Then he added, "He was a good man. I met him before I started preaching in 1953. He was a few years older than me." Tommy was sitting at the hospital with his wife at the time, and told me, "Have a good service tonight." That was the last thing he wrote to me. He passed away the next morning. He didn't preach as long as Earl, but Tommy Thornhill was still a devoted Christian who preached the importance of following the word of God to the best of your knowledge and ability.

Maybe you're reading this and saying, "I'm too old," or "I can't preach," or (like Moses) "Pick someone else." Keep reading.

If, like me, you believe the church needs more people to step up and lead people to the love and

safety and salvation found in Jesus Christ—and who will stand strong against false teachings that will lead souls away from the God who gave His Son for them—then consider the following options to help make it happen.

Encourage Younger Christians

Each of these men knew the importance of the next generation, and made a point to help encourage Christians in their growth. They encouraged young men to consider preaching (even if it was just filling in here and there). They helped these young men learn to think for themselves and discover what the Bible says, instead of trying to indoctrinate them.

So find younger Christians and encourage them to greater service for the Lord. It doesn't have to be preaching (not all on that list were preachers), but encourage them to pray, to be involved during Bible studies, to share the gospel with others. In short, build them up in the Lord.

Consider Yourself

What kind of legacy are *you* leaving? You might not be a preacher or an elder, but you can still have an influence on people for good. Jimmie Beller wasn't a preacher or an elder. But no one can forget his smile, his sense of humor, and how he had no problem pulling you aside after services to challenge you on something you said during a sermon (which happened to me more than once)—but he always did it with the attitude of humility and love.

You *can* fill these shoes by being a loving Christian, one who helps influence others and challenges them to greater faithfulness.

Write or Record

Harold, Earl, and Tommy left behind a lot of writing that will still impact people for years. In fact, many of Harold Turner's articles are being featured on the FCGN (*Fulton County Gospel News*) podcast.

Consider taking up the pen (so to speak) and writing about the Lord, His church, and what it means to be a Christian. Whether it is on a website

(blog), the church bulletin (the preacher usually doesn't mind when other members want to help write), or in book form, consider doing it.

Delbert Fuchs (pronounced "Fox") was a dishwasher who spent much spare time writing short articles on different subjects. I don't think they were ever published anywhere, but he used them for evangelism. Whenever he would have a discussion with someone on religion, if they brought up a topic, or an objection, or a question, he would make a copy of one of his articles on the subject, and hand it to them (or mail it to them if he wasn't going to see them in person again soon). I got to meet him when he was in the nursing home. And even there he had copies of his articles, and tried to convert the nurses to Jesus and His Bride—the church.

In addition to this, he also recorded himself teaching some of the same lessons, and handed out tapes to those who said they didn't have time to read the articles.

It is easy to grab your cell phone and record a voice memo where you talk about a biblical topic for just a couple minutes. Then you have that to share, if you want. And it is quite easy now to set up a podcast or a YouTube channel where you can share these recordings for people all over the world to discover.

Be Involved

Believe it or not, the hardest thing for most preachers when it comes to sermon preparation is *picking a topic*. There are literally thousands of things from the Bible he could preach on, but which one to pick?! You can do yourself and the preacher a favor by suggesting topics, or handing him a list of questions you have, so he can try to address them from the pulpit, the bulletin, or just in conversation. It will encourage the preacher more than you know, because it tells him *people are listening* and that *someone cares about God*. Believe it or not, there are times when preachers get discouraged because they don't see much spiritual thought in some of the members (and sometimes even in the elders).

The more you are involved in biblical discussions

with your brethren, in contemplating spiritual things, in following the admonition to “exhort one another,” you are growing into the kind of person who can *fill the shoes* of those who have gone on before.

In short, if you see faithful brethren pass away, or even just move away, and you ask yourself, *Who’s Gonna Fill Their Shoes?* look to yourself and realize that it just might be you—and you have it in you to encourage the next generation to fill yours.

Thoughts on Earl Kimbrough

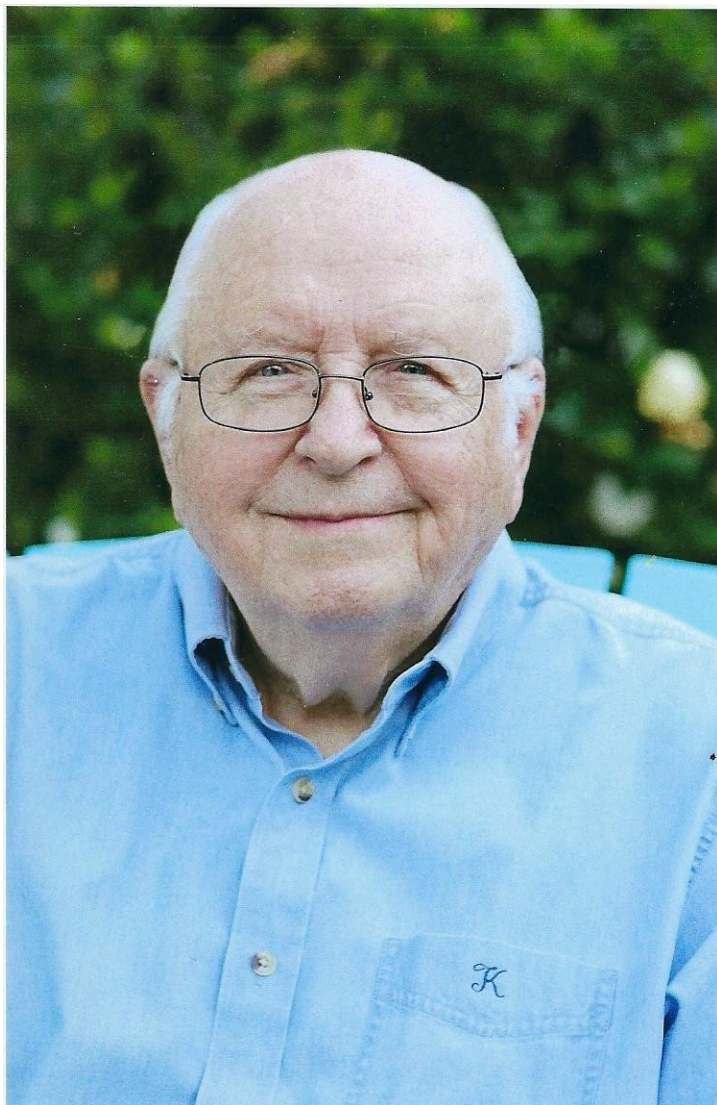
Kyle D. Frank

Earl Kimbrough has had more to do with shaping my religious thought than anyone, with the exception of Homer Hailey. I “met” Earl through the early books he did. His outlook and his take on things were compelling to me. I learned from him about our Lord’s church and the way we should look at things in church history. I learned from him to follow the Savior, no matter how confusing things can be.

Earl was a writer extraordinaire. He was always writing or working on ideas for writing. He was writing right up to the day he died. That was Earl.

When I had a chance to help with preparation for publishing his material I was astounded at his work. It was so organized and well-presented that it took very little time to get it ready to publish. It was at this time that I really came to know Earl. Phone calls were memorable as Earl would always thank us for everything we did.

You always left Earl with this sense of joy and amazement. He had that effect on you. I wish everyone I knew took hints from Earl.



I'M A HERETIC?

A BONUS EDITORIAL BY BRADLEY S. COBB

Occasionally, I look at reviews for books I've written or published. My book on Revelation (*War in Heaven War on Earth*) has several reviews (thank you!), but there was one that really stood out...

The title of the review was:

Good work on supporting view with history but riddled with heresy of

I am going to copy/paste the entire review as-is (typos included) so you can read it as well:

I really appreciated mr. Cobbs work on pulling out the historical events which appear to align with John's writings. His need to continually subject the reader to his heretical view on salvation had no place in the book. He places himself in direct opposition to the church and it's counsel of Orange which was written in opposition to semi Pelagianism in 529. This was also addressed by the reformers at the synod of Dort in 1619 which condemned the Arminianism which he supports. Most importantly it also stands against the teaching of the whole of Gods word which reveal the we are a chosen people. We are predestined, called, justified and glorified by God. Jesus even declared that he would lose none of those the given to him. I believe to fail in this point is to deminish the work of God by questioning the total depravity of man.

Now, I don't know about you, but I noticed that he praised the actual research and work, but he was extremely upset that I dared (*gasp*) to remind readers about the possibility of falling from grace (Galatians 5:4), about the importance of choosing God (Joshua 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff), and the need for Christians to "examine yourselves, whether

ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). And his basis for being upset? *I don't follow church councils and synods—I don't follow the doctrines of men!*

Teaching "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" and "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins" is called, by this reviewer, a "heretical view on salvation."

He says that in teaching this "[h]e places himself in direct opposition to the church." What church is he speaking of? Could it be the church that Jesus sanctified and cleansed "through the washing of water, by the word"? (Ephesians 5:26). Or perhaps it is the church—the body—that *we are put into through baptism?* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Of course, as you read the review further, it is obvious he means a Calvinistic church (probably Presbyterian).

I could give a further reply to this review, but the false doctrine of Calvinism has been addressed by Jim Mitchell in the last several issues of this magazine, and Andy Erwin's article in this issue also addresses some of the same issues.

Allow me to just say this: God inspired the words from Paul, *speaking to CHRISTIANS*, "you have fallen from grace." Regardless of how anyone wants to twist, contort, or mutilate the Scriptures, it still says that there were some Christians in Galatia who had "fallen from grace." Let me ask you a simple question: *Can you fall from something you were never in or on?* Can I fall from the roof of my house if I was never on the roof? Can I fall from a plane if I was never in or on the plane? Of course not. And **you can't fall from grace unless you were in grace.**

Call it "semi pelagianism" if you want, or "Arminianism" or any other "-ism." The fact remains, The Bible says it. And that settles it.

A New Congregation is Planted!

Stephane Maillet

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:2)

We’ve been eagerly anticipating the day we could share our new mission, an opportunity which facilitated the greater progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12).

Since May 8th, 2022, we’ve been the church that belongs to Christ in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. In this new location, we are currently 15 diverse, loyal members, strong and growing with qualified elders appointed. We minister to our immediate local area (pop. 86k souls), Provincial citizenry (794k souls), and the East Coast reaches (2.3M souls).

We’ve had fellowship meals together every Sunday since May 8th and plan to continue this tradition, flourishing in unity together. We have planned wonderful church retreats and other encouraging



calendar activities. We congregate each week for studies and worship through His grace, having peace and freedom in Christ. We devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. We, faithful believers, remain united and have everything in common, ready to sacrifice our well-being to give to anyone who has need. We break bread in our homes and eat together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord has been adding to our number those who are being saved (Ref. Acts 2:42-47). God is good, “and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).



We currently assemble in our homes. And though this has been a blessing, it simply does not accommodate our forecast as the church in 2023. And so, after careful prayer and consideration, knowing there are numerous locations ripe for the gospel purpose on this East Coast, we are looking to purchase land and build a modest location for the body of Christ to have greater community presence in an untapped section of this European-style Country.



We speak to God with joy because of your partnership in the gospel “from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil 1:5-6).

We love God, for He first loved us, and we seek to do what is right in His sight. Will you labor with us together, suffering hardship as good soldiers of Christ Jesus? (Ref. 2 Tim. 2:3).

Stay focused and positive. Many more wonderful and uplifting moments to come. “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.” (2 Tim. 4:22). Your servants,

The EastCoast church of Christ.
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[Editor’s Note: We were blessed to meet several of these Christians, and highly recommend this work as worthy of support. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.]



been happy to share the reports of spiritual productivity for all our loving supporters since June 26th, 2011.

Our activities, growth, updates, and reports will be shared with all involved. We are a sound and loving family seeking to do what God instructs us in His Book. We find encouragement in like-minded brethren around the world who can recognize the challenge and pray for our spiritual endeavor.





Hear the Children Cry

Andy Robison

Here I submit a song which I wish I never had to write.

When adults fight over land and philosophies, innocent children suffer. Yet, sometimes, they prove to be the most resilient. Their innocent voices cry; their untainted hearts pray.

Children, we must be reminded, are innocent before God. They are most certainly, objectively, NOT born in sin. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel emphatically used a large section of Scripture to elucidate the point. He describes hypothetically a righteous man who is followed by an unrighteous son, who in turn is followed by a righteous son. He hones in on the point that neither the righteousness nor the sin of one generation is automatically passed on to another. Each accountable being answers to God for his chosen path. The tenor of the chapter is well-summarized in the memorable verse 20:

"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

Implied undeniably from that text is that no guilt of sin passes from one generation to another. Admittedly, however, consequences do. One generation can mess up badly and make life rough on the next. Collectively, a generation that turns against God leaves a societal nightmare for those succeeding them. Also, individually, for example, a drunken father might make it more difficult for emotionally scarred and financially impoverished (he's spent his money on alcohol) children to thrive. This seems to be the meaning of Exodus 20:5b:

"For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me."

Christ affirmed the innocence of children with His several instances of attention to them and His tender teaching that those who desire greatness become like them (Matt. 18:1-5; 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). Remember, "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).

Jesus also used the opportunity to speak of the dire consequences for those who hurt children. People discuss whether Jesus meant literal children or

those of young age in the faith (cf. 1 Pet. 2:2), but the point is equally applicable:

“whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”

(Matt. 18:6-7).

There are many ways to offend children. A vast network of immoral propagandists try to pump homosexual and transgender ideology into their heads. A bill passes a state legislature that would forbid any talk of sexuality from kindergarten through third grade and the immoral ideologues come unglued. “Woe to the world because of offenses.”

The same people advocate for the slaughter of unborn children. Mothers are talked into abortions, arguably on insufficient information. “Woe to the world because of offenses.”

War dislodges children from their homes, separates them from their families, causes them to lose loved ones and even their own lives. “Woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”

Children are precious in the sight of Deity. Jesus, the week before His death, entered Jerusalem triumphantly (to the common people) and then cleansed the temple of the hypocrites (Matt. 21:1-13). After that, the children cried out in the temple, echoing what the masses had said earlier, “Hosanna to the son of David!” (v. 16). The self-righteous chief priests and scribes objected, to which Jesus replied with a quotation of Psalm 8:2, “Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise” (v. 16).

Psalm 8:2 has proven somewhat enigmatic to this author’s understanding. The nine-verse Psalm focuses on the glory of God visiting the lowliness of man, raising man up as the pinnacle of creation who received dominion over the rest of the earth. The powerful opening is also the poignant closing, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth” (vs. 1, 9). After the opening verse comes

the statement Jesus referenced, with more to consider:

*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.*

In Matthew, Jesus interpreted “strength” as “praise.” That is interesting. Further, it is interesting that the innocent babes crying out praise to God is “because of” God’s “enemies,” to “silence the enemy and the avenger.”

I do not know what all is entailed in that statement. For your consideration, I offer this: In the midst of the harshest battles against God, the innocence of children is a buffer against a generation’s total rejection of the Divine. Perhaps the innocent praise from children strengthens the hearts of those charged with protecting them. Perhaps the cries of children embolden those who defend them. Maybe the innocence is what may eventually permeate the hard hearts of their oppressors. Maybe, in some cases, perhaps.

At any rate, that’s how I take it for this song. I wish no war had happened that prompted its writing; I wish I never had to write it. But, if it must be written, perhaps God can somehow use it to encourage generations to watch out for the children. Maybe hard-hearted people would be softened to learn to echo the plea. Maybe people could think of the children more—i.e., hear their cry—and not be such offenses to them.

To hear the song, *Hear the Children Cry*, to print a copy, or to access the PowerPoint slides (all for free), use this link:

<https://www.churchofchristsongs.com/content/hear-children-cry-robison>

Or you can view it on YouTube here:

<https://youtu.be/dxXnmgCgq34>

Hear the Children Cry

*"Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger"* (Psalms 8:2)
Andy Robison

A.R.

1. Lord, hear the child - ren cry, Their
2. Lord, hear the child - ren cry, Their
3. Lord, hear the child - ren cry, The
4. Lord, hear the child - ren's cry, That

moth - er's help - less plea, That
fath - ers off to fight, That
in no - cent souls, Though
laugh - ter be some day The

from the rav - aged war - Re -
from cha - ot - ic fear, The
forced in - to ex - ile's hell, Their
mood of morn and eve, The

lief, sweet peace could see, Oh,
tri - umph be for right, roll.
names heav - en's heart of praise.

Lord, hear the child - ren, Lord, hear the child - ren,
Lord, hear them, Lord, hear them,

Lord, the child - ren cry, Oh,
Lord, hear them cry, cry.

Lord, hear the child - ren, Lord, hear the child - ren,
Lord, hear them, Lord, hear them,

Lord, hear the child - ren cry.
Lord, hear them, Lord, hear them



Problems with Addiction

Devin Self

A common phrase you hear among those that are addicted to something is: “there is no way I can quit such and such, it would be too difficult.” This is not the truth, though. Although it will be difficult, there is a way out and it is not **too** difficult or beyond what we can handle. Now, if you just throw your hands up in the air, then you probably are not going to find the way out that God provides. But if you realize that people have been struggling with temptations from the beginning, you’ll realize God has always given them ways out also. Then, you realize he is there for you and you can do it, just like he has been there for those that have already left this world and fought some of the same fights.

For example, read 1 Corinthians 10:13-14:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

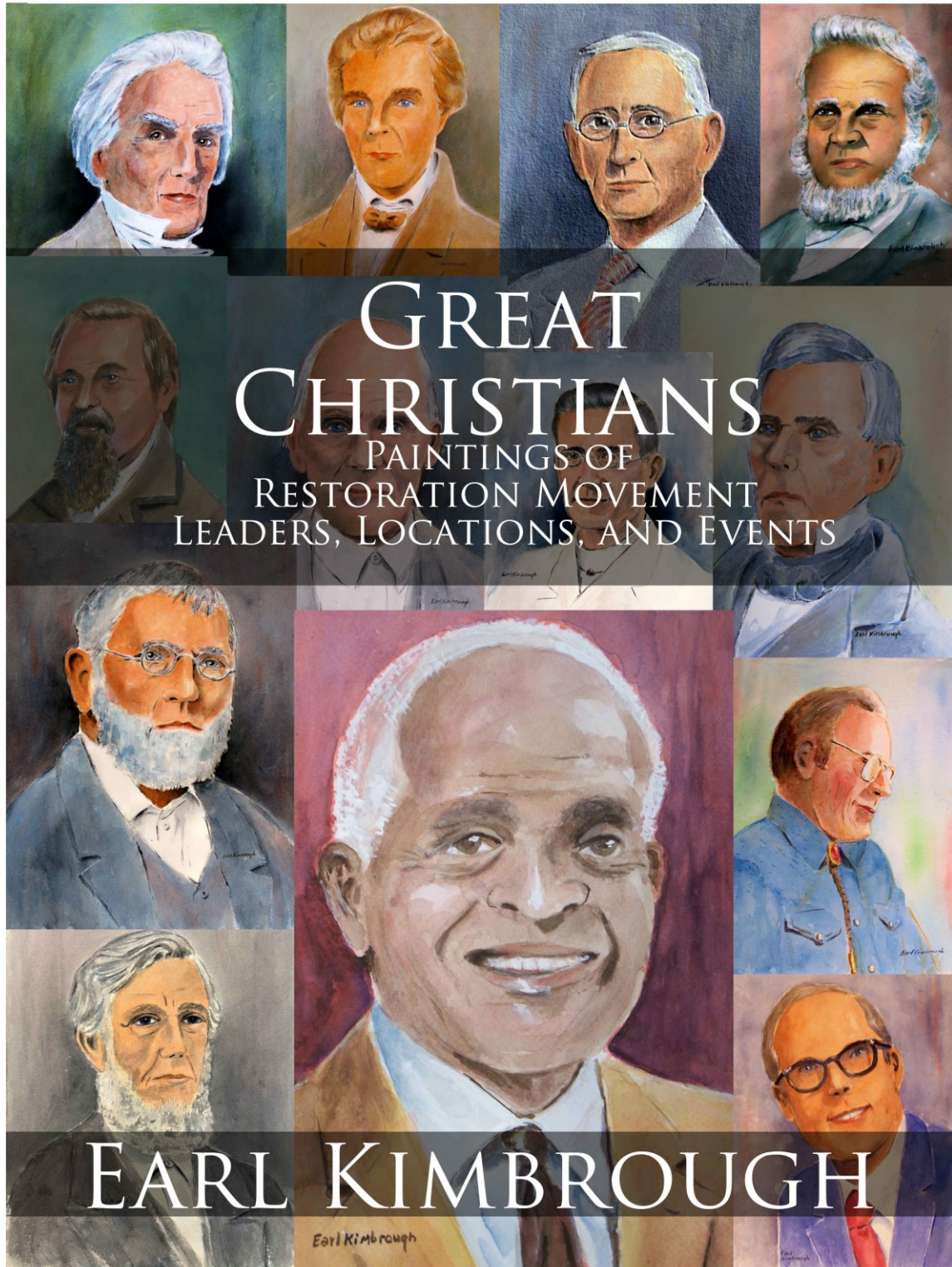
Notice here in these verses it says, “God is faithful.” That means he sticks by his people’s side. He doesn’t leave us alone to fight the battle ourselves, and he makes the way to escape if we will just open

our eyes to use it. Take the ladder God gives us out of the hole, don’t try to claw your way out on your own.

Next the verses say, “flee from idolatry.” Idolatry is defined as, “the reverence and worship of idols.” Idol worship is not the same as it used to be from first glance. That is, most people don’t worship objects made of gold that represent a false god. There are some cases where people actually still do this, which is wrong also. But the idols most worship nowadays come in a more disguised form. These can range from our houses, to our cars, to money, to drugs, to food, to alcohol, and all the way down to the human body itself. Sometimes we find ourselves addicted to these things, putting way too much reverence into them. But we shouldn’t do this; we should not let these things that will pass away take hold of our minds. Christ is forever, so let him be where we direct our attention.

James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” If the devil knows you are resisting and he can’t control you because you have submitted to God then he will flee from you. That’s because the devil has a losing record and always will when it comes to God.

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HOW THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Relate to *TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY* CHRISTIANS

Charles R. Rose

THE LAW OF THE SABBATH

IV. Commandment # 4 (Exodus 20:8-11)

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (NKJV).

Deuteronomy 5:12:

"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor you ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the

Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

The law concerning the Sabbath has long been a point of discussion among religious folk: Many erroneously believe Sunday to be the Biblical Sabbath, and attempt to bind Old Testament laws concerning the Sabbath (forbidding to work, travel etc.) on mankind today. In discussing this with many of my friends who are members of various denominations, as well as many members of the Lord's church, I have come to the conclusion that very few have studied God's law of the Sabbath beyond that which is stated in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. And many have never really looked at the Deuteronomy reading. However, when one takes time to *"search the Scriptures"* as did the Bereans of Acts 17:11, and considers all that God's Holy Bible has to say concerning the Sabbath, one will come to this conclusion: **This is a specific law, to cause a specific group of people (the Israelites), to remember a specific event in their nation's history.**

As we approach this subject, we will be addressing the following questions specifically:

1. Who first observed the Sabbath?
2. When was man first commanded to keep the Sabbath?
3. What was the Biblical purpose of the Sabbath?

law?

4. When did the law of the Sabbath end?

There is a fifth related question, which is the subject of another lesson. Why do we worship on the first day of the week today rather than the seventh?

Who First Observed the Sabbath?

We begin answering the questions by reading Genesis 2:2-3:

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

This brings several questions to mind that must be answered from the Bible in order to see the truth of God's Holy Word.

1. Who rested on the seventh day? God did!

Let us now see what commands He gave to man at that time. From Genesis 1:26, where the three members of the Godhead determined to create man and woman in their own likeness, through Genesis 3:24 where Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, how many commands did God give to Adam and Eve? *We read of only one.* It is found in Genesis 2:16-17:

"And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

As we shall see as we go through these lessons, there are moral and religious laws that have been in effect, although unwritten, from creation. But for our present study in reading the biblical account of creation and the Garden of Eden, at what point did God command Adam and Eve to keep the Sabbath? The truth of the Bible is, God never commanded it of Adam and Eve. To be sure, God did have His seventh day of rest, but He never commanded Adam to keep it.

2. When Was Man First Commanded to Keep the Sabbath?

To answer this, let us now read Deuteronomy 5:1-6:

"And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain. He said, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Note: Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, pg. 491 tells us that Horeb is a range of mountains of which Mt. Sinai is the chief. More importantly, notice exactly who Moses called together that day, and with whom God made His covenant on Mt. Horeb. Not all of mankind, but *the nation of Israel only*. Notice also verse 3, that God *did not make this covenant with their fathers who had lived and died before them*; but with those who were living that day. And what was this covenant? The verses which follow show it to be the Ten Commandments.

Let us now look at Nehemiah 9:11-15:

"And You divided the sea before them, so that they went through on dry land; And their persecutors You threw into the deep. Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the road which they should travel. You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant."

The context shows this to be a prayer offered by the Levites (Nehemiah 9:1-5). To understand of whom the Levites are speaking one only has to read verse 11. Who, besides the Israelites did God lead through the sea on dry land then destroy their oppressors in the deep? God came down on Sinai (also called Horeb in Deuteronomy 5) and gave them the Ten Commandments (Verse 14). Notice also in these commandments are *"just ordinances, true laws, good statutes and commandments."* Of those Ten Commandments, nine are moral and religious laws, which God has demanded man to keep from creation. Notice:

1. When in the history of man has God allowed man to worship other gods or take His name in vain? Commandments 1, 2 and 3 cover this.

2. Has there ever been a time in which God approved of children dishonoring their parents? Commandment number 5 deals with this.

Neither has God our Creator ever condoned **murder**: commandment number 6; **adultery**, commandment number 7; **stealing**, number 8, and **lying**, number 9. From Adam to this present time has God ever allowed mankind to **covet his neighbor's belongings**? Commandment number 10. Although not written down for man to read, all these commandments are moral and religious laws that have been in place since God created man. However, Nehemiah tells us that one of the Ten Commandments was made known to the children of Israel at Sinai. **Nehemiah 9:14 plainly says, "You made known to them Your holy Sabbath ... by the hand of Moses."** Of the Ten Commandments, this is the only one which was not made known to their fathers before them, but first to those Israelites who were alive at Mount Sinai. (Deuteronomy 5:3).

Thus, we have the answer to the question, "When was man first commanded to keep the Sabbath?" It was at Sinai, through Moses!

3. What was the Biblical purpose for the Sabbath law?

To answer this we read Ezekiel 20:10-12:

*"Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. Moreover **I GAVE THEM MY SABBATHS, TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN THEM AND ME, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD WHO SANCTIFIED THEM.**" (Emphasis mine C.R.R.)*

Again, who did God cause to go out of the land of Egypt? We know this to be speaking of the children of Israel. And, again, God said it was **THEN** that He gave them His Sabbaths. Had God wanted the children of Israel to keep the law of the Sabbath as a reminder that He is the Lord who sanctified them, what better words could He have used than Ezekiel 20 verse 12? *"Moreover I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them (the ones He had made to go out of Egypt, verse 11) and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctified them."*

Notice also Deuteronomy 5:15 concerning this reason:

*"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: **THEREFORE THE LORD YOUR GOD COMMANDED YOU TO KEEP THE SABBATH.**" (Emphasis mine C.R.R.)*

Thus, we have the answer to question number three concerning the biblical purpose of the Sabbath Law. It was to be a sign between God and the Israelite nation showing that He delivered them from Egyptian bondage when Moses led them out through the Red Sea and into the wilderness. This law of the Sabbath was never intended for any other people. It was not given to their fathers before them (Deuteronomy 5:1-5; Nehemiah 9:11-14). And it was never intended for any nation other than the nation of Israel (Ezekiel 20:10-12). Bringing us to question number four:

4. When did the law of the Sabbath end?

To find the complete answer we need to under-

stand the purpose of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, which is fully given in the Holy Scriptures. In Hebrews 4:14-15 we read:

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Who is our great High Priest? It's Jesus! The only begotten Son of God!

Do you recall from which tribe of Israel God determined all priests under the old law should be chosen? The tribe of Levi (1 Kings 12:31). And from which tribe did our Lord Jesus descend? The tribe of Judah. With this thought in mind let us read Hebrews 7:11-19:

"Therefore if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arose another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment; but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

Under the Old Testament law given at Mount Sinai only the tribe of Levi, through Aaron and his descendants, could become priests unto God, (verse

11 cf. Jeroboam's sin 1 Kings 12:31). Thus, Jesus of Nazareth, being of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14), could not be a priest. Therefore, the commandment concerning the priesthood had to be annulled (set aside or changed, Hebrews 7:18). Hebrews 7:12 says the priesthood and law were both changed. Can there be any doubt that God changed the Law and the priesthood in order that Jesus might become our great High Priest?

Hebrews 7:18 states that the *"former commandment"* was annulled *"because of its weakness and unprofitableness."* The *"former commandment"* (Old Testament law) was indeed the word of Almighty God, of which the Psalmist said, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right; rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;"* (Psalm 19:7-8a). How, then, could it have contained a weakness, and how could it be unprofitable? The weakness and unprofitableness must be in the fact that Jesus, under that commandment, could not have become our High Priest and therefore could not have offered His perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. He could not have brought that *"better hope through which we draw near to God"* (Hebrews 7:19). So, when was the law changed and the former commandment annulled?

Let us read Colossians 2:14-17:

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

Notice that verses sixteen and seventeen list some of the *"requirements that (were) against us"* mentioned in verse fourteen. Notice that each of those mentioned were very important to the Jews under the Old Testament, **including the Sabbath.**

Their festivals such as Pentecost, the Passover, and Feast of Tabernacles are not bound upon Christians under the New Testament law of Christ. We do not celebrate the new moons and holy-days as did the Hebrew nation. And **the Sabbaths, along with these other Old Testament laws, were nailed to the cross of Christ.**

In Hebrews 5:8-9 we read of Jesus:

"Though He were a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

The inspired writer says it was in His suffering (on the cross) that Jesus was PERFECTED. It was there (on the cross) that the Law was fulfilled and changed. It was there that the *"former commandment"* was annulled (Hebrews 7:18). It was there

that Jesus of Nazareth BECAME our great High Priest and *"author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*

Thus, our fourth question, "When did the law of the Sabbath end?" is answered. It ended when Christ nailed it to His cross!

Does His sacrifice affect you today? YES! In one of two ways: **1)** Either it saves you because you have obeyed His gospel plan of salvation. **2)** Or, it condemns your soul to eternal punishment because you have refused to obey.

If you have not completed your obedience to Christ, we plead with you to REPENT of all sins and turn away completely to follow Him (Acts 17:30). CONFESS His name before men (Romans 10:9-10), and be BAPTIZED in order to wash away your sins (Acts 22:16).

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Our guidelines are as follows:

1. You must be a member of the church of Christ. The only exception is if you are writing to debate a matter of doctrine or biblical interpretation. In these cases, and at our discretion, a response from one of our regular writers will appear with it.
2. Articles must deal with topics of the Bible, Christianity, Christian living, doctrine, church history, or anything that is connected to those topics.
3. The article should be between 1.5 and 6 pages, 12-pt font, single-spaced.
4. Footnotes are welcome, if you quote someone or want to add additional information.
5. Bible translation is up to you, just try to note which version you're using at the end of the first quote.
6. Deadline for the next issue is September 30th, 2022.
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EYE HATH NOT SEEN

Bill Howard

Every word in God's message to mankind is of vital importance. All of it is God breathed, and no passage in the text is of more value than any other. We realize this is what Paul was writing to Timothy, to help him understand the importance of God's word:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"

(2 Timothy 3:16).

Quite often, one will be reading and come across a passage that strikes us a bit differently; perhaps one that has been read dozens or hundreds of times, but now the impact was a bit different, or at this particular time, it precipitated a momentary pause and a reason for more thought. Such was the case with this scripture in 1 Corinthians.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"

(1 Corinthians 2:9).

This comes from the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth as he addressed some of the major problems that were plaguing them at that time. Earlier in

the letter, he had talked about the mystery of God's wisdom which was now being revealed to man through the gospel of Christ. This particular passage of scripture is indicative of the fascinating truths which are being revealed since the gospel was first preached on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. On that day, the church had its beginning, and the spiritual blessings reserved for believers began to unfold. Paul pointed out to the Ephesians:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"

(Ephesians 1:3).

So, just exactly what are we talking about?

Before getting into the spiritual blessings which are reserved for those who love and obey God, let us give a bit of thought to blessings that all of mankind may enjoy. We may label these as universal blessings, and if you think of a name you would rather use, that is okay too. Even atheists who deny the very existence of God avail themselves every day of some of His blessings. God does not differentiate between those who believe in Him and those who do not when considering universal blessings. Jesus said: "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on

the unjust” (Matthew 5:45b). The physical and material blessings go out to all of mankind. The earth which the non-believer says God did not create provides the necessities of life for all, produces the energy, the power that drives commerce, industry and all the functions by which the atheist exists along with all others. The sun, the moon, the stars and mountains and valleys, the lakes and streams, the oceans all work in unison to fulfill and supply all the necessities of the world. We need not overly dwell on those thoughts, rather we are concerned with the spiritual blessings in which all of the family of God own because they are given by our Creator himself.

The onset of being blessed spiritually becomes a part of our life when we have taken the initial step of being in fellowship with our God. This was all set in motion when our Savior Jesus came from heaven to earth to give his life as a sacrifice for sin that by his death, the shedding of his blood, man could have the means to become a child of God. Prior to this sacrifice, this shedding of the blood of Christ, there was no forgiveness of sin. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year” (Hebrews 10:3). Now, the great things of God that before Christ were a mystery are now being revealed through the teaching of the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. These spiritual blessings began to be poured out upon mankind on the day of Pentecost mentioned above.

One very important truth we need to remember: Paul’s statement about these blessings is that they are in Jesus Christ, in no other place, there and there only. They become available to all who choose to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and are baptized for the remission of sins and added to the kingdom of Christ, His church. This is the Well-spring: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to those believers who were baptized into Christ, the first of the spiritual blessings, salvation through our Savior Jesus, cleansed of sin and becoming a member of God’s family.

Let’s stop right here for a moment. We must not pass over this lightly. This is a monumental event; it is awe-inspiring. It is without question the most important endeavor one will ever pursue in his lifetime. The old man is gone, crucified with Christ.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”

(Romans 6:3-6).

Did we point out just how colossal an undertaking this is? Yes, we did; but just stop and think for a minute. We are talking about spiritual blessings in this life if we are a child of God. These blessings we receive as a Christian are to be desired and appreciated, and we will presently dwell more on that subject, but for now, we need to realize that we are talking far beyond the here and now as well. We are dealing with actions that will determine our future beyond this physical life. It seems that often we are not keeping ourselves fully aware of the truth that life does not end when we die the physical death to this present world. We dare not let ourselves be lax and indifferent about the end result of our living. We have been repeatedly reminded that in the life after death, we will either be rewarded with life everlasting in that place that is prepared for those who love the Lord, or we will be relegated to a devastating endless life of punishment for those who chose not to avail themselves of this great blessing: a Savior who was willing to endure the brutal death on a cross just for our benefit. Whether or not we choose to dwell on the truth of heaven and hell, they are just as real as is our living on earth. After death in this life, we will live eternally in one place or the other; this is an inescapable fact, and this truth cannot be overly emphasized.

When God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, He revealed to him his desire for the Israelites.

“Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel”

(Exodus 19:5-6).

Being a special treasure to God—all it required was to be obedient. How much more meaningful could anything be than that? And, yet just a short time later they ignored their covenant with God and demanded an idol be prepared for them to follow. God was so thoroughly disappointed he thought of destroying them. This was just one of many times the Jews disappointed God until finally He allowed the nation to be broken and destroyed years later.

The spiritual blessings we receive from God are similar to what He wanted for the Israelites. Peter wrote about Christians:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”

(1 Peter 2:9).

Paul stated that God’s children are saints, (1 Corinthians 1:2). Sanctified, set apart to honor our maker, different and peculiar in the sense that Christians can easily be recognized by the way we live, and the things we embrace. At least, this is the way it should be.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”

(Titus 2:11-13).

This is what God asks of us: simple obedience to His will, and we benefit from the spiritual blessings

as His family.

As Christians, we have fellowship with God and Christ.

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”

(John 14:20-21).

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”

(Romans 8:16-17).

We will worship God. John said:

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth”

(John 4:23-24.)

Recognizing all God has done and planned for us, we would want to worship him, a warm and honest honoring of Him; it would come from the heart and not a rigid mechanical worship such as was practiced by the Jews.

We will enjoy the fellowship of other Christians as we gather to worship and praise the name of God. We join ourselves in prayer to God, to give thanks for all he is and has done. Paul advised the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), we can be in a prayerful spirit at all times. If we fail to gather in the worship service, we will miss the strength and encouragement which we need to continue to be faithful. Wisdom from the writer of Hebrews:

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much more, as ye see the day approaching”

(Hebrews 10:25).

If we fail to gather for worship on the first day of the week, we also miss the opportunity to celebrate the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. The communion service was instituted by Christ, and He said that as often as we celebrate we are doing it in remembrance of what He did for us in His death.

These are a few of the wonderful things we experience as Christians, blessings we would not even think about had we not become a part of God's family. Paul told the Galatians that we would also partake of the fruit of the Spirit, among which are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22), attributes that enhance our life while here physically but which prepare us for the balance of eternity.

The end result of these blessings which make for a beautiful Christian life is the promise that has more meaning than any other phase of the Christian life. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). In John chapter fourteen, we read Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us in heaven. We have, as Paul wrote to Titus, that blessed hope for that time to come, but we can in no wise picture in our mind what that

place which Jesus has made ready will be, it is beyond our comprehension; we will know when we hear Jesus say: "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

One final thought as we bring this to a close. God created us as intelligent human beings, capable of choosing, making decisions for ourselves. No one can force us to do anything we do not wish to do. That is the way it is with all these spiritual blessings we have talked about: Being saved by the blood of Christ, living the blessed Christian life with the knowledge that if we are faithful we will be rewarded with eternal life in the presence of God. He has made this available to us, but He does not force us to accept. We have the privilege of choosing our future. If we want to be with God in heaven forever, all we have to do is accept and abide by his wishes. If we would rather not be in heaven, if we choose to be in hell eternally, it is our privilege to do so. But, do not be deluded, it will be one or the other: heaven or hell.

Some things to think about.

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EHUD

Southpaw with a Dagger

Chris Gardner

The account of Ehud is relatively short, and what little we have about him is contained in the third chapter of the book of Judges, verses 15-31, and a few short mentions of him in the first verse of chapter four and 1 Chronicles 7:10 and 8:6. Despite his brief stint in the Scriptures this account is one of the more memorable ones and one of my favorites in the Bible. To help with this article I would encourage you to first turn to Judges and read 3:15-31.

Ehud lived during the time of Israel's history when they were ruled by judges prior to the time of kings. These judges were individuals chosen by God to watch over the people and take vengeance on their enemies, freeing them from some level of subjugation. In this account their adversary was Eglon, king of Moab, and he had been ruling over them for eighteen years (Judges 3:14). During this time he had put Israel under his domain, meaning that the Israelites were required to pay him tribute (or a tax) which is most likely the reason the Israelites cried out to God for help. So Ehud, (the son of Gera),¹ was raised up by God to free them from Eglon's and the Moabite's bondage.

What makes this account about Ehud so interesting for me is how the Bible gives us these extra details about the two main characters. We are

told Ehud was left-handed (v. 15). Most commentators believe that this meant more that he was ambidextrous than it did that he was just left-handed, which allowed him to conceal his weapon on the opposite leg. We also learn that Ehud made a double-edged dagger (which is considerably smaller than the traditional sword), and that he concealed it under his clothes attached to his right thigh (v. 16). We are also given an extra detail about Eglon in that he is described as being "*a very fat man*" (v. 17). At first these details seem odd, but like any good mystery, "the devil is in the details," and as the account continues to unfold, they are what make this account so interesting.

The time to bring tribute to Eglon came about, and Ehud, along with some other Israelites, came to Moab to pay their tax. What Eglon didn't know is that Ehud had a plan, and that it wasn't going to end well with him that day. Once Ehud and the other Israelites had presented their tribute, Ehud told Eglon that he had a secret message. What little background we get on Ehud doesn't offer us any insight that he had any military training or carried any leadership capabilities at all, but what he did possess was craftiness, and, if we are honest, a good dose of deceitfulness. Neither thing you would expect in someone picked by God to be a judge. But remember, the primary role of the judge was often to free them from oppression, and God allowed men like Ehud and Samson to be who they were through their own freewill to accomplish the deed of ending a time of suppression.

Truth be told, Ehud didn't really have a secret message from God except that God had chosen him to end Eglon's rule over Israel (so I guess there is some truth here from a certain point of

¹ *Ehud* was "the son of Gera." This probably means he was a descendant of Gera, since Gera himself, according to 1 Chron. 8:3, was a son of Bela the son of Benjamin, and therefore was a grandson of Benjamin; and Shimei the contemporary of David, a man belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, is also called a son of Gera in 2 Sam. 16:5; 19:17. At the same time, it is possible that the name Gera does not refer to the same person in these different passages, but that the name was repeated again and again in the same family. (Keil and Delitzsch, e-sword)

view). This message entices Eglon, and he clears the room, leaving both men in a “cool private chamber.” Now, this doesn’t mean that Eglon had collectables around the room on shelves or had his favorite movie posters hanging on the wall. This cool, private chamber or “summer parlour” (KJV), “was a room placed upon the flat roof of a house, which was open to the currents of air, and so afforded a cool retreat, such as are still met with in the East.”² Now alone in this room, Ehud delivers his secret message. This time he informs Eglon that it was from God (*Elohim*), which caused Eglon to stand up. Now, we are not certain why Ehud used *Elohim* instead of *Jehovah*, but there is some speculation *Elohim* was used to make Eglon think it was from one of the many man-made gods of that time primarily due to Eglon having no idea who Jehovah (Israel’s God) was nor would he have cared. So Eglon, thinking he was going to receive some accolade or praise from some god, stood up so as to properly receive his great compliment.

This was the opening that Ehud was waiting for, and he took his concealed blade from his right thigh and plunged it into Eglon’s belly (v. 21). He forced the blade so far into the fatty tissue of Eglon’s abdomen that the hilt of the knife entered into his stomach and was swallowed up by the fat which “*closed over the blade.*” The gash caused by the dagger opened up a cut big enough to allow gravity to take hold, and Eglon’s entrails fell out onto the ground (v. 22). The Bible could have simply said that Ehud stabbed Eglon in the stomach and he died, but instead we get this vivid, graphic breakdown of how brutally violent and gross this interaction really was. Ehud then left Eglon for dead, “*went out through the porch, shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them*” (v. 23).

The same servants that had been ushered away were now returning to check in on their king and

were surprised to find the room locked. They just figured that their master was “attending to his needs,” or as we would say, “going to the bathroom.”³ The servants delayed to the point they were about to burst from embarrassment and finally retrieved a key and unlocked the doors to reveal that Eglon had been murdered (v. 24-25). Their delay gave Ehud all the time he needed to quietly escape (v. 26).

Once he got back to the mountains of Ephraim, he blew a trumpet which indicated it was time for the Israelites to strike. Ehud lead Israel over the men of Moab that day and killed ten thousand Moabites, freeing Israel of their captivity. Israel, thanks to the left-handed, dagger-wielding judge, enjoyed a span of eighty years of rest (v. 30). Contextually there is no real significance for us today from this account, no type to antitypes to make, no hidden messages or themes. The account of Ehud and Eglon is just an interesting account of God using someone for the greater good of His people. None of us are ever going to be placed inside God’s Word, but that is not to say that you (along with your individual eccentricities), cannot be used by God for the greater good today: for if God could use men like Ehud and Samson (who again are not known for their piety), he can use us who do love and trust Him to guide our lives.

So I encourage you to never devalue yourself in the eyes of the Lord. While we might not to be the next David, Isaiah, Paul, or even Ehud... we can still make a difference in our families, communities, and congregations by being strong in the Lord, doing His will, and sharing the gospel.

² Dr. Thomas Shaw, *Shaw’s Travel’s*, pp. 188-9

³ When the servants of Eglon came (to enter in to their lord) after Ehud’s departure and saw the door of the upper room bolted, they thought “surely (78, *lit.* only, nothing but) he covers his feet” (a euphemism for performing the necessities of nature; cf. 1Sa. 24:3), and waited to shaming (cf. 2 King Jdg. 2:17; 8:11), i.e., till they were ashamed of their long waiting (see at Jdg. 5:28). (Keil and Delitzsch, e-sword).

THE SILENCE OF THE GRAVE

John Krivak

While people are talking, the grave keeps its silence. *"In a better place now,"* they say with hopeful confidence, looking for affirmation from each other. All of them say this. With the rarest of exceptions, death is thought to be the automatic door to Heaven. It seems natural to think this way. The agonizing process of dying is done. And, the life leading to this end may not have been a picnic either. Surely what follows has to be better? To think otherwise is inconceivable. The sermon at graveside said all of this, too. *"In a better place now."*

Jesus told the parable of Lazarus (a poor man) and the (unnamed) rich man (Luke 16:19-31). One died and the fresh grave kept its silence. Then the other's grave, and again—hush. Silence, while the people spoke to each other. People spoke, but only Jesus could hear the conversation between the two in their graves, and Father Abraham. Atop the dirt, no one heard a peep of all this. Indeed, one had gone to a better place—called Abraham's bosom. But the other found flames in Hades, even though he had lived joyously. It is not known how each met death—whether it was painless and quick, or slow and agonizing. What was important was not how they died, but how they lived. On that basis there came a great reversal. The one who lived in prosperity went to torment; the one who was always deprived was now richly supplied. Moreover, Lazarus could carry no aid to the formerly rich, for an uncrossable chasm had been fixed between them. There had been previously no relief for the agony of poor Lazarus, when the gate between them could have been opened. Now, no interaction would relieve the agony of the rich man.

Above all, the rich man from his grave wanted to break the silence, to reach those above the dirt and tell them the secrets that death would not share. His deepest desire was denied:

"Then I beg you, father, that you send [Lazarus] to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so

that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead'"

(Luke 16:27–31).

Even if the gospel, they will not be persuaded....

I was called to preach my Grandmother's funeral. Passing time had separated the relatives, and I knew not which—if any—had found salvation. I felt the pressure—for their sakes—to preach her into Heaven. But I had never known her to talk about God, or to worship. Yet she had been a sweet and kindly soul, who had sewn for me and I loved her fresh baked bread. Grandma Dove had been that for many grandchildren, and they were listening to me now. I told them that—as much as I wanted to—I could not preach her into Heaven. The farthest I could take her was to the judgment throne of Jesus, where every one of us will one day stand. I admitted with honest humility that the final decision for Grandma belonged to Him—not me. I went on to words of comfort based on the love of Jesus, and on His qualifications to judge one and all. My Grandfather who was present, declared: "When my time comes, I want that fella to speak for me!" His time soon came, and I did not preach him into Heaven, either.

I confess that I am troubled at what I hear spoken after funerals. Death seems to automatically bring one and all to the better place. And the grave—ever silent—does not correct these confident speculations. I understand the compelling need for comfort in the painful sadness of grieving. But what of the two options, rather than the only one that everyone talks about? As ever, the grave keeps silent.

But Jesus has spoken. Will it make a difference *"even if someone rises from the dead"?*



WILTED PETALS

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

Jim Mitchell

**“PERSEVERANCE of the SAINTS”
(or)
“ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED”
[PART 1]**

For several issues of this publication, we have been analyzing **The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented** authored by David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn. Published in 2004, this is the second edition of the book – the first edition is from 1963. We have been dealing with the second section which states its purpose as “devoted to a biblical defense of the five points of Calvinism” (p. xx1). Noting that “approximately 250 passages (consisting of well over 400 verses) are quoted in full” it is stated “Great care has been exercised to avoid quoting verses out of their context” (p. xx11). As has been consistently seen throughout the previous four articles dealing with the first four points of Calvinism, EVERY passage we have reviewed from the book has been either taken out of context or misunderstood.

Using the **ACRONYM** of **TULIP**, we have thus far dealt with what these authors have offered regarding the first four points and found each to be sorely lacking. Thus far, we have discussed the verses they use for: Total Depravity (original sin), Unconditional Election (predestination), Limited

Atonement (Jesus did not die for everyone but only for those predestined before time to be saved), and Irresistible Grace (if you are predestined you have no choice but to follow God).

So far, we have found this book to have neither defended nor documented from scripture what these authors claim to validate on the first four points of Calvinism. Instead, they continually assume what they need to prove and avoid either the context of the passages quoted or miss the statements found in the scriptures cited. John Calvin was notorious for assuming what he needed to prove from scripture, and those who embrace the system of doctrine to which his name is attached invariably continue to do the same. Analysis of this book claiming to have “defended” and “documented” Calvinism from scripture has shown the authors have failed on both counts. The context of verses cited has continually been ignored, conclusions based upon assumptions and preconceptions which cannot be validated by the scriptures used have been read into those ‘proof texts’ rather than found in them. In this first article on the final point of Calvinism we will discuss passages these authors use from the Old Testament, Matthew, and the Gospel of John in their discussion of the **P** in the word **TULIP** which is known as “perseverance of the saints,” but more commonly referred to as “once saved always saved.”

The authors discuss “THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS OR THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS” on pages 64 through 71. Their initial statement in this section is as follows (words in bold are emphasized in their text).

“The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit, but also **kept** in faith by the almighty power of God. All those who are spiritually united to Christ through regeneration are eternally secure in Him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God. They have been predestined to eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who *profess* the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is *saints* – those who are set apart by the Spirit – who *persevere* to the end. It is *believers* – those who are given true, living faith in Christ – who are *secure* and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace, for they were never in grace.” [Keep the phrase “they were never in grace” in mind, for we will address this topic later in the article (JM)] “True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ.”¹

Prior to the first passage of scripture used in this section, it is stated:

“The following verses show that God’s people are given *eternal life* the moment they believe. They are *kept by God’s power* through faith and *nothing can separate them from His love*. They have been *sealed* with the Holy Spirit, who has been given as the *guarantee* of their salvation, and they are thus assured of an eternal inheritance.” (p. 65).

What follows are the verses used in connection with the above statement. As you read through these verses with the above statement in mind, note care-

fully the assumptions made in the misuse/misapplication of these verses. [The ESV has been used throughout this article as it is the translation used in the book under consideration (JM)]

[Isaiah 43:1-3] “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.’ (ESV)

Assumptions made: Keep in mind that the book “defending” Calvinism is using this as a text to show that “It is *believers* those who are given true, living faith in Christ – who are *secure* and safe in Him.” Does this passage from Isaiah even mention faith? If “*living faith in Christ*” is a necessary item as these authors state, how does “living faith” IN Christ exist in a message given centuries prior to Christ being here?

Ignorance of the context: The beginning of 43:1 – “But now...”, indicates a continuation of what is found in Isaiah 42 and earlier. Isaiah 41:8 tells us Israel is the subject under consideration and the discussion in this section of Isaiah centers on how Israel had disregarded and disobeyed God. “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;...” (Isa. 41:8). Beginning in Isaiah 41:21 the discussion turns to the futility of worshipping idols (41:21-28), a topic which returns in 42:14. Note the continuation of the Jews as the subject at the end of Isaiah 42. “Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey? So he poured on him the heat of his anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart” (42:24, 25). This is a passage which deals with God’s retribution on the disobedient nation of

¹ David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, S. Lance Quinn. *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented; Updated and Expanded* (P & R Publishing. Phillipsburg, NJ – 2004) pp 64, 65.

Israel, acknowledging in Isa. 43:1-3 that God would not utterly consume them. Contextually, this passage has no bearing on the subject the authors are attempting to defend. As has been noted in the previous articles on the other points of Calvinism, it seems, once again, that the authors perhaps limited some of their research to using a concordance in order to find words and phrases they assume support the teachings of John Calvin without doing their homework in analyzing contexts.

Through both their assumptive “reasoning” and ignoring of the context, the authors use the above passage in a way that does NOT defend the point they endeavor to prove. **Isaiah 43:1-3 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[Isaiah 54:10] “ ‘For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,’ says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”

Once again, the authors, in their attempt to validate Calvinism, make the unfounded assumption that this verse deals with “the security of believers.” In so doing, they overlook the context surrounding what is referred to in v. 10 as God’s “covenant of peace.” The context of the chapter deals with Israel in captivity – “...*O barren one*” (54:1) and finally returning from exile. Concerning 54:1, the Pulpit commentary notes:

“Israel in captivity is addressed as “barren,” because, in the time of suffering, her numbers rather diminished than increased. Still, she is bidden to “sing” on account of the prospect that is opening upon her. She that is now desolate and solitary will soon have more children than she formerly had...”²

Isaiah 54 ultimately points to the “children of promise” of which Paul writes in Galatians, quoting Isaiah 54:10 in Galatians 4:27. Interestingly, or sad-

ly, the authors fail to point out the subject of Isaiah 54 or Paul’s usage of it in Galatians. Why? Discussing the context of the chapter would automatically invalidate the way they have used the verse. **Isaiah 54:10 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[Jeremiah 32:40] “I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”

What is most striking about the use of this verse is that the last portion of the verse states exactly the opposite of what the authors try to “prove.” Notice the implications of the second half of the verse. “*And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*” According to Calvinism, those who are part of this everlasting covenant cannot fall away (the author’s statement on page 64, which will be further addressed later). If that were the case, why would God “*put the fear of me in their hearts, that they MAY NOT TURN from me*” if, in fact, they never could turn away from God? **Jeremiah 32:40 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[Matthew 18:12-14] “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one what went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine what never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that *one* of these little ones *should perish.*”

As seems to be continually the case, it is surprising that this passage is used as it is exactly the opposite of how the authors intend it to be used. To say the least, it is intriguing that the authors highlight in italics the phrase which shows both their misunderstanding and misuse of the passage. Note the wording of 18:14 – “**So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that *one* of these little ones *should perish.*”** In A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament by Dana and Mantey, it is noted that:

² George Rawlinson, “ISAIAH” *The Pulpit Commentary* – Vol. 10 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950) p. 314.

“The subjunctive mood” (ie. “*should perish*”) “is the mood of mild contingency; the mood of probability. While the indicative assumes reality, the subjunctive assumes unreality. It is the first step away from that which is actual in the direction of that which is only conceivable, and, therefore, properly leads the list of the potential moods.”³

For the authors to be able to use this verse, the verse needs to simply read “perish” rather than “**SHOULD** perish.” If one is searching for the truth, the concept of “should” as being contingent rather than an absolute is not that difficult of a concept to grasp. **Matthew 18:12-14 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[John 3:16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

The above comments concerning Matthew 18:12-14 also apply to John 3:16. In order for this verse to “defend” Calvinism, it needs to say “**WILL NOT** perish”⁴ rather than “**SHOULD NOT** perish,” but that would change the form of the Greek word. The implications of “**SHOULD** not...” are that the authors do not have a grasp of what “should” actually involves. **John 3:16 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[John 3:36] “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”

Why did the authors stop their quote here and not quote the rest of the verse? Here is the verse in its entirety. “Whoever believes in the Son has *eternal*

life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” Was it merely an oversight to quote the first half of the verse and put a period at the end rather than the semicolon in the text of the ESV translation, or is there a reason they lead the reader to believe their quote was all that John 3:36 contained? When the rest of the verse is added, it becomes obvious that “believes” and “does not obey” are contrasted. They are opposites, which means that if one “believes,” he/she will “obey.” If one “does not obey,” he/she really does NOT “believe.” Putting both halves of this verse together presents problems for Calvinism. If the person who believes/obeys “has eternal life,” and the person who does not believe/does not obey the Son “shall not see life,” the question which needs to be addressed is whether or not is it possible to stop believing and/or stop obeying?

Earlier, the authors stated: “*Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace, for they were never in grace*” (p. 64). In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul provides extensive arguments and proofs that to bind the Law of Moses upon Gentile Christians is to proclaim a different message which was a distortion of the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). In Galatians 5 he wrote: “**I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace**” (5:3-4). Calvinism, teaches that one cannot fall from grace while Paul declares to Christians in Galatia who have compromised the Gospel that they have been “**severed from Christ**” and **HAVE “fallen away from grace.”** Please note that you cannot be severed from something to which you were never attached, nor can you fall away from something of which you were never a part. It cannot be argued from Galatians 5 that Paul was only targeting those who “*profess to believe*” since those who are warned about being “**severed from Christ**” or “**fallen from grace**” in 5:4 are referred to as “**brothers**” in 4:31 and admonished in 5:1 to “**stand firm therefore, and to not submit again to a yoke of slavery.**”

³ H.E. Dana, Julius R. Mantey. A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (The MacMillan Co., Toronto, 1955). #163, p. 170.

⁴ [Editor’s Note: Unfortunately, the NIV and some other newer translations (NLT, CSB, NET, NASB, and others), seeking to insert Calvinistic thought into the text, have intentionally mis-translated the subjunctive mood (“should not perish”) with a definitive statement (“will [or shall] not perish”). This is a blatant twisting of the actual words of Scripture, and is yet another reason why some translations ought to be avoided, or at the very least, not relied upon as one’s primary Bible.]

Paul wrote to Timothy: *“the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared...”* (1 Tim. 4:1-2). How can they *“depart”* from something to which they were never a part? Should I believe Paul, or the authors of a book endeavoring to defend doctrines which have consistently shown themselves contrary to what God’s word actually teaches? Peter sounded a warning to Christians at the end of 2nd Peter. *“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability”* (2 Pet. 3:17). If John Calvin were correct, why should Peter have been concerned about being *“carried away”* if it was already predetermined by God that the *“beloved”* would automatically persevere to the end? Back to this last text the authors use from the Gospel of John, the fact that they do NOT seem concerned with context (remember, they only quoted half of the verse), the way other passages show the error of their doctrine, the assumptions which are continually made, and the practice of reaching conclusions prior to actually investigating alleged “proofs” (which turn out to NOT be proofs at all), **John 3:36 does NOT “defend” Calvinism’s teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[John 5:24] “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me *has eternal life*. He does not come into judgment, but *has passed from death to life*.”

Here is yet another example of the authors assuming things which the verse does not say.

From a grammatical perspective, the verb forms of “hears” and “believes” (present active participles) carry the meaning of something which continues. To use this verse as a “defense” of Calvinism, the authors must opt for “hearing” and “believing” being one-time occurrences, which they are not; as well as assume that this hearing and believing can never change (Calvinism teaches that humanity is totally

passive in this entire process. To Calvinism, you “hear” because God makes you hear. You “believe” because God makes you believe). It should be noted however, that the force of these verbs literally carries with them a process which continues. You continue to hear and continue to believe. **What happens if one stops “hearing” or stops “believing”?** To the Calvinist, that question is irrelevant since, according to Calvinism, humanity has no true responsibility in the process – God either causes someone to believe or not and they have no choice in that matter. In his comments on 5:24, Lenski observes:

“The hearing and the believing go together. They are always correlatives of the Word, i.e., the latter [the “Word” (JM)] is intended for the very purpose of being heard and believed. And these are personal acts, hence the singular, so personal that Jesus combines person and act:... ‘the one hearing and believing.’”⁵

In John 5:24, the Greek word translated “has” is described as a “futuristic present” and “denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass.”⁶ This raises other interesting questions. Does the word of God ever give warnings to or describe those who can cease to hear and/or cease to believe? Does John 5:24 necessitate the belief that humanity is totally passive in the process of salvation and in living for God? If “hearing” and “believing” are things which occur because God makes them occur and humanity is totally passive, then do not the statements and teaching of Jesus become totally irrelevant, since the ‘elect’ will have no say in what happens to them and the ‘non-elect’ can’t comprehend His words in the first place? Are there passages in God’s Word which show the futility of approaching the above

⁴ R. C. H. Lenski. *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1943 Lutheran Book Concern) p. 389.

⁶ Dana and Mantey, op. cit. p. 185.

verses with the author's assumptions and presuppositions? The answer is YES.

Some of the other passages at odds with the Calvinistic position of these authors are:

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God"

(Heb. 3:12).

The "brothers" mentioned cannot fall away from something if they were never a part of it in the first place, and yet they are warned against what might be "leading you to fall away...". John Calvin, along with Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, are at odds with what Scripture clearly says.

"For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt"

(Heb. 6:4-6).

It cannot be argued that those mentioned in the above passage were never a part of the family of God, for they had "been enlightened...tasted the heavenly gift...shared in the Holy Spirit"... etc., yet falling away was still a possibility.

"For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. For 'Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.'"

(Heb. 10:36-39).

Calvinism teaches that the "righteous one" who "shall live by faith" cannot fall away. Hebrews 10 states that one who lives by faith may still "shrink back" and "be destroyed." It is obvious why these scriptures were neither considered nor included by

these authors as they attempt to "defend" Calvinism. These verses point out the futility of their position and show Calvinism to be false. Take away their assumptions and presuppositions and **John 5:24** does NOT "defend" Calvinism's teaching of "once saved always saved."

[John 6:35-40] "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'"

While it would be beneficial to delve into the greater pericope of John 6 and trace all that Jesus said to the recipients of these words, i.e. those who had been among the crowd of 5,000 miraculously fed (6:1-24), we will focus on specific points in both the above words of Jesus in the limited section of this chapter quoted by the authors.

Note what they do NOT highlight in John 6:35-40. Jesus stated "whoever comes to me" (which the authors do not emphasize) but which is significant since it is "whoever comes" who will not be cast out (v. 37). That being said, the authors' position would necessitate Jesus to have said 'whoever is chosen by me' or 'whoever is chosen by my Father,' but that is not what He said. Additionally, since the word translated "comes" is a present middle participle, it would seem to carry much more than an action with finality, but describe a continuing devotion and commitment. Contrary to Calvinism, it should be noted that Jesus words "whoever comes" suggests a process in which the individual is actively engaged. The same term for "come" is found in John 5 where Jesus, in His discussion with Jews seeking to kill Him, states: **"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal**

life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39, 40). If John Calvin’s reasoning was correct, Jesus made a mistake since it would be impossible for anyone to refuse to come since that would involve the ability for each individual to make a choice (do I follow Christ or not) which Calvinism maintains is impossible for people to do, but something which God must do TO them. John Calvin invariably set himself at odds with the Son of God, and those who currently follow Calvin continue to do the same.

In commenting on John 6:37, Shank notes:

“Many assert that Jesus here promised that no one who comes to Him will subsequently be cast out, and that a saving relationship with Christ, once effected, is therefore indissoluble. But such an assumption contradicts numerous plain warnings of Jesus, for example John 15:1-6. The promise of Jesus in John 6:37 is, as Robertson comments, a ‘definite promise of Jesus to welcome the one who comes.’”⁷

Concerning 6:37, Merrill Tenney writes:

“Jesus made plain that human salvation is no surprise to God. He summons people to himself by his Word and by his Spirit. The invitation, however, is not restricted to any particular time or place, nor is it exclusively for any one nation, race, or culture. God will not refuse anyone. Nevertheless, a superficial attachment to God is not enough.”⁸

Take away the assumptions and presuppositions and require pertinent questions to be answered and concepts to be addressed, and it becomes obvious that **John 6:35-40 does NOT “defend” the Calvinistic teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

⁷ Robert Shank, *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance* (Westcott Publishers, 1961) p. 360.

⁸ Merrill C. Tenney, “John” in *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary. Vol. 2: The New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing, 1994), p. 316.

[John 6:47] “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes *has eternal life*.”

Once again, the authors have assumed that believing is a one-time event rather than something which is ongoing. Also note the selectivity in their choice of verses from John 6. The Greek phrase “has eternal life” in John 6:47 is identical to the phrase “has eternal life” in 6:54. In 6:54 Jesus stated **“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”** Whenever one has a myopic view of scripture (i.e. shortsighted, nearsighted), or for that matter a myopic view of any writing, topic, or concept, there will always be problems. The authors seem not only to rely heavily upon usage of a concordance, but are now seen to be even further selective in their choices. If indeed it were the case that John 6:47 teaches that all that is necessary for eternal life is for one to believe, then by the same token 6:54 teaches that all that is necessary for eternal life is partaking of the flesh and blood of Jesus. See the problem? Neither passage should be taken from its context and made to stand apart from that context. An additional assumption from the authors is that the “believer” can never stop “believing” for if he/she did, they really never believed in the first place. Such erroneous thinking has already been addressed earlier in connection with our comments on John 5:24. **John 6:47 does NOT “defend” the Calvinistic teaching of “once saved always saved”** for ignoring context and concluding, by assumption, what you need to prove is not permissible.

[John 10:27-30] “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them *eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand*. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

Once again (has been the case throughout the book) Steele, Thomas, and Quinn view verses from assumptive conclusions they have already reached but which they fail to prove. Does the statement **“My sheep hear my voice,”** mean they hear His

voice only one time, or do they continue to hear. Similarly, does **“they follow me”** carry with it the idea of a one-time act, or do they continue to follow? Is it ever possible for the sheep to stop “hearing” and stop “following?” Intriguing, is it not, that in Matt. 10:6 and 15:24 Jesus stated that He was sent to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” not the elect/chosen sheep of the house of Israel? Why was that the case? Without addressing those and other questions, this passage cannot legitimately be used in support of this Calvinistic doctrine. In fact, from a Calvinistic point of view, even the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15 makes no sense since the shepherd is searching to find the sheep that is lost when, according to Calvinism, the lost will always keep getting lost so the shepherd really just wasted his time. It is interesting, is it not, that at the conclusion of that parable Jesus said **“I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”** (Lk. 15:7). It is not stated that the angels are rejoicing over the **“righteous”** or over the ‘elect,’ but over the **“sinner”** who is contrasted with “the righteous.” The authors are driven by assumptions and reading things “into” the text which are not there in the same way that John Calvin was driven by assumptions he needed to prove, but it was upon those unproven assumptions he built his view of scripture which has been, and continues to be, a detriment to Christianity. **John 10:27-30 does NOT “defend” the Calvinistic teaching of “once saved always saved.”**

[John 17:11-12, 15] “I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, *keep them* in your name, which you have given me that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I *kept them* in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and *not one of them has been lost* except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ... I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you *keep them from the evil one.*”

Before taking a look at the larger context of John

17, please note that the passage quoted above actually argues against what the authors allege. They are attempting to defend Calvin’s doctrine of “perseverance of the saints” (i.e. “once saved always saved”) by using a passage which shows the opposite. Jesus is praying to the Father about the ones **“which you have given me”** (v. 11 and 12), yet among those who were **given**, one actually **WAS** lost. Notice the impact of verse 12. **“While I was with *them*”** (i.e. the ones GIVEN to Christ by the Father) **“not one of *them*”** (i.e. those GIVEN to Christ by the Father) **“has been lost *EXCEPT*”** (i.e. except **ONE** GIVEN to Christ by the Father). **This EXCEP-TION is the opposite of what Calvinism is endeavoring to prove!** Actually, it is amazing that these authors would use a passage which exposes such a flaw in their teaching.

By using this passage to “defend” this tenet of Calvinism, the authors proceed with assumptions which they try to shoehorn into the verses. The assumption is that these of whom Jesus speaks are passively incapable of any action on their part when the context suggests otherwise. Why did the authors fail to mention other things that Jesus said in John 17?

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”

(John 17:6-8).

A mere two sentences before the verses they quote, Jesus says those for whom He prayed **“received”** the words God gave Him and that they **“have come to know”** Jesus **“in truth”** (v. 8). Jesus also states **“they have kept your word”** (v. 6). As Lenski observed:

“Jesus is happy to be able to add, ‘and they on their part (αὐτοῖς, emphatic) did receive them,’ namely as given to Jesus by the Father

himself. They accepted and appropriated in their hearts the gift so graciously extended to them, **They** did this; many others spurned the gift in unbelief. This is how the disciples realized what Jesus says in v. 7.”⁹

For the authors to “defend” this teaching of Calvinism from John 17, they must show those who are *chosen* (those given to Christ by God) not only are compelled in such a way that they have no choice but to believe, but also that they cannot refrain from keeping the word of God. The authors have not only failed here, but have quoted a passage (John 17:12) stating an *except*-ion proving their doctrine false. John 17:12 shows Calvinism guilty of teaching something against clear statements of God’s word.¹⁰ **John 17:11-12, 15 does NOT “defend” the Calvinistic teaching of “once saved always saved.”**¹¹

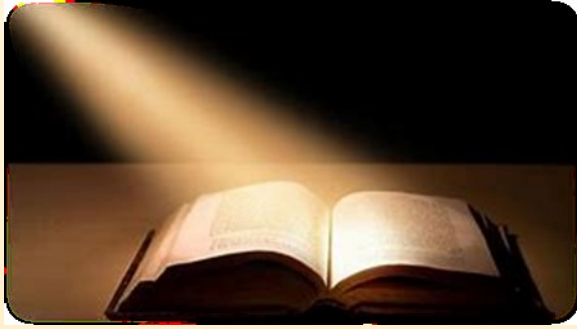
⁹ R. C. H. Lenski, *op cit.* 1131.

¹⁰ Refer back to *Wilted Petals – Part 4* and what Calvinism teaches concerning “irresistible grace” discussed in the previous issue of this publication.

¹¹ Concerning John 17, Robert Shank raises some very valid questions and makes some very astute observations. “Some assert that it is impossible that any who once believe on Jesus should subsequently be lost, since God must answer the prayer of His Son. But Jesus prayed for those who sent Him to the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Are we to assume that, because Jesus so prayed, all the members of the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, Judas, the soldiers, and all the mocking multitude were forgiven, simply because Jesus prayed for them? Are we to assume that the whole lot were immediately destined for salvation, simply because Jesus prayed for them? Jesus prayed aloud at the grave of Lazarus for the benefit of “the people which stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 11:42). Are we to assume that all who heard His prayer and for whom he prayed were necessarily persuaded that He was indeed sent of God? Obviously not. It is evident from John’s account that, while many of the Jews who witnessed the raising of Lazarus believed in Jesus, others did not. ... Neither the Father nor the Son can keep those who do not wish to accept the conditions under which they may be kept. It is not, as some foolishly assert, a question of whether men are “stronger than God.” Nor is it a question of what God could do. It is only a question of what God does do, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures declare that men are free to depart from God, and believers are solemnly warned against so doing (Heb. 3:12) [op cit. pgs. 276, 277]

Lest anyone think this book on Calvinism authored by Steele, Thomas, and Quinn is (in Calvinistic circles) a rather weak treatise on these five points, the writer of the forward to the second edition (who also wrote the forward to the first edition 40 years ago) claims this book “*offered a clear and concise definition of the Calvinistic position,*” and “*provided a conspectus of the biblical foundation for each point...*” He went on to say “*Far from duplicating existing materials, this present work may be viewed as filling an unfortunate lacuna.*” (pg. xiii). Thus far, in each instance of analysis of the scriptures used to “support” Calvinism’s five points, we have noted a preponderance of assumptions and presuppositions read into texts rather than derived from them. The final and last article in this series will examine the rest of the passages the authors use in their attempt to show that “once saved always saved” is what the Bible teaches. Thus far they have failed miserably to validate, justify, or prove any of the five points of Calvinism.

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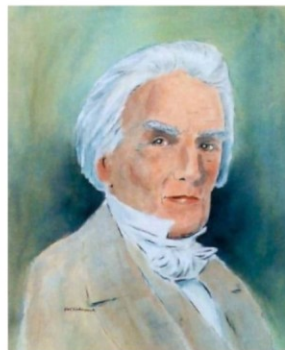


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THE REAL PHARISEES

(PART 5 – ZEAL FOR HUMAN LAW AND TRADITION)

Andy Sochor

The Pharisees were very zealous. When Paul – who had been a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5) – gave his defense before the Jews, he said, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today” (Acts 22:3). However, the Pharisees were not just “zealous for God.” As a Pharisee, Paul’s zeal was shown in his efforts to persecute the church (Philippians 3:5-6). When people “have a zeal for God” that is “not in accordance with knowledge,” they will “not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:2-3). This was the problem of the Pharisees. They were zealous, but their zeal was misdirected.

The Pharisees Overemphasized Human Tradition

“Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, “Honor your father and mother,” and, “He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.” But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’ he is not to honor his father or his mother.” And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.’

“‘You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in

vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men”

(Matthew 15:1-9).

Jesus confronted the Pharisees over their traditions. The Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples broke “the tradition of the elders” (Matthew 15:2). In response, Jesus asked them why they allowed their tradition to serve as justification for them to “transgress the commandment of God” (Matthew 15:3). They were zealously defending their traditions instead of the law of God.

However, there is a sense in which certain human traditions can serve a purpose in our service to God, provided that we keep them in their proper place. Remember what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth regarding their assemblies: “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Corinthians 14:40). When the local church meets together, the Lord does not want confusion and chaos. After all, “God is not a God of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). This does not mean we must be inflexible in the order of our services, but it does mean that we must be sure we do things “properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

How can we be sure we do that? We do not carry out this command by following the prescribed order of services in the New Testament because one is not given. There are certain “acts” we are to do in our assemblies – singing, praying, teaching, giving, and observing the Lord’s Supper (Ephesians 5:19; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 11:23-26) – but no order for these is given in the Scriptures. So how do we do these things “properly and in an orderly manner”? We do so by having a way that we customarily

do them. In one sense of the word, this is a tradition and there is nothing wrong with that.

However, the Pharisees overemphasized human traditions. This can be done in two ways:

1. When the traditions are bound upon others as a religious requirement – The Pharisees did this with hand washing (Matthew 15:2). There is certainly nothing wrong with washing hands before a meal, but it is wrong to condemn someone as being guilty of sin for not washing their hands before a meal.

2. When the traditions are elevated to such a level that they rival the word of God – The Pharisees did this in their “loophole” they created for the commandment to honor their parents by dedicating that money to God (Matthew 15:4-6). Obviously, there is nothing wrong with choosing to dedicate money to the Lord; but it is wrong to disobey the command given by God (i.e. providing help to one’s parents in need) in favor of a rule that was made by men.

If we are guilty of overemphasizing human tradition in either one of these ways, we have “[transgressed] the commandment of God” (Matthew 15:3), “invalidated the word of God” (Matthew 15:6), and have made our worship to God “vain” (Matthew 15:9). There is nothing wrong with traditions that are authorized as expedients (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23) as long as we do not make them a requirement for others or elevate them to a level that is equal to the Scriptures.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are not the ones who boldly defend the word of God. Instead, they are those who promote and defend human traditions as if they were divine law.

The Pharisees Overemphasized Making Converts

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves”

(Matthew 23:15).

One might wonder how it could be possible to overemphasize making converts. After all, one of the principal works that we have been given – both individually and collectively – is to try to turn people to the Lord. The New Testament places a good deal of emphasis on making converts.

- The apostles’ mission was to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19).
- The church’s work is to be sure “the word of the Lord [is] sounded forth” (1 Thessalonians 1:8).
- Christians are to support preachers (3 John 7-8) and teach others (1 Peter 3:15) as we have the opportunity to do so.

Seeking to convert people to Christ is important. Yet there is an overemphasis on converting others when we are willing to change the message or are unconcerned that the message has already been changed. The Pharisees had changed the law to the point that they were converting people to themselves, which did the converts no good. While their zeal was commendable – traveling “on sea and land to make one proselyte” (Matthew 23:15) – the Pharisees should have made sure they were following the law correctly so they could be converting people to the Lord’s way instead of to their way. Today, if we compromise and change the gospel message, then we will be guilty of doing the same thing.

Paul told the Corinthians, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void” (1 Corinthians 1:17). This certainly does not mean that baptism is unnecessary for salvation. The Scriptures plainly teach that it is (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21). Paul’s point was that his responsibility as an apostle and preacher was to preach the truth, not to baptize (make converts). Timothy was to preach the truth without compromise, even if people were uninterested in his message (2 Timothy 4:2-5). Converting someone with a message other than the truth of the gospel means we are not converting

them to Christ. If we do not use the pure, unadulterated gospel – “the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16) – those who are “converted” are still condemned.

We must not compromise or change the message of the gospel in order to make more converts. The churches of men have been doing this for years, but they are not converting anyone to Christ this way. Paul was not sent “to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17). He wrote later in the same letter, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth” (3:6). We simply need to plant and water and allow God to cause the growth so that we are converting people to Christ rather than to ourselves.

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are not the ones who sit back and refuse to try and make converts. Instead, they are those who are zealous about making converts; yet they have changed the message and are not converting people to Christ.

The Pharisees Wanted to Hold onto Parts of the Old Law

“But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses’”

(Acts 15:5).

Despite all of the problems that we have seen with the Pharisees throughout this study, some of them had evidently believed and obeyed the gospel. A notable example of this was Paul (Acts 26:5; 9:1-18). However, many of them held onto the same attitudes and continued to be “zealous for the Law” (21:20).

Because of this, certain ones came to Antioch – a church with a large number of Gentile disciples (Acts 11:19-21) and where they were “first called Christians” (11:26) – and taught, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (15:1). Luke recorded that “Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them” (15:2) because this teaching would effectively bring these disciples “into bondage” (Galatians

2:4).

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever taught that circumcision was necessary for those living in the gospel age. In fact, Paul wrote, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). He told the Corinthians, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Corinthians 7:19). Clearly, by the time the gospel was preached, circumcision was not one of the “commandments of God.” Yet many of the Pharisee Christians (often called “Judaizing teachers”) wanted to bind it as a requirement upon the Gentile converts.

When this issue was discussed in Jerusalem, Peter said, “[God] made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (Acts 15:9-11). No one was able to perfectly keep the old law; therefore, they were not to bind it upon others. Even if one only tried to bind circumcision, this would still be wrong because trying to keep part of the Law puts one “under obligation to keep the whole Law” (Galatians 5:3). Those who seek “to be justified by law” – the Law of Moses – have “fallen from grace” (5:4).

Circumcision of the flesh has been replaced by circumcision of the heart. Under the gospel age, Paul said, “Circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (Romans 2:29). He told the brethren in Colossae that they had been “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands” by being “buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:11-12). The old law that required circumcision (cf. Leviticus 12:3) had been “taken...out of the way” and “nailed...to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). It has been replaced with the gospel – the law of Christ (cf. Hebrews 8:8-12; Matthew 23:23-28).

So who are the real Pharisees today? They are

not the ones who advocate for a strict adherence to the law of Christ. Instead, they are those who turn to the law of Moses and seek to find justification for their preferred practices.

Conclusion

So who are the real Pharisees? As we have seen in this study, the way they are described in the Scriptures is often not what is intended by those who would use the label today.

The Pharisees had the wrong attitude toward God's law. They were disobedient and closed-minded. They tried to do the least that they could. They also believed God's word was insufficient and wanted to see signs.

The Pharisees rejected God's purpose. They did this by failing to fulfill their divinely-given purpose to fear and obey God. They also failed in their responsibility to provide material and spiritual help to others. Instead they took advantage of others and prevented them from entering the Lord's kingdom.

The Pharisees were corrupt in their hearts. They were guilty of arrogance, hypocrisy, and being lovers of money.

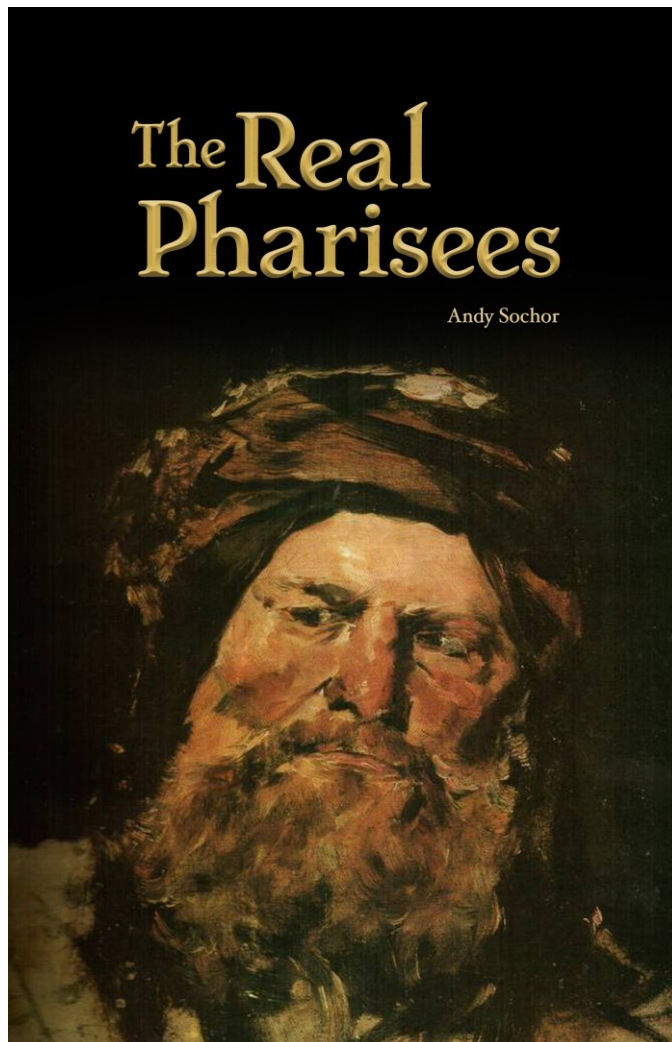
The Pharisees focused on outward appearances. They wanted to appear righteous to others because they loved the praise of men. They honored God's spokesmen of previous generations as this would make them look good to others, yet Jesus knew they were just like their fathers who killed the prophets.

The Pharisees were zealous for human law and tradition. They wanted to hold onto their traditions and, after the Law of Moses had been nailed to the cross, wanted to hold onto that in the church. They were very zealous in this as they even sought to make converts to their cause.

Rather than labeling those who strive to carefully follow the Scriptures in all that they do as Pharisees,

we need to step back and look at ourselves. Paul told the brethren in Corinth, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Are we like the Pharisees in any of these ways? It is very unlikely that we – or anyone else – will fit all of these characteristics. But if we can find any of these characteristics in our lives, then we need to make some changes.

Remember what Jesus said, "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). We should not want to be like the Pharisees. Instead, we must strive to be like Christ.



THE NEW BIRTH

John Krivak

You can start an entirely new life in Jesus, but not before you bring your old life to an end. To avoid misunderstanding, let me say that we are not talking here about suicide! We are talking about a radical change of life—a change so radical that it truly feels like a death experience. As a coin has two sides, response to the gospel requires a death to the old life and rebirth to new life in Jesus. The two are a “tandem” of absolute requirement.

The Bible talks about a “new birth,” a second birth. Even a Jewish rabbi was confused by what this means: “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” (John 3:4, NASB). There is a pattern of transformation that was established in the “gospel events” of the life of Jesus—His death on the Cross, burial in a tomb, and resurrection to newness of life. Jesus set the pattern: first a death experience, which is followed by a “new birth” (a resurrection). When people of faith follow Jesus through this pattern, they are born again. When Jesus challenged Nicodemus to be reborn, it was the same tandem that a reborn Pharisee would describe like this:

“...although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through

faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”

(Phil. 3:4–11).

Listen carefully to Jesus. All through the Gospel of John, Jesus insists “my hour has not yet come.” But when some Greeks seek Him out, Jesus knows the moment has arrived:

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him”

(John 12:23–26).

First, observe the two-step pattern in the germination of a plant from seed. Its existence in seed form comes to an end—a form of death. But out of the destruction of the seed, new life emerges—a picture of resurrection. Second, that experience is lonely, solitary for the poor seed. But once it sprouts forth, it generates more seeds that will each repeat the pattern of death and rebirth—alone no more!

The New Testament writings often discuss this death experience. Paul exclaims, “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” (Galatians 2:20). The pattern is clear, isn’t it? And again, “I die daily!” (1 Corinthians 15:31). It is clear that Paul is following the pattern set by Jesus, both modeled (on the Cross) and taught to followers: “Whoever does

not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27). None of this is optional.

Now, let’s transition to the new birth: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,” Jesus told Nicodemus. And again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:3–6). The new birth generates new life because God puts His Spirit into the heart of every person that dies with Jesus. Baptism (in water) is where death and rebirth take place. When one goes under the water, it is a burial of the “old self”—“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Romans 6:3–8).

Baptism is also the place where the Holy Spirit is received, following the pattern set by Jesus with His baptism: “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him” (Mark 1:9–10). For us who follow into baptism, we are “born of water and Spirit,” just as Peter promised on the day of Pentecost: “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” (Acts 2:38).

Though it is impossible, some want to keep the old life, and add Jesus to it. You can hear it in popular music. These songs will admit (or even boast) that the chosen path of life will drag unrepentantly through the gutters of immorality and sin. And yet—wait for it!—the refrain comes through that, nevertheless, Jesus will be there at the end of a wretched life with free salvation! This “faith” is not the kind that saves, is not the response to the Cross that God—in full tandem—requires:

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all”

(Colossians 3:5–11).

The catchy song carries a false gospel that eliminates a death to the old life. Better—so the song goes—to continue the old life and just tack on that salvation bit to the end!

The new birth brings a radical change of life. Sin had a place in the old life; it has no place in the new. How is change possible? The Holy Spirit brings the power for holiness against the power of sin. The reborn Christian is now a “saint” who is “sanctified” (that is, made holy). The new quality of life may be described in such positivistic terms, without requir-

You can start an entirely new life in Jesus, but not before you bring your old life to an end.

ing an absolutely immediate and perfect break with sin. There is a growth process. Even so, the new birth breaks the previous slavery under sin:

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you”

(1 Thess. 4:1-8).

Because new birth of the Christian is tied to the resurrection, we enjoy a “living hope” that carries us safely through the rough-and-tumble of mortal life:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the

outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls”

(1 Peter 1:3-9).

The new birth brings you fresh into the family of God, adopted and in line for a full inheritance. The Spirit, now dwelling inside you, recreates you into the image of Jesus. When He returns, you will look very much like each other!

Both halves of the tandem find anchor points in Scripture that authenticate this as theological truth. One may be “born again” only after dying to self (the “old self”) and to sin. Having done this, we may claim these accomplishments:

- ***We have “obeyed the gospel”!*** The gospel is the saving message that Jesus was crucified and resurrected. We also have been crucified and raised to newness of life (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17).
- ***We have formed a “New Covenant” relationship with God through Christ Jesus!*** The essence of that arrangement is that the full self-sacrifice of Jesus (on the Cross) is answered with a full self-sacrifice of our own (denying self, taking up our own crosses, and following).
- ***We gain entrance to the Kingdom of God!*** Jesus warned Nicodemus that, without a new birth, one will not see the Kingdom of God. The same Kingdom restriction attends those who try to enter the Kingdom without a “death experience”:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

You can start an entirely new life in Jesus, but not before you bring your old life to an end.

INTERPRETING THE TEXT

Matthew Shaffer

Our first set of interpretive questions grew out of one central question: *what does the text say?* Word and phrase studies give us the tools we need to understand what a specific verse can mean, and what it cannot. We have already seen the importance of context when we determine the meaning of a word, now we will extend our view of the context even farther. Here, we will deal with the central question of structure or relationship, which underlies our second set of interpretive questions. *How is the book and chapter of the Bible put together, and what role does our verse play to move the thought, argument, or narrative forward?*

When we study a passage this way, we will deal with most of the surrounding text in a more superficial way than our chosen verses. This is fine if we keep ourselves humble. Every passage deserves our full attention, but it is not practical to study a whole book in-depth every time we deal with a single passage. Thus, we can work with our best understanding in the moment if we recognize that our thoughts on a verse we deal with in passing may change or develop when we examine it in more detail.

The Book as a Whole

The first step when dealing with a passage's context is to identify the purpose of the book as a whole. If we know what the book was designed to accomplish, we can take it for granted that every verse serves to support that goal. This will give the broad context that we need to orient our study. The genre of literature to which a given book belongs will often determine what kind of purpose it serves. By nature, a collection of poetry, like the book of Psalms, will not contain a single line of thought from the first psalm to the end of the book. Instead, its purpose has more to do with inspiring the people of God toward praise and appreciation of God's

work in our lives. Likewise, a book of history may be more descriptive, while a letter may have a central thesis that its author seeks to prove. The purpose of each book can generally be summarized in a short statement. Consider the following examples, according to my understanding:

- **1 Samuel** tells the history of Israel from the birth of the prophet Samuel to the death of king Saul.
- The book of **Psalms** contains the thoughts of God's people expressed in poetry to inspire the praise and devotion of His followers.
- The book of **Haggai** was written to convince the people of Israel to continue rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem despite the threats of their enemies.
- The book of **Acts** tells the history of Christianity from Jesus' ascension to Paul's imprisonment in Rome.
- The book of **1 Corinthians** was written to foster unity in a congregation that was torn apart by factions and doctrinal arguments.
- **1 Peter** is a general reminder of the things Peter had taught throughout his life and an encouragement to all Christians to keep the faith, whatever we may suffer in this life.

If you do not know what the purpose of a book is, try reading the first and the last chapters. Often, though not always, the author of the book will explain what he hopes to accomplish in that writing (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:10-11), or he may summarize and apply what he has said throughout the book (e.g., 1 Peter 5:8-11). If you cannot identify a clear statement from the author himself, you might consult the introductions of a few commentaries on that

book. The authors of commentaries generally explain what they think the central purpose or theme of the biblical book is, along with their reasons for reaching that conclusion.

The Chapter/Section in the Book

Once we have determined the direction in which the whole book is oriented, we can start to think about the large blocks of content that make it up and how they move the book forward to its goal. There are at least two ways that we can divide the book up: we can assess the book chapter-by-chapter, or we can use the section headings provided in most modern translations. There is an advantage to the second approach, since it breaks down the progress of each book into smaller steps. Chapters, as they are divided in modern Bibles, often deal with several subjects that, although they are related, are more difficult to summarize into a short statement. However, it is worth noting that the section headings vary from translation to translation. As you study the book, you may find that you disagree somewhat with the section headings used by your preferred translation, and your interpretation of the book will reflect that.

We should note that it is not always helpful to study the whole book. Some books do not necessarily have a continuity of thought from chapter to chapter, like the book of Psalms — although some psalms may have been grouped by a common theme. Additionally, it may not be necessary to study every part of a historical book like 1 Samuel, the gospels, and Acts to understand the context of a particular passage. In these cases, it may be better to study a distinct section of the book, like Saul's efforts to kill David (1 Samuel 18-31), rather than to start from chapter 1.

The following is a basic outline of 1 Peter using the section headings in the NKJV:

- **Greeting and address** (1:1-2)
- **A heavenly inheritance** (1:3-12) We have received an eternal and incorruptible inheritance through the resurrection of Christ,

which was predicted and proven beforehand by the prophets of old.

- **Living before God our Father** (1:13-21) Because our inheritance is purer than things of the world, we must replace worldliness in ourselves with holiness.
- **The enduring Word** (1:22-2:3) The Word of God — the expression of His holiness and incorruptibility — is the tool that God uses to train us in holiness.
- **The chosen Stone and His chosen people** (2:4-9) Through the influence of the Word, God is building us into a spiritual house that shares the nature of Christ, our prototype, who was rejected by the world.
- **Living before the world** (2:11-12) Therefore, as Christ, we must live a life separated from the world.
- **Submission to government** (2:13-17) Yet we should not war against the world, but be submissive to its authorities, so that we will win through peace and good works, not aggression and violence.
- **Submission to Masters** (2:18-25) This principle is true, no matter how cruel and aggressive this world's authorities are towards us. If we want to win like Christ, we must fight like Christ — through submission and humility, knowing that God will judge evil-doers in the last day.
- **Submission to husbands** (3:1-6) The same principle applies to authority in marriage. Wives who find themselves married to a man who does not believe in Christ cannot win him over through rebellion, but rather through peace and good works.
- **A word to husbands** (3:7) But as many Christians as have authority in this world, such as through marriage, are bound to use it wisely, with compassion for and cooperation with those entrusted to them.
- **Called to blessing** (3:8-12) Therefore, Christians are to do good and to bless others

in every situation, for they must bless to inherit the blessing.

- **Suffering for right and wrong** (3:13-17) No one in this world can truly harm us, for our eternal, incorruptible blessing from God is greater than all the suffering this life can threaten.
- **Christ's suffering and ours** (3:18-4:6) This is because the death of the flesh, even if it comes by violence, brings about an end to sin and gives the Spirit of God opportunity to make us alive in our spirits, just as Christ's death was necessary before He could be raised again.
- **Serving for God's glory** (4:7-11) Therefore, while we still have time in this life, it is our duty to use the gifts God has given us to glorify Him.
- **Suffering for God's glory** (4:12-19) We should also view suffering as a gift, an opportunity to glorify God. If we live like Christ, we will share His reward.
- **Shepherd the flock** (5:1-4) A closing word to elders, who have the responsibility to use their authority wisely and sincerely for the good of those under them.
- **Submit to God, resist the Devil** (5:5-11) Those who are younger have the responsibility to submit to the elders among them, and to one another as brethren. If we resist the temptations of the devil and humble ourselves to God, we will be glorified in the end.
- **Farewell and peace** (5:12-13)

Our verse, 1 Peter 3:21, falls in the section titled "Christ's suffering and ours" (3:18-4:6). We can see that this section is not thematically isolated from the sections surrounding it — before we get to this section, we can see several examples of how our duty as Christians is to submit to worldly authorities and to commit ourselves to good works, no matter how cruel the authorities are. Peter uses the specific ex-

amples of cruel masters and unrighteous husbands to illustrate this point. It follows logically that we may suffer in this life. Therefore, under the heading "Suffering for right and wrong" (3:13-17), Peter demonstrates that this worldly suffering cannot harm us in an eternal way. The next section, where our verse can be found, explains that worldly suffering and even death cannot nullify our salvation in Christ — in fact, death is what gives our salvation its power! The next two sections go on to show that, on these principles, our suffering in this life actually glorifies God, since it is both the result and means of our victory over sin.

To summarize our findings on this level, the comments on baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 appear as part of a larger case that we should accept suffering in this life because we can identify ourselves with Christ's suffering and His resurrection. How does Peter's reference to baptism help support this case? To answer, we will need to look a little closer at the immediate context surrounding that verse.

The Verses in the Immediate Context

It will be helpful to take a similar approach to interpreting the flow of verses in the immediate context. How does each verse help us move from the point proven by the previous section to the thesis proposed by the one we are studying? We will consider each verse individually with careful consideration to how it adds to the unified message of the passage:

- 3:18 — Worldly suffering should not trouble us (from the previous section), because when Christ suffered and died on our behalf, he died in the flesh but He was made alive by the Holy Spirit.
- 3:19 — This is the same Spirit who has preached to men in the past (we will set aside the precise identity of the "spirits in prison" for this study, though it is a question that deserves much more attention).
- 3:20 — The Spirit preached in the days of Noah, when salvation through water was

first declared, then accomplished — albeit in the case of only eight people.

- 3:21 — There is a corresponding message of salvation through water in the present day — baptism — whose ability to save is centered in the inward man, and whose power comes from the suffering and resurrection of Christ.
- 3:22 — This Christ, who died, has nevertheless been glorified with a position of authority in heaven.
- 4:1 — Since Christ has suffered to accomplish His glorification and His victory over sin, we should be prepared to experience the same.
- 4:2 — Once we have armed ourselves with a mind prepared to suffer, we have broken the bonds that temptation in our bodies has over us. We can live for the will of God because we are willing to forego the comforts of the flesh.
- 4:3 — This lets us leave behind the excesses that may have defined our earlier lives.
- 4:4 — Those who are still bound by the comforts of the flesh cannot understand why we have forsaken these things, nor why we are prepared to suffer. Thus, they speak evil about us.
- 4:5 — They will be accountable for themselves.
- 4:6 — Thus, we see that what is important to worldly men and what is important to God are opposed to each other. What is judged negatively by men — suffering, broadly speaking — counts favorably toward eternal life in the spirit with God.

There are some difficult details in this whole section that require more attention, but we can find a clear progression of thought: Christ had to suffer to be glorified. This is the same pattern that has saved since the days of Noah and, through the imagery of baptism and its connection to the death and resurrection of Christ, it is the same pattern that we have

submitted ourselves to. Therefore, we should expect to be perfected through suffering and even physical death.

This gives us a view of our verse in its context. Baptism is an important part of the greater point that Peter is making because it is the moment when a Christian convert identifies himself with Jesus' suffering and death. It provides a link to show how God's Spirit has worked to overcome suffering and death from the earliest stages of history until Christ, and even now, as long as there are Christians.

Conclusion

When we examine the structure of a biblical passage, it is usually easiest to work from the outside in. We must 1) determine the overarching message of the book, 2) identify and examine the component sections that make up the book, to understand the author's flow of thought on a large scale, and 3) examine the verses immediately surrounding our passage of interest to see how it helps to push the author's discussion forward. If we can understand the passage's connection to the book on these three levels, we should be able to answer the questions of relationship we developed earlier in our course of studies.

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NOTEWORTHY NEW BOOK:

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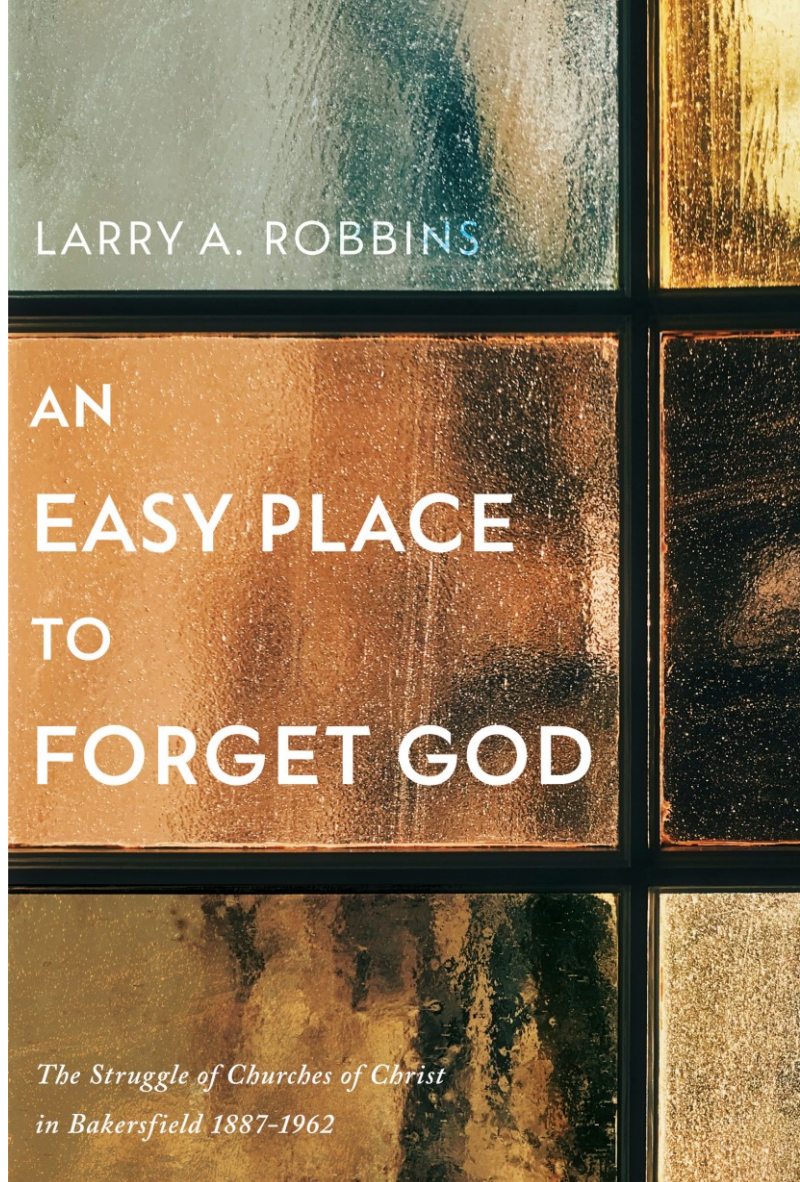
Larry Robbins

An Easy Place to Forget God [Self-Published, 2022] centers on the individuals and families who set out to recreate the church they read about in the New Testament in the city of Bakersfield. The book describes their successes and struggles while offering an overview of the Restoration Movement from 1887 to 1962.

Among those challenging themselves to ‘live in the world but not of it’ was an evangelist/dentist—his wagon serving as office and home, with a tent as his auditorium. A slightly built oilfield worker from Florida, his family often ill and going without, preached to a “sin-stricken city needing missionaries worse than any other country I ever lived in.” A woman, who played a prominent role in one of Nashville’s largest congregations, helped plant not one but two congregations in her Bakersfield home.

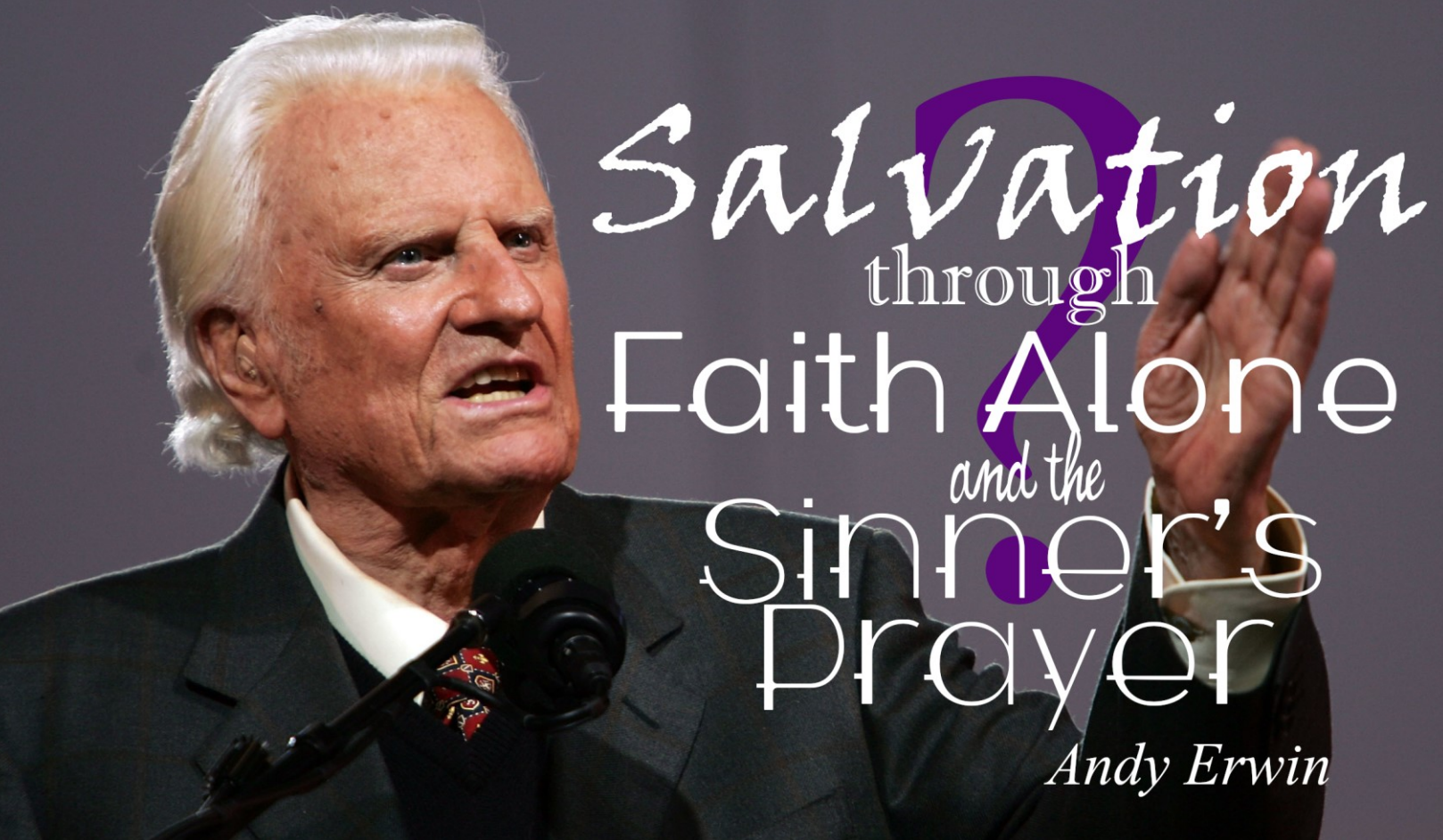
With little else in common, they shared a desire to serve their God. Among them was a preacher, who also was a labor leader and strike organizer; a Christian from the South, good enough to be a child of God but, because of the color of her skin, not good enough for the local church; a carpenter who worked to construct a church building during the day and a congregation of God’s people north of the Kern River in the evenings; and a public relations expert, who attempted to use the latest advertising techniques along with an auto-parts magnate’s fortune to bring New Testament Christianity into the twentieth century.

From 1887 to now, Bakersfield, California, has been the site of many congregations. While they all generally reflect the restoration of New Testament Christianity, they differ in details which, to them, are essential beliefs. As the story unfolds, we see One Cup, Black, Mutual Edification, non-Sunday School, Mainstream, Non-Institutional, Institutional, and Progressive congregations—the differences in



beliefs and a summary of their views/backgrounds is given. Derogatory descriptions like *no-class*, *digressive*, *anti*, and *liberal* are intentionally avoided. Sections on “premillennialism” and “institutionalism” provide a context for understanding the decisions made from the 1920s onward along with their consequences. Finally, the Epilogue briefly discusses why this account ends in 1962 and attempts to summarize events up to the present.

Excerpts from religious papers, church bulletins, and newspaper articles are included to help provide context for the times discussed. The book’s title is from a note written by Bertha Drane and published in the *Gospel Advocate* in 1922. Having reestablished a congregation which met in her home in Bakersfield, she and the others acknowledged the challenge they faced: “This is a nice country to live and enjoy the temporal blessings, yet an easy place to forget God.”



The cardinal doctrine of evangelical churches is salvation by faith alone through grace alone.¹ The doctrine came into existence through the reformatory works of Martin Luther. It was Luther who added the word “alone” to his German translation of Romans 3:28. Luther hoped to provide a clear contrast for his idea of salvation through faith, and the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation through works.²

Salvation by Grace through Faith

Let us begin with a look at Ephesians 2:8-10. Paul’s beautiful statement on salvation which comes by grace through faith has been much maligned by advocates of the evangelical doctrine. Paul states:

¹ An example of this doctrine being so stated is found in the *United Methodist Member's Handbook*, Revised by George Koehler (Discipleship Resources, 2006), 78-79.

² However, Luther remained convinced that baptism was for the remission of sin, although he was mistaken as to the form of baptism.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Calvinists believe this passage teaches faith is the gift of God. This interpretation is in keeping with their theory that man is depraved and then regenerated through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Faith, for them, is part of the direct operation of the Spirit. Faith itself is the gift of God. Without God granting faith, man would remain without it. If this were the case, we would not be commanded to believe the gospel, and we would not be condemned for not believing and obeying the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:10-12). Biblically speaking, however, faith is developed by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Evangelicals would like for this passage in Ephesians to read, “you are saved through faith *only*.” Paul clearly teaches that we are children of God by

faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26). He does not teach that we become children of God at the point of faith/belief (mental assent) in Christ. For Paul, having faith in God meant having a trusting obedience and submission to the will of God.

Faith, repentance, and obedience have always been required from man in response to the word of God. Paul understood and taught this. “Faith” without repentance and obedience is truly not faith at all. Does obeying God constitute salvation by works? Paul taught that faith and obedience are coupled together in the plan of salvation. According to him, one becomes a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus when he is baptized into Christ and clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). Paul wrote of having faith in the working of God, i.e., the removal of sin at baptism (Colossians 2:11-13). Note how Paul said that the forgiveness associated with baptism was due to “the operation of God” (Colossians 2:12-13) not the work of man. We mention these two passages specifically so that we might explain what is meant by the “works” mentioned in Paul’s statement. We are not arguing that man is saved by works nor do we affirm that man can earn salvation. However, we do not believe that baptism, for instance, is any more a work to merit salvation than repentance or confession, as all three are necessary for salvation, and each constitutes true biblical faith in Christ. Jesus even said that believing is a work (John 6:28-29).

The glaring contradiction in evangelical teaching is they deny the importance of scriptural baptism in the plan of salvation based on it being deemed a work while allowing the act of an extra-biblical “sinner’s prayer” in their plan of salvation while affirming it is not a work. We ask for them to explain, how is prayer any less a work than baptism?

As we consider the passage in Ephesians 2:8-10, let us also recall how the church in Ephesus began. In Acts 18:24ff., we read of Apollos coming to Ephesus teaching and preaching the things of the Lord. However, he knew only the baptism of John (v. 25). Paul later came to Ephesus, and upon finding out that they had been baptized with John’s bap-

tism, which had been superseded by the baptism of the Great Commission, he baptized twelve men in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:1-7). If ever a church existed that understood “there is one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5), it was the church in Ephesus in the First Century. The church had been sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26). The New Testament teaches only one “washing” connected with sanctification and cleansing and that is baptism (see also Titus 3:3-7).

We should also consider Paul’s own conversion to Christ. Did he teach something contrary to what he experienced and was commanded to do? Saul of Tarsus (Paul) believed in Christ while he was on the road to Damascus, and yet he was told to go to Damascus and wait to be told what he must do. For three days in Damascus, he prayed and fasted (proof of repentance) (Acts 9:9, 11). When Ananias came to him, he told Saul of God’s plan for him, laid his hands on him so that he could receive his sight, and commanded him to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins while calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). Saul was not commanded to believe or repent, for it was evident that he was already a penitent, believing man. Rather, he was told to do that which he had not done so that he might be forgiven and become a child of God. If a sinner’s prayer is necessary to receive the forgiveness of sin, why did it not work for Saul? He prayed for three days and was told to be baptized to wash away his sin. Are we to believe that Paul taught a plan of salvation which he personally did not follow? If so, his very words would condemn him (Galatians 1:6-9).

The Sinner’s Prayer

Let us also offer a few candid remarks about the practice of the sinner’s prayer. The sinner’s prayer is not only contradictory in theory and practice and contrary to the word of God, but also insulting to those who would obey God truly. Those who submit to the will of God and are baptized for the forgiveness of sin are usually derided by those advocating the sinner’s prayer for believing in salvation by works. But how is prayer not a work according

to their reasoning? The advocates of the practice have merely replaced baptism with the sinner's prayer. The act of baptism is a work, according to them, but the act of prayer is an act of faith. Why can't we allow baptism to be the act of faith—as it is taught in the Scriptures—and do away with the sinner's prayer that is not in the Scriptures?

Jesus has said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16). Evangelicals teach, "He who believes and says the sinner's prayer shall be saved..." Only one can be right. Is Christ right or is the evangelical movement right?

By inspiration, Peter taught, "Repent and every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin..." Evangelicals teach, "Repent and every one of you say the sinner's prayer for the forgiveness of sin..." Again, only one can be right. Is it the Holy-Spirit-inspired apostle or is it your favorite evangelical preacher—who is right?

Our Lord placed baptism in the Great Commission. The Holy Spirit placed baptism in the first gospel sermon on the day the church began. Who placed the sinner's prayer in the conversation? It was not recited on Pentecost, for the sinner's prayer is hardly a century old.³ The practice began during the evangelical revivals of the early Twentieth Century not during the First Century or the book of Acts. A systemized plan of salvation was needed to calculate how many people were being "saved" at these gatherings. The Lord provided baptism as a means of knowing when a person is saved and added to the church. But the people responsible for the sinner's prayer had vociferously argued against baptism being necessary for salvation. Instead of using the biblical plan of salvation which includes baptism, they replaced baptism with a prayer.

³ The following information came from a doctoral dissertation approved in 2001 at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The author of the dissertation is Paul Harrison Chitwood. The title of the work is "The Sinner's Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis." [Editor's note: this dissertation can be downloaded from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary site, <https://digital.library.sbts.edu/>]

Prayer became the line of demarcation. Baptism was relegated to something a person did because he had already been saved, rather than to be saved. While a few books were written containing various forms of the prayer in the first half of the Twentieth Century,⁴ it was not until the 1950s that the prayer began to appear in the literature published by the American Tract Society (ATS).⁵ From that time onward it was popularized by such events as the Billy Graham Crusades and Campus Crusades for Christ, International.⁶ Instead of extending an invitation mirroring Peter's on Pentecost, evangelicals began to appeal to their audiences to "welcome Jesus into your hearts" and "pray this prayer with me." As a result, untold millions have been led astray by a doctrine and a practice clearly invented by men as a substitute for baptism in the Lord's plan of salvation.

The sinner's prayer is one of the worst shams ever perpetrated in the Christian dispensation. It was invented and is propagated by those who had a prejudice against baptism. Yet, every argument falsely alleged against baptism can be turned forcefully and convincingly against the sinner's prayer. The doctrine of salvation at the point of faith (faith being mental assent) is never taught in Scripture. The doctrine of the sinner's prayer contradicts their doctrine of salvation at the point of faith. If one is saved at the point of faith, why is the prayer necessary? The practice of the sinner's prayer was invented so that records of conversions could be kept. However, records of conversion were kept in the book of Acts before and without the sinner's prayer. Those records were accumulated based on the number of baptisms (Acts 2:41).

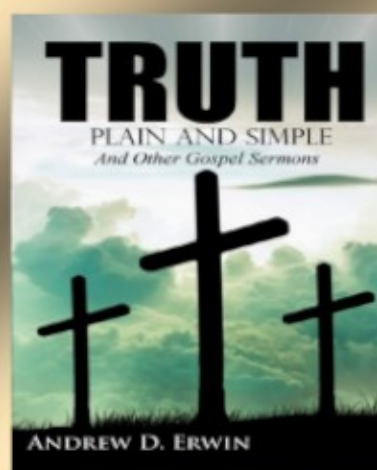
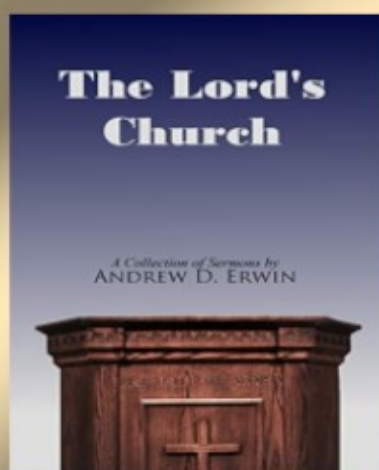
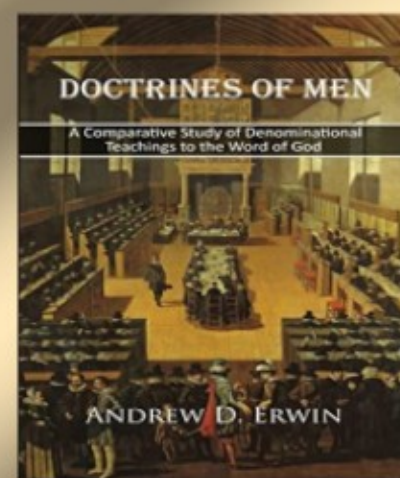
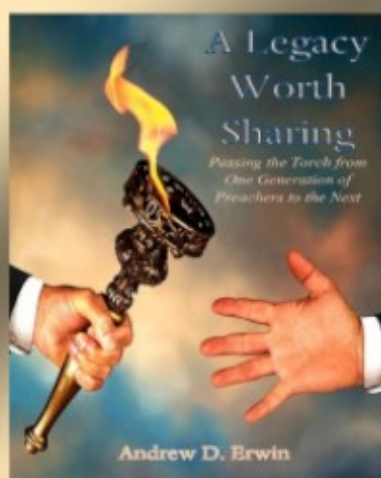
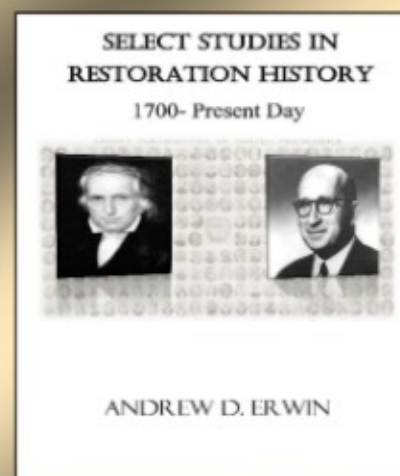
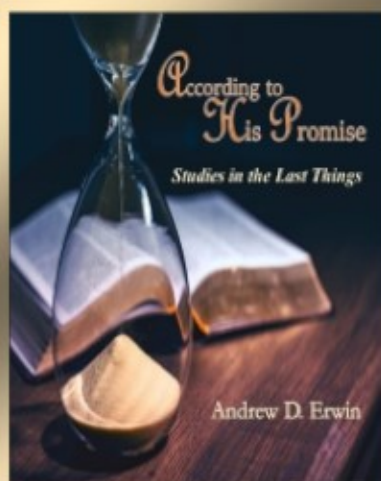
⁴ L.R. Scarborough. *A Search for Souls: A Study in the Finest of the Fine Arts – Winning the Lost to Christ* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. 1925). 122. See also: Faris D. Whitesell, *Sixty-Five Ways to Give an Evangelistic Invitation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), 88.

⁵ Paul Harrison Chitwood, 48–55.

⁶ Chitwood, 55–63.

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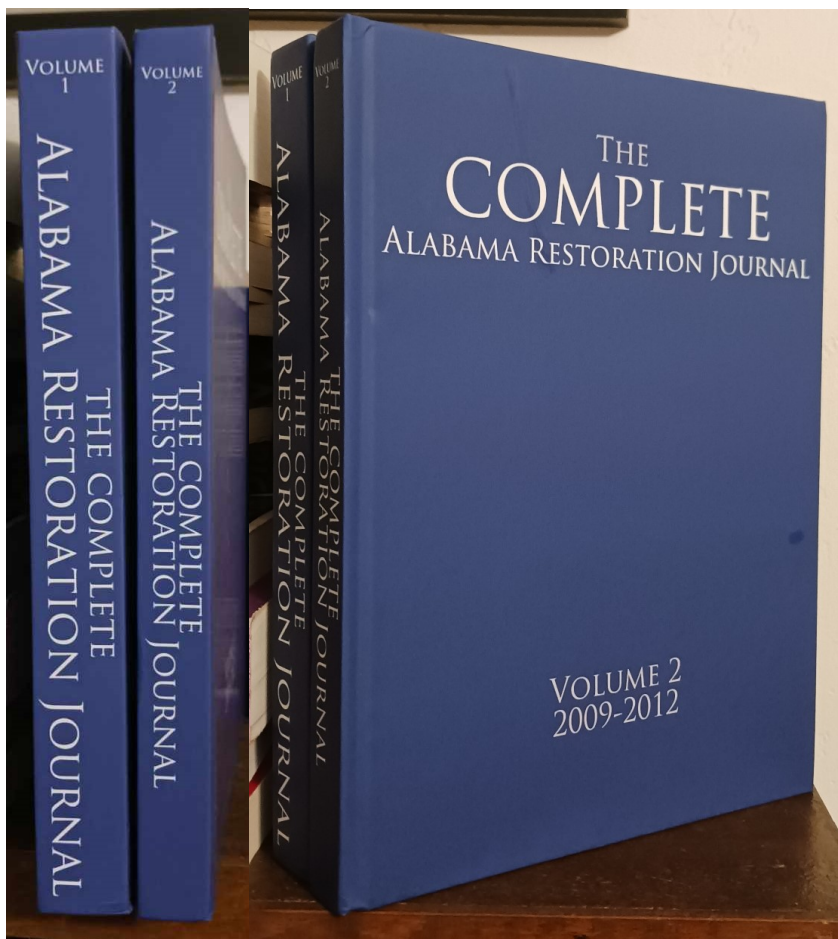


Andy Erwin is the editor of the *Gospel Gleaner* and is actively involved in training preachers around the world.

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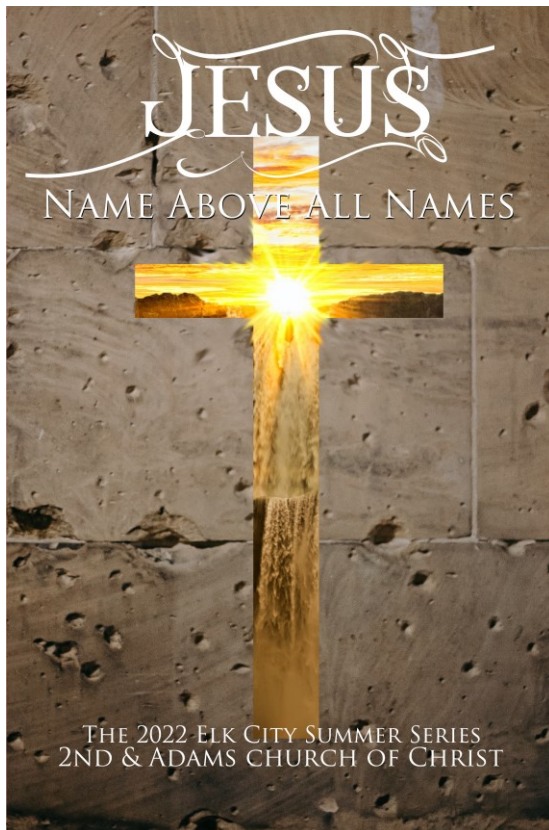


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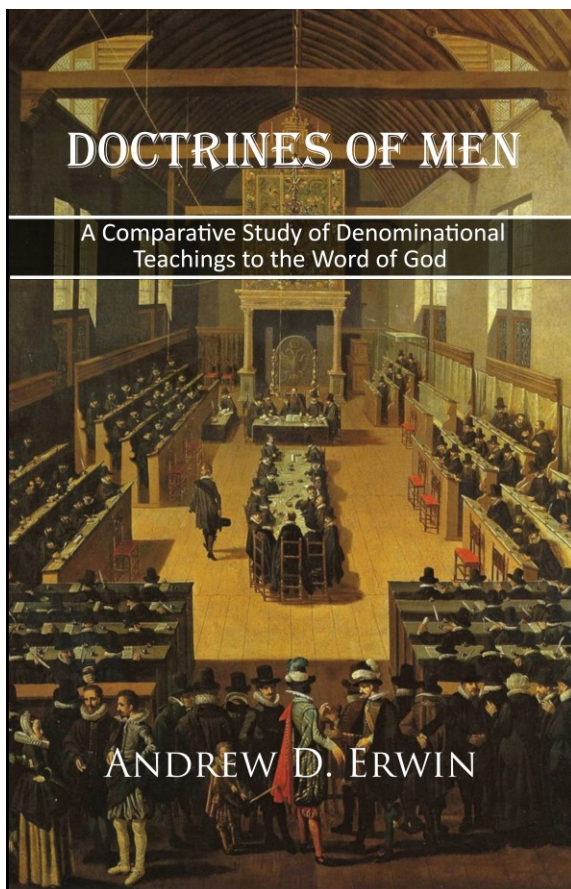
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SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Bradley S. Cobb

The word “saved” (or “salvation” or any of their various forms) is used in different ways in the Bible. For example, the same word translated “saved” in the New Testament is also translated “healed,” “made whole,” “do well,” and “preserve.” The basic idea is taking someone from a bad state and placing them in a better state. Taking someone from sickness to health, from slavery to freedom, from sinner to saint, from earthly life to heavenly life—the Bible uses the Greek word *sozo* to describe each of these transitions.

The topic considered in this article is salvation in the Old Testament, but I wanted you to understand before we get there that the word “saved” in the Bible doesn’t always mean salvation from sin (though it is also used in that way). In fact, most times we see that word in the Old Testament, it *doesn’t* specifically describe salvation from sin.

The Main Meaning of “Salvation” in the Old Testament

God sent Isaiah to King Hezekiah, to tell him to “Set your house in order: for you shall die and not live” (Isaiah 38:1). But Hezekiah went to God in tears, pleading for more time. And after God granted him another 15 years, Hezekiah wrote the words “The LORD was ready to save me” (Isaiah 38:20). This is salvation from sickness. But this isn’t how it is normally used.

Hannah was horribly depressed. She was one of two wives to her husband Elkanah. His other wife had given him children, but Hannah was barren, and the other wife missed no opportunity to rub that in her face. We all know the story about how the family went to Shiloh, and Hannah went off by herself to pray, mouthing the words, but making no sound.

She was praying for a son, and said that in return, she would dedicate him to God. After her prayer was answered, and she fulfilled her vow to God, she prayed again, this time with the words, “My heart rejoices in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation” (1 Samuel 2:1). This is salvation from the mocking of her husband’s other wife, salvation from her barrenness. But this isn’t how it is normally used.

Read these passages, which are just a sampling, and see for yourself what the primary type of salvation was in the Old Testament.

When the Israelites were standing on the shores of the Red Sea, the Egyptians hot on their heels, scared that they were going to be killed, Moses said:

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever!” (Exodus 14:13).

After Moses raised his rod, the Red Sea split, and the Israelites walked across on dry ground. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, God brought the walls of water crashing down on them, drowning Pharaoh’s entire army. The inspired record then says:

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore (Exodus 14:30).

Forty years later, the Israelites are at the side of another body of water, the Jordan River, and Moses is giving a series of sermons, delivering to this new generation the laws and commands of God, as well as the promises. Hear what he says to them:

It shall be, when you are come night unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, and shall say to them, "Hear, O Israel, you approach this day unto the battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:2-4).

This is the same thread that runs throughout the books of history. Judges 6 and 7 use the word several times to describe the salvation that God would bring to Israel by the hands of Gideon and his 300 men. Salvation from the Philistines is mentioned several times in the books of Samuel. Here's just one of those passages:

By the mouth of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies (2 Samuel 3:18).

In the books of Kings and Chronicles, there are instances of the people going to God in prayer, crying "Save us!" But these are all asking for *physical* salvation from their enemies.

Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the LORD God, even Thou only (2 Kings 19:19).

What we need to recognize in all of these is that they weren't asking for salvation **from sin**; they were asking for physical deliverance from their enemies. But make no mistake about it, there was a **spiritual** component to this as well, as we will see.

Old Testament Salvation Based on their Attitudes and Actions

In the book of Judges, we see over and over the rollercoaster of the Israelites—they go from faithful to fallen, then God sends a nation to conquer them. Eventually, they cry out to the Lord in repentance, and God sends a deliverer, a judge, to save them from their enemies. In short, God didn't save them

when they continually rejected Him. This is a constant theme throughout the entire Bible (Old Testament and New Testament). If you doubt it, just read Hebrews 10:26-31. Moses, soon before his death, told the Israelites that they needed to learn the lesson of faithfulness:

It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. ... And thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man [literally, "no one"] shall save thee (Deuteronomy 28:15, 29).

Obedience was required if they wanted physical salvation. But so was humility. After David had been saved from Saul (The king of God's people, the Israelites), he was inspired to write:

"The afflicted people ["humble people," NKJV] thou wilt save, but Your eyes are upon the haughty, that You may bring them down" (2 Samuel 22:28).

Here is a contrast being made between two people who are in a covenant with God. On one hand, you've got the mighty King Saul, the haughty, high-minded King Saul. On the other hand, you've got the humble servant of God, David. Being saved physically in the Old Testament was based on one's attitude towards God. And brethren, our salvation today is based on our attitude of humility as well—Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10).

He will save the humble person (Job 22:29).

The sixth Psalm shows the heart of a humble person before God, including these words:

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak: O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but Thou, O LORD, how long? Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for Thy mercies' sake (Psalm 6:2-4).

When David's son Solomon went before the people after the completion of the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, he preached to them and offered a public prayer to God. In it, he showed the connection between their physical deliverance and their spiritual condition. Hear his words:

If they sin against Thee (for there is no man which sinneth not), and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near. Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray to thee in the land of their captivity, saying, "We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly"; if they return to thee with all their heart and all their soul in the land of their captivity wither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land which thou hast given to their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chose, and toward the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee (2 Chronicles 6:36-39).

Without any doubt, the lost people of God, in order to expect salvation, had to repent of their sins against God. It was a requirement for their salvation. But I want you to notice something very specific from this passage, and that is:

Forgiveness (and therefore Salvation from Sin) Existed Under the Old Testament.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say that the people under the Old Testament weren't forgiven, their sins were just "rolled forward" until the cross. I wish someone would give me book, chapter, and verse for that, because I've never seen it. Now, I will readily agree that the forgiveness, and thus salvation from sin, under the Old Testament was *on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ* (Hebrews 9:15 makes that pretty clear), but that doesn't mean forgiveness somehow didn't exist under the Old Testament.

The Law of Moses is filled with all the various

sacrifices which had to be offered in order for someone to receive forgiveness of their sins (see the book of Leviticus). When you knew you had sinned in a certain area, it was off to the priest so you could offer a sacrifice. You might wonder why God commanded these sacrifices to be offered, and there are some very good reasons for it: (1) to show that sin deserves death. Have you ever considered that it was God's amazing grace that allowed people to offer animal sacrifices to atone for their sins? Since sin deserves death (Romans 1:28-32, 6:23), God could have required the death of the sinner—but in most cases He didn't. (2) To make people think about the cost of sin. Animals weren't cheap, and the animals that God required for sacrifices weren't the cheap ones (unless the person was extremely poor and couldn't afford one of the other animals). Imagine you're a farmer, and you've sinned. Your sin just cost you one of your best cows. Do you know how much a cow sells for today? Do you think you could easily lose that much money each time you wanted forgiveness from God? It would act as a deterrent of sorts, because someone might think twice before sinning when they realize what it is going to cost them.

But even more than sacrifice, what was really required for forgiveness of a child of God under the Old Testament was (1) confession of sin, (2) repentance, and (3) a humble spirit. People could offer sacrifices all day long, but if their heart wasn't right, it didn't matter. Psalm 51 is David begging God for forgiveness for what he did to Bathsheba and her husband Uriah. In verse 3 he confesses: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." In verse 13 (among other places) he shows his repentance: "I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." He shows his humble spirit in verses 16-17: "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else I would give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

To add to the reality of salvation from sin under the Old Testament, let's look at Ezekiel 3:17-21:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning for me. When I say to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die;" and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou has delivered thy soul.

Not a bit of this statement from God is about salvation from something physical. This is completely about being saved from their sin. If they die in their iniquity, they are lost eternally; but if they repent, their soul is saved. This was written to Ezekiel, who was preaching to people in Babylonian captivity—people who, for the most part, would never return to their home of Judah. There was no physical salvation for the majority of the people Ezekiel preached to. My friends, this is speaking of *spiritual* salvation, salvation from sin!

It all pointed to Jesus Christ

Later on in Ezekiel, the prophet spoke on behalf of God and foretold that God would:

save them out of all of their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them (Ezekiel 37:23b-24)

David had been dead and gone for hundreds of years when this was written, but the Jews knew that God had foretold a descendant of David would rule over His people. This descendant was known as the Messiah in Hebrew, or in Greek, Christ.

The apostle Paul helps us to see that the physical salvation the Israelites experienced in coming out of Egypt and through the Red Sea was a type, a picture of what salvation would be in the New Testament:

I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Just as they were baptized, leaving slavery behind, being made free in crossing the Red Sea (a baptism into Moses), we are baptized, leaving slavery to sin behind, being made free in being baptized into Christ.

The physical salvations of the Old Testament point forward to the spiritual salvation in Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

If you take nothing else from this lesson, remember this one thing: Though salvation in the Old Testament was usually a reference to a physical deliverance from enemies, it was still based on the obedience and repentance of the people; and ultimately gives us a picture of salvation in the New Testament.

There are numerous examples in the Old Testament of God's children losing their salvation, and we've already looked at passages that showed what was required for them to get it back: confession, repentance, and a humble spirit.

If you're a child of God who has gone astray, take this lesson to heart and come back to God.



ATHEISM. is myth understood

Johnny O. Trail

A few years ago, I was vacuuming my van out when I saw an older person using a wash wand to clean all the dirt and grime off her vehicle. As I looked at the trunk of her car, I noticed a bumper sticker that said, “Atheism is Myth Understood.” This bumper sticker made me consider some of the implications of atheism and biblical teachings about God.

Myth is defined as “a person or thing having only an imaginary of unverifiable existence.” When one couples this definition with the idea of atheism, it means that God is an imaginary being with an unverifiable existence. Such a definition of God is fraught with problems.

It is logically impossible to go from the knowledge of God to believing there is no God. This is refuted by the ontological argument for the existence of God. The argument goes as such: There are creatures in mythology that we know do not exist. For example, fairies are mythical creatures that do not exist. We cannot arrive at the same con-

clusion in consideration of God’s existence. One cannot know of such a being (God) that is all-powerful in nature and go from this conclusion to denying the fact of His existence. This is an *appropi* argument.

The second part of a myth’s definition, “unverifiable existence,” is refuted by some of the other arguments for God’s existence. One way in which we can know God exists is that there must be a precipitating cause for all that we see in the natural universe. This is sometimes called the cosmological argument for God’s existence. Something (in this case God) had to be responsible for causing all things to happen.

One does not look at a building and assume that it just fell from space complete and finished in its final form. On the contrary, reasonable human beings know that several things had to happen before the building could be completed and functional in nature.

This argument stands in stark contrast to what

atheists assert. Their view is that something suddenly came from nothing. Wayne Jackson correctly avers, “First, if there was ever a time when nothing existed, nothing would exist today—for nothing produces nothing but **nothingness!**”¹

Along these same lines is the idea that life did not come from non-living matter. If one considers the unavoidable beginning of evolutionary thought, he reaches the conclusion that life must have emerged from inorganic matter. Nothing in the natural universe supports this theory. The idea of spontaneous generation or abiogenesis was proven to be false centuries ago. Abiogenesis is defined as “the supposed spontaneous origination of living organisms directly from lifeless matter.”

The teleological argument is the idea that complexity in the universe necessitates a higher being to engage in creating. The complexity of the human body and its constituent parts should tell one that he was in fact created. Complexity tells us that life and the universe cannot possibly come into existence by chance. Atheism leaves the impression that extremely complex systems just happened by themselves. Nothing could be more ridiculous than this assumption.

Another way that one can argue for the existence of God is from a moral standpoint. If there is no God, what morally constrains one to do the right thing? All human beings must acknowledge that there is a higher law that causes them to act and behave in certain ways. In a system devoid of God, one makes his own determinations concerning morality. Anarchy becomes the rule of law. Without God, it suddenly becomes morally acceptable to murder tens of millions of babies in the name of “reproductive health.” If there is no God, who determines what is right and wrong?

The Bible does not make any overt arguments for the existence of God, but it does say something about the person who does not believe in Him.

Psalm 14:1

“...The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.”

At once, this passage reveals the character of the unbeliever and the reason behind denying God’s existence.

The one who denies God is a “fool.” This is more in line with their reasoning than impugning one’s character. It is beyond all rationale for one to assert that God does not exist. Indeed, the Apostle Paul says something similar when he says in Romans 1:22-23:

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

While their reasoning resulted in idolatry, the nature of that logic was similar—foolish thoughts about God, His nature, and very existence.

Thus, if one removes the existence of God, he becomes his own moral agent. This was the very nature of the temptation that Satan offers to the mother of all living. Genesis 3:5 says, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” At once, the motivation for denying God’s existence becomes understood. Without Him, there is no absolute moral authority to condemn sinful behaviors.

There is much sadness regarding the fact that there are those who simply do not believe in the existence of God. The atheist engages in a miserable existence without hope when he denies the existence of God. Christians have all the hope in the world, because they know that God exists and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

¹ Jackson, Wayne (2022). “Atheism: The “No-God” Religion.” [Atheism: The “No-God” Religion : Christian Courier](#).

DO YOU HAVE A CONSISTENT BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Gerald Cowan

You might assume that all professed Christians have a Biblical worldview in all things. If so, you would be wrong. A consistent worldview on any level in any person is rare indeed, difficult to find, even among those identifying as Christians. The key word here is *consistent*—applying equally in all matters. Consistent with truth means not departing or differing from established truth, dependable, not flexible, not variable.

What is a Biblical worldview? It is a belief system that forms and controls the understanding of the world and all that's in it: the source and function of the existing world, the nature and meaning of life with special emphasis on humanity, the existence and nature of God, the source and repository of truth with emphasis on moral and spiritual aspects of it, the value of culture and social structure, and countless other matters relevant to the world we live in.

The Biblical worldview holds that the Eternal God is the source of all truth, the guide and arbiter and judge in all human affairs, the One to whom all mankind must answer, the One who cannot be over-ridden even by the universal human collective. *God is true even if it shows all men to be liars* (Romans 3:4). Typically people accept God's word on some things, but not all things. The invisible God does not seem to deal immediately and concretely with people, but the world is always with us and is often immediately reactionary, showing pleasure and acceptance to those who accede to its dictates but is negative and punitive to those who do not. And, since we have to live in the world, it is often easier to go with the flow of the world than to swim against the tide and suffer the slings and arrows of offended society (to parody a line from Shakespeare's Hamlet). I will offer here a few reasons—not justifications but explanations—for the current inconsistencies in the worldview of professing Christians. You will notice that most of these are based upon the world's attitudes and desires, not upon any failure or deficiency of God or His scripture. The reasons that people, including Christians, are not consistent or dependably Biblical are:

They are not convinced that God even exists, but they cannot doubt the world exists. Note the incongruity here: a world that could not produce itself exists, but it is comforting to pretend that either it did create itself or is absolutely eternal—neither of which is a scientifically or philosophically sustainable idea. A careful look at the world which *is* will convince rational persons that whoever or whatever created the world must be greater than the world itself and must have existed prior to its appearance and be able to keep it functioning—it would require a GOD beyond our limited comprehension to explain the existence of this world. It has been said that in order to disprove the existence of God one would have to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable, and eternally existent—to disprove God, one would have to be God.

They are ignorant of what the Bible says. They simply do not know the Word of God. Quite likely

they have not even read it. They often say, “Well, the Bible says, God says, Jesus says, etc.” something that is not in the Bible and is often actually contrary to what the Bible does say. Someday I may give you a long list of common sayings which people believe are scripture but aren't. Maybe I'll give it in the form of a quiz by which to test your own knowledge or ignorance and how dependent you may be on common but spurious “chimney corner” scripture. Point of importance here: If one does not know what the Bible actually says it will be difficult—improbable if not impossible—for him to form and maintain a Biblical worldview or a Biblical view on any subject. Being able to quote your preacher or your church is no proof. Preachers and churches can be wrong because they too have been indoctrinated with something other than Biblical truth. The cure for Biblical ignorance is to look into the Bible itself, read it and study it and do not misquote it to yourself or others. The admonition of apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15 and 3:16-17 are pertinent to this point.

God can't get their attention because the world is so loud and its pressure is so intense. People are so dependent upon their physical senses—touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell—and so sure of their own rational irrationality, their powers of mental perception and logic, and their sense of importance they will not accept anything that does not meet their personal criteria.

They disagree with God and reject what the Bible says on certain issues. I would like to see an intensive exhaustive survey done to determine if people truly believe what the Bible says. In personal experience I've found relatively few who really believe what the Bible says—and that includes many professed Christians. If one does not believe what the Bible says, it will be impossible for him to have an authentic biblical worldview. For those who are contrary, repentance is the key.

They are more concerned with the here and now in the world than the future and eternity promised by God. They are more concerned with what the world thinks of them than what God

thinks. “*Fear of man will prove to be a snare*” (Proverbs 29:25). A believer who views the world from a biblical standpoint recognizes that he is not of the world. Jesus said, “*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you*” (John 15:19; 17:14). When a believer starts making compromises with the world’s way of thinking, he loses focus on God’s perspective. For those who are fearful, courage is the key.

They are influenced by the lies of the world, repeated loudly, emphatically, and endlessly. What passes for science, sometimes *science which is falsely so called* (1 Timothy 6:20 KJV) but is accepted because only the ignorant and prejudiced refuse to bow to (almost deified) **Science** which presents unproved and sometimes impossible-to-test theories as settled fact and truth. As someone who should think more before he speaks recently said: “prefer facts over truth.” Maybe it was “truth over facts.” It works either way. Perhaps he mis-spoke. Either way, I think he conveyed accurately the attitude of many: “We prefer ‘our facts’ or ‘our truth,’ our perceptions and preferences and the way we see things over reality, over the way things really are. Nobody is more prejudiced against an absolute omniscient God than self-serving purveyors of pseudoscience whose objective seems more denial of God than evidence and certification of truth.

Satan, the default deity of the God-rejecting world—the *god of this world* (2 Corinthians 4:4)—is liar-in-chief and has been remarkably successful in blinding the eyes and minds of people to the truth of God (Revelation 12:9). A powerful tool of Satan is the idea that the Bible is a book of myths and scientific and moral errors and cannot be trusted. If he can convince people that the Bible is no longer relevant or that its laws and principles are obsolete he will move them away from God. Those who have been deceived need to be more careful in developing their powers of discernment.

They are tepid and unenthusiastic in their commitment to Christ. Like the church of Laodi-

cea, they are “*neither cold nor hot*” (Revelation 3:15), unwilling to take a stand for Christ—perhaps lacking the courage to take a stand against him. Many simply wait to see the current trend before committing themselves to anything, then go with the flow and “fit in.”

They allow circumstances which are incompatible with their assumptions and desires to cause doubt about God’s principles and promises. They assume the reality of evil in the world—including natural catastrophes, diseases, and consequences of malevolent people—is evidence of the non-existence of a good, benevolent, all-powerful and all knowing God. If He does not know what is happening in the world He cannot be all-knowing; if He knows but is not able to prevent it or correct it He cannot be all-powerful; if He knows it and could prevent it but does not do so He cannot be loving or benevolent, or even good. They often refuse to include righteousness, holiness, and justice—the “you reap what you sow and all your actions have certain consequences which may be good or bad” principle—in their equations. They refuse the God who is because He is not the God they want, the “do whatever you want and I’ll make sure it doesn’t hurt you or prevent your entrance to heaven; you can have it your way” God who would be neither righteous, holy, nor good.

To have a consistently Biblical worldview one must go to the Bible, learn what is in the Bible, commit to the Biblical standard presented in the Bible without reservation, appropriate the promises of God in the Bible and trust Him for their fulfillment, teach and encourage others to take the same stand he has and view the world in the same way he does through the lens God provides in His sacred word. The world has nothing new, nothing perfect, nothing permanent to offer. God offers not only present fulfillment and satisfaction but permanent perfection and glorification. Take the world; you can’t keep it (Luke 9:25, 1 John 2:15-17). I will take God; He will keep me and all that I commit to Him (2 Timothy 1:12).



Dinosaur Mummies

Travis Quertermous

Our title does not refer to the latest Hollywood blockbuster, but to an actual dinosaur fossil of extraordinary importance. In 2011, in Alberta, Canada, a heavy-equipment operator in a mine discovered a nearly complete fossil of an armored dinosaur named *Nodasaurus*. It took six years to excavate the 3000-pound, 18-foot fossil. The *Nodasaurus* is so well-preserved and life-like that it actually looks like it is just asleep.

These facts alone would make the discovery special, but what really puts this find over the top is that its skin is not really fossilized (which occurs when the organic material is replaced by rock), but mummified! Closer inspection of the creature's skin has actually revealed red skin pigmentation! Furthermore, paleontologists have even discovered the remains of its last meal, a crop of ferns.

"It's basically a dinosaur mummy—it really is exceptional," Don Brinkman, director of preservation and research at the Royal Tyrrell Museum where the fossil is housed tells Craig S. Smith at *The New York Times*.¹

Another scientist, Donald Henderson, called this fossil "the Rosetta Stone for armor" to emphasize its

importance.²

Nor is this find unique. The Institute for Creation Research (ICR) has catalogued over 40 similar specimens that they call "Original Tissue Specimens."³ In other words, these are fossils which have non-fossilized, original tissue, preserved intact! These include things like bone marrow, blood vessels, proteins, skin samples, pigments, etc.

Now here is the interesting question. Evolutionists date these fossils as being millions of years old! The *Nodasaurus* mentioned above is supposed to be 110 million years old. If the earth and these animals are really that old, how could these organic samples have survived all that time intact? Obviously, they couldn't!

True science agrees with the Bible that the earth and the cosmos are only 6,000-8,000 years old. Evolution is a false theory that ought to be rejected. Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul:

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen"
(1 Timothy 6:20-21, KJV)

¹ Jason Daley, *Spectacularly Detailed Armored Dinosaur "Mummy" Makes Its Debut*, smithsonianmag.org, May 15, 2017

² *Ibid.*

³ Brian Thomas, *Dinosaurs and The Bible*, Harvest House Pub., pg. 38

Marriage



Divorce

THE BACKSTORY

Cory Collins

It breaks our hearts when people we love end their marriage. We hurt with them in their pain. We are concerned for their children. We wish we could turn back the clock and help them address their issues before “I do” became “I don’t.” Emotions often run high, and individuals sometimes find it almost impossible to be objective when they are the ones involved.

At the same time, when discussions take place regarding what the Bible says, and what Jesus Christ himself taught, we must be clear. When people seriously dig into the Scriptures to look for justifiable reasons to end their marriage, it can sometimes be so easy to rationalize and “find” all sorts of things that they may claim as legitimate grounds for divorce. One’s perspective can be greatly affected by his or her personal experiences and the experiences within their own immediate or extended family. Discussions arise, and sometimes arguments follow, as individuals disagree as to what the Bible actually authorizes and allows.

People were debating the very same question in Jesus’ day. They even asked him, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” The implication

is, “If one may not divorce just for any cause at all, then are there any causes at all that would justify divorce?” Jesus did in fact name one legitimate cause. Matthew 19 records their inquiry, Jesus’ response to it, and the conversation that followed.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate... And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

(Matthew 19:3-6, 9)

Jesus saw the pattern for marriage as having been established in the beginning, at creation. One man and one woman, joined together by God himself, were to treat their union as sacred and inviolable. Jesus explained that, since it was God who fused the two into one, man was not to separate or “put asun-

der” that union. He made one exception and only one. Sexual immorality (or fornication) was so offensive in the sight of God that the faithful spouse would be free to divorce and remarry. For that reason, every husband and every wife who fears and loves God must be on guard to protect their vows against the temptation to violate the holiness and exclusivity of their marriage.

The “Back Story”

In this article, however, I want to talk primarily about what I will call the “back story.” The point is simply this. As much as people focus on divorce when a breakup seems inevitable, divorce is not the first problem, but rather a response to one or more previous problems. Divorce is, in fact, a man-made “solution” to earlier spiritual issues that laid the groundwork and led to the divorce.

Unscriptural divorce is sin, no doubt, but it is so often not the first sin, but it is instead the domino-effect result of other sin or sins that preceded it built up to it. But what if couples instead avoid or repent of the elements that lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness? What if they create and develop the elements that strengthen joy, trust, and commitment? In that case they can reap the benefits, not only of sexual fidelity, but of marital success in every area!

The Negatives in the “Back Story”

Let’s consider, for example, the negative sinful factors in Colossians 3 that contribute to the likelihood of divorce. If two spouses were to “put these things to death” as Christians, how much less likely would they be to want to end their marriage?

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

(Colossians 3:5-10)

These are the very things that contribute to a broken marriage! These include immorality, wrong

desires, anger, abusive speech, dishonesty, and so forth. If both the husband and wife commit themselves wholeheartedly to obey this teaching, and to “put to death” and “put off” these sinful ways, are they likely to divorce? Of course not! The truth is that these are the problems in marriage that start the process that often leads to divorce.

The Positives in the “Back Story”

Now let’s look at the positive side. If both spouses were to “put on” these things as Christians, how much less likely would they be to want to end their marriage?

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,

If both the husband and wife commit themselves wholeheartedly to ... “put to death” and “put off” these sinful ways, are they likely to divorce?

to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Colossians 3:12-17)

Doesn't this passage beautifully describe the husband or wife that one would never choose to leave? When two people are holy, compassionate, kind, humble, and patient ... when they put up with each other and forgive each other ... when they have love-based harmony ... when they are both grateful ... when they consume the message of Christ together, worship together, and seek to have every word and deed glorify Jesus Christ ... can you imagine a divorce in their future? What godly person would ever want to leave such a husband or wife?

As the old adage says, "The family that prays together, stays together." Have you ever known a couple to divorce that regularly prayed together, for themselves and each other, that the God of heaven would bless, sanctify, and strengthen their marriage? I personally have not.

Then, making specific application to wives and husbands, God's Word says:

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

(Colossians 3:18-19)

Of course, Ephesians 4:17-5:21 is parallel in many ways to Colossians 3, and Ephesians 5:22-33 specifically addresses husbands and wives. Study

these passages carefully.

What godly man or godly woman would want to divorce a holy, godly, faithful mate who is devoted to these truths?

In my experience, when one or both spouses say, "I/we want a divorce," the "back story" inevitably involves a prior lack of commitment to the ways of God. Divorce is not the first sin but rather the follow-up sin to what has gone before.

Of course, it may be the case that one mate is faithfully (though of course not perfectly) seeking to live by texts such as Colossians 3, while the other chooses selfishness and sin instead. The one spouse may be devoted to

Jesus Christ and may suffer greatly because the other is not. (This is a key reason for choosing a mate who is first of all sold out to obeying and following Jesus Christ first.)

However, even if such a sad marriage ends in a scriptural divorce, such a tragic outcome confirms the point being made here. Prior sin caused the divorce. There was a "back story" without which the divorce never would have occurred.

So, let's fix the back story and in this way prevent divorce and remarriage. Let's diligently search through the Scriptures, not looking for additional justification for divorce beyond what Christ taught, but looking rather for additional instruction and motivation for living a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, God-glorifying life.

Let's carefully choose the dominoes we are moving now, because they will lead to what happens to the later dominoes and the final domino in each of our lives. That's true, not just in marriage, but in all areas of life.

And that's the "back story." Read it and reap!

ATRIBUTE TO MY DAD:

THOMAS THORNHILL SR

Tommy Thornhill Jr.

Last month, on Monday morning, June 20, I received a phone call from my brother-in-law, James Hamilton and my sister that my dad had suddenly passed away. He was 87 years old and has now gone to stand before God. And though he has left us in this life, we are not as those who sorrow who have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13).

Recently I was asked to write a tribute for my dad as a gospel preacher. So I am honored to share with you a few details about him. In this article I will note some of his qualities and seek to make application from God's word about them. As I write I will direct some of my thoughts to those who are considering preaching or are developing as young proclaimers of God's word. We desperately need young men to "stand in the gap" (Ezekiel 22:30) and fill a much-needed role in the Lord's church, both at home and abroad.

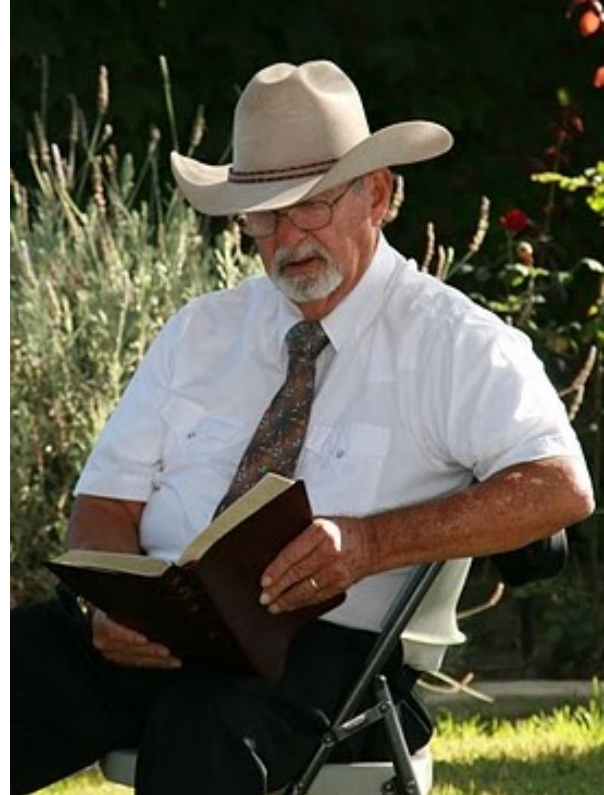
I have this hope because ***my dad was a Christian for most of his life***. And he lived the life of a Christian. He was twelve when he was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins (Gal. 3:27, Acts 2:38) and grew up in a home that feared and honored God. He was about 17 years old when he decided to become a preacher. In a recent biography my dad noted that his first few years he was a nominal Christian. But then he began to associate with a group of committed Christians who wanted to preach. This changed him and would impact the rest of his life. Scripture tells us to consider our friends because they can have a great influence on us (Prov. 1:10-16, 13:20, 1 Cor. 15:33, Eph. 5:11, etc.). And this is equally important early in life as that will likely be a factor in what becomes important to you.

He went where he was needed. My dad preached

for nearly 70 years. Most of his early preaching was in Florida, but he preached in Arkansas (3

congregations), Mississippi (1 congregation) and he spent 5 years in Norway as well. He did not choose congregations based on their wealth or even their ability to fully support him. And often he sacrificed and we did with what we had to get by, including "making tents" from time to time. My mom also helped when she could (after we were grown up enough to take care of ourselves). He rarely served in congregations with elders and thus had to deal with the ramifications of smaller, developing congregations. This was not because he did not want to serve with elders, but he realized that every congregation has needs and we cannot wait for the "perfect" congregation. Like Paul, when doors opened, he went (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9). My advice to younger preachers, do not expect to get your "dream congregation" when you are fresh out of training. Be willing to sacrifice and work through those efforts. Be content with what you have and make the best of whatever situation you find yourself in (Phil. 4:11).

He stood firm for truth, even when it was not popular. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-3 to preach the word, "in season and out of season." That was my dad. He would preach the word of God without compromise even if it had consequences. The Bible is clear that we must stand for truth, even when it is not popular. My dad did this. First, when



churches divided in the 50-60s over the sponsoring church arrangement and what works the church could corporately support, he stood his ground based on his studies and convictions. This despite differences with his family and friends he had grown up with. Through the years, he maintained a high moral standard in his preaching on subjects such as modesty, social drinking, and dancing. He also stood firm against ecumenicalism as it became the more popular and pleasant road to travel. Again, there was often a price associated with that stand. Friends, we are living in times of great compromise, and the truth of God's word has suffered in many places because of it. I want to encourage all to stand firm for the uncompromising truth of God's word. Yes, God wants us to be united (1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:1-3, Phil. 2:1-2, etc.), but NEVER at the cost of truth.

He was a good husband and father. He provided and protected us all. At times we did not have much extra, but we didn't go hungry either, and had a roof, and transportation. Most of his works required outside support and he diligently worked to maintain that support. 1 Timothy 5:8 warns that those who fail to provide for their own household have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers. Let that sink in. As preachers, we must ensure that we do NOT neglect our family responsibilities. God will hold us accountable. And of course, this applies not just to preachers, but all men and women – fulfill your role and take it seriously.

He was a man of prayer. I describe prayer as a spiritual indicator – something that helps you gauge your faithfulness. The Bible is full of examples of godly men who prayed all the time. Even Jesus, the Son of God, continually prayed (Luke 5:16). If you ever heard my dad pray, you know that it was from the heart. Every prayer was different, timely, and thoughtful. His prayers would include gratitude for the occasion, but also general appreciation for all that God has done for us. May we all be people of prayer. Never underestimate its power.

He cared about the souls of others, regardless of race, etc. God is no respecter of persons – Acts

10:34-35. Dad did not care your ethnicity, nationality or gender. All need the gospel (Rom. 3:23). He would study with anyone and welcome anyone who wanted to hear the truth or worship God. I know of at least one occasion where he was not hired because the congregation had racial tendencies and did not like his answers when they interviewed him. Never forget Galatians 3:27-28.

He had a good reputation. Revelation 4:13 speaks of those who die in the Lord. John notes, "Their works follow them." My dad valued his reputation and always tried to be truthful and honorable in his business and spiritual dealings. When he left a place, often times he would be invited back for meetings, etc. He tried to instill that in us as well. Consider that all 3 of his children are faithful to the Lord. I am a gospel preacher. My sister is married to a gospel preacher (James Hamilton). And my other brother faithfully serves as a Christian. I have 2 sons. One is a gospel preacher. James & Ellen have a daughter that is married to a preacher. That is the legacy of our family. So many places that I have gone in the south (and this is also true with my sons), when I mention my name, they bring up my dad's name wanting to know if I am related. And it is always a compliment. May we never forget, as we were reminded – do NOT dishonor your name. That applies to your family name AND your spiritual name too.

These are a few observations about my dad. I could add others, but I conclude by saying that I am honored to have been his son. And I will strive to live carrying on the legacy he established.

Every year, we hear of faithful gospel preachers, elders and other faithful saints passing from this life to face eternity. They have worked hard and tirelessly to further the cause of His kingdom and keep the church true and strong (Paul calls this "sound" – 2 Timothy 1:13, 4:3, Titus 1:9, 13, 2:1, etc.). Who is going to take their place? My dad has finished his walk and work on this earth. He left a powerful legacy. Who is going to fill his shoes? I pray to God that someone will step up and say, "I will!"

Thank you for reading this.

Angels: GOD'S MESSENGERS (PART 2)

Tommy Thornhill

Now let's notice the order of angels. The Bible speaks of an Archangel in **1.Thes.4:16; Jude 9; Rev.12:7**, and his name is Michael (who is like God). In the OT he is "*one of* (indicating more than one) *the chief princes*," and is referred to as "*the great prince*" **Dan.10:13, 21; 12:1**. The idea, "*one of the chief princes*," means he was of the first order of angels. In Daniel he is portrayed as a defender of the people of Israel, leading other angels against the forces of Satan. The only other angel named in the Bible is Gabriel (man of God) **Dan.8:16; 9:21; Lk.1:11,19,26**. Gabriel was not a trumpet player as some want to portray him today. He was a deliverer of messages, to Daniel, Zacharias, Mary. Some have suggested since he announced the 1st coming of Christ, why not the 2nd. This thought might be the reason where the idea of him being a trumpet player comes from, since Jesus' second coming is to be announced by the sound of a trumpet **1.Thes.4:16**. In my study I found Jewish tradition (I forgot to write down the source) claiming there were at least 4 archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel (one who calls the judgment), Raphael (receives the dead). The apocryphal lists 6 or 7. Note **Rev.8:2**. (7 angels).

The Bible also speaks of elect angels **1.Tim.5:21**. They are not identified, but they were of the higher spiritual creation, the non-physical. It could be that they are the angels in the inner circle around the throne of God, maybe the cherubim of **Gen.3:22-24**; or the seraphim or 4 living creatures of **Isa.6:1-2; Ezek.1, 10; Rev.4-5**. They are there to supervise worship and praise to God. All of these things suggest a ranking of angels, but all with the one purpose, that of serving and praising God. One thing we know, all of them are a joyful, praiseful group.

While angels are of a different order and not earth-bound as we human are, they are still part of

the family of God. Note **Eph.3:14-15**. "*For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*" From this scripture we learn two things. 1. God has a family. 2. Part of His family is on the earth, and part of His family is in heaven. The part of God's family in heaven are the higher spiritual creation, the beings identified as angelic in nature, who worship and serve Him. They reside in what the Bible refers to as "*the heavenly places*" or more correctly, "*the heavenlies*" **Eph.1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12**. This is the realm of spiritual beings, the non-physical reality that reaches beyond this planet we know as earth.

The part of God's family in heaven would be the higher spiritual creation, the beings identified as angelic in nature, who worship and serve Him. Among them are the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and the myriad host of angels **Rev.4:4, 11; 5:11**. I believe this would also include the spirits of just men made perfect **Heb. 12:22-23**. These just men are not angels but dwell among them after they die.

People may wonder why God created angels to begin with. I must confess my ignorance of this for God never fully explained the why. Just accept the fact He did it. We may never fully understand how they work in God's creation, but I am fully persuaded He did not create them simply to be ornaments or decorations like we see angel statues as perceived by men, to be placed in a garden or on some building. one thing is certain. God created them for a much greater reason, to be used by Him to fulfill His designs and purposes. He created them to be His active divine agents, to heed His voice and do His pleasure **Ps.148:1-5; 103:20-21**. They work to serve and praise Him, acting on His behalf to carry out

His will, designs and purposes.

Let me reemphasize a point I made earlier. God is still an active God. He may be **INVISIBLE**, but He is **NOT INACTIVE**. He is not impotent or helpless. He is not, as some might think, a “hands off” God in the affairs of mankind today. His involvement with, and providential care for mankind, did not end with the end of the age of miracles. He is still in control of this universe, and still acts on behalf of His predetermined purposes and promises. He still cares for, provides for, and protects His creation, using His angels in so doing. He has not retired **Dan. 4:17, 32; Matt.5:45; Acts 17:26; Heb.1:3; Col.1:17**.

From the very beginning we see angels acting to carry out the will of God. After Adam and Eve sinned God utilized angels to stand guard at the Garden of Eden to keep them from the tree of life. We are told He placed cherubim (angels), holding flaming swords, to guard “*the way to the tree of life*” **Gen.3:24**. We also learn that angels are stationed at the gates of heaven **Rev.21:12**. We see angels working for God in the book of Daniel where they were assigned to function in connection with various nations. We see them working in the book of Revelation to oversee the abyss and guard the gates of heaven. Why would we think that God and His angels are no longer active in the affairs of this world and in our own lives?

God uses agents, some human, some divine, to carry out His work. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to save lost men and women. He sent the Holy Spirit to reveal His work and purposes to mankind. He sent the apostles and prophets to speak and record His word, telling men how to be saved. He also uses angels to bring about His holy purposes, aiding mankind, even if I don’t know how it is being done.

Ps. 78:49-51 tells of God sending angels of destruction to punish. Ex. Sodom **Gen.19**, plagues in Egypt **Ex.14:19**; with David **1.Chron.21:11-17**; the Assyrians **Isa.37:35-37** (185,000 killed). In the NT, Herod **Acts 12:21-23**. There will be angels involved in the second. Coming of Christ **Matt.13:41-42**.

The Work of Angels

Angels are messengers of God. In the OT they revealed the Law **Acts 7:53; Gal.3:19**, the promise to Abraham **Gen.18**, delivered messages from God to various prophets, kings, judges, patriarchs, people. In the NT, they delivered messages to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, Philip, Cornelius. One message they never delivered was the message of salvation to man, even though they, at times, brought sinner and preacher together so the preacher could deliver the message as in the case the Ethiopian Eunuch **Acts 8:26f** and Cornelius **Acts 10**. Later they appeared to the apostle John on the isle of Patmos to deliver the message of the book of Revelation **Rev.1:1; 22:16**.

They were used by God to protect His people **Ps.34:7; Dan.12:1; Jacob Gen.48:16; Israel Ex.23; 20-23; Elijah 1.Kgs.19:5-9; Elisha 2.Kgs.6:16-17**. “*Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*” The three Hebrew children **Dan.3**; Daniel in the lions’ den **Dan.6**. Mary and Joseph **Matt.2:13**; the apostles more than once **Acts 5, 12, 27**. This knowledge should give us comfort since our warfare is spiritual **Eph.6:11-12**. So we need to open our eyes to see that God protects those who are His **Eph.1:16-19; 2.Kgs.6:16; Ps.34:7**.

They escort saints at death **Lk.16:22**. Does this mean there are guardian angels? Some think so when they read **Heb.1:14; Matt.18:10; Acts 12:5**. I don’t know the answer, but I don’t need to know. I still believe in angels. If we have guardian angels I am not aware of it. But I do know that God cares about His people and even though I may suffer in this life, God will not allow me to suffer more than I can bear **2.Tim.2:19**.

Angels are said to be witnesses and harvesters, onlookers who watch what we do **1.Cor.4:9; Heb.12:1**. We confess Jesus Christ before them **Lk.12:8-9**. They harvest souls **Matt.13:37-43, 49-50; 25:30-ff; 2.Thes.1:7-9**.

I have spent considerable space to discuss what the work of angels is, now let me point out **WHAT IS NOT** the work of angels. These things have been mentioned briefly in the past, but just for emphasis

let us notice them once more. From the scriptures we can know for certain God did not create angels to be worshiped **Col.2:18; Rev.22:8-9**. Even though human beings are made lower than the angels, they are not subject to angels. *“For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels”* **Heb.2:6**. And it is clear that God never assigned angels the responsibility of preaching the gospel message of salvation to the world. He left this task for men **Matt.28:19-20; Mk.16:15; 2.Cor.4:7**. While angels are not utilized by God to proclaim the gospel, they certainly rejoice when people hear and obey and return to God **Lk.15:9-10**. They hear their confessions **Lk.12:8**. Angels will be present at the judgment to observe, but not to be judges. Their presence will in no way relieve humans of their personal responsibility to stand before the judgment seat of God and answer for their deeds **2.Cor.5:10**.

The conclusions I have drawn in these lessons are mine. While I have given scriptural references to support my conclusions, I do not claim my conclusions are the final word. I believe they are right, but since I am not infallible, I could be wrong. This is the reason I encourage everyone to study the scriptures for themselves and form their own convictions based on their study of the subject. The scriptures simply give a guideline for research.

Having stated the above I am now going to venture to deal with a question that intrigues people. **Where did the devil and his angels come from?** Please don't take my conclusions as the definitive answer, but they are my thoughts based on what I have gleaned in my study through the years on the subject. The scriptures simply give a guideline for research.

Through the years I have heard different ideas, and some of them border on the absurd and ridiculous. Let me emphasize the fact the Bible DOES NOT REVEAL TO US how angels or Satan came into existence. It simply reveals their existence, just as it does with the existence of God. Since He did not deem it necessary, we are simply expected to

accept by faith (confident trust that it is so), not only that God exists and is eternal, but that angels and the devil are not eternal.

While the Bible does not tell us of the devil's origin, it does tell us that he is a real being. He is not a myth. He is not a figment of one's imagination, or invention of men. I **know** for certain that the Bible describes the devil or Satan as a real being, possessing personal characteristics, names and nouns. We are not told where he came from but are told he suddenly appears for the first time in the Garden of Eden. The Bible records three direct appearances of the devil in the Bible **Gen.3; Job 1; Matt.4**.

He is first introduced to man, recorded in **Gen.3** when he appears to Adam and Eve in the form of a *serpent*, and introduces sin into the world. Later, in **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7** the devil is among the “sons of God” (angels) as they appear before God. He is called “Satan,” and his intent is to cause Job to sin against God. In **Rev.12** the apostle John describes Satan's appearance in heaven as *“the dragon and his angels”* fighting against Michael and his angels. He is called *“the dragon”* **v.7**, and in **v.9** as *“the serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan who deceives the whole world.”* Besides being known as the serpent **Gen.3:1**, Satan **Job 1:6**, the Devil and the Dragon **Rev.12:3, 7, 9**, he is also known as Be- elzebub **Matt.12:24**, Beliah **2.Cor.6:15**, the Wicked one **Matt. 13:39**; the god of this world **2.Cor. 4:4**, the prince of the power of the air **Eph.2:2**; the prince of this world **Jn.12:31**.

Just as God exists as the personal God who is perfect good **Matt.19:17**, the devil also exists as a personal being who is all evil **Matt.13:39**. The devil (Satan) is evil for he is a liar and murderer **Jn.8:44**, God's adversary (Satan), the accuser (devil), accusing man to God and accusing God to man. The devil is not equal to God. He is subject to God, so his power is limited **Job. 1:12; 2:6; 1.Pet.5:8-9; Jas.4:7; Lk.22:31**. His miracles are not true miracles. They are lying wonders **2.Thes.2:9; Rev.13:13-14**. God allows him to exist to deceive

people who don't want to believe, and to test the faithfulness of those who believe and seek to follow God **2.Cor.2:11; 11:3, 13-14; Eph.4:14, 27.**

So, at the present time, God and the devil co-exist as does good and evil. But God and good existed before the devil and sin, and God and good will continue to exist when the devil is destroyed. But the question remains. Did God create the devil to be evil? Did evil make the devil, or did the devil make evil?

Did God create the devil to be evil? Did evil make the devil, or did the devil make evil? To each of these questions I must answer, **I do not know.** What I do know is that without the real Devil or Satan there is no accounting for evil. Evil is embodied in the devil as a personal being, not an idea. We know from **Gen.3:1-6; Jn.8:44** that the devil is responsible for introducing sin into the world. >From the Garden of Eden onward the devil is seen as the archenemy of God. But the question remains, where did the devil come from?

What I write about the origin of the devil will NOT be the definitive answer, but the product of my study through the years. I firmly believe that Satan aka the Devil is a real being, and he co-exists with God and portrayed as God's archenemy and adversary. Because of his hatred and opposition to God he is constantly active in cursing and leading humanity astray from God. He has made it his mission, if possible, to destroy everything God has created and pronounced as "*very good*" **Gen.1:31.** That this is his mission can be readily seen in the descriptive names by which he is called. He is called the Tempter, Beelzebub, the Deceiver, Murderer, Father of lies and other such names. As a result, it is only natural for people to wonder about where he came from, and why he exists. Curiosity causes such questions as "Where did the devil come from?" Has he always existed? Is he eternal? If not, did God create him to be an evil being, "*the wicked one*" **Matt.13:19,38** so he might deceive and create havoc among humanity, that they might rebel and sin against their Creator? I readily admit I cannot give scriptural answers to these questions.

From my study of the Bible, I can know for certain that the Devil is a real being, for without his existence there is no accounting for sin in the world. I can also know that he is not as strong as God. The devil may be superhuman, but he is not divine like God. He is subject to God and limited in his power **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6.** God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to bind (limit) the power of the devil. Jesus taught this clearly in **Matt.12:27-30**, who as the strong man He binds Beelzebub, the devil). Later passages reveal the devil has been overpowered by Jesus. **1.Jn.3:8; Heb.2:14-15.** The devil/Satan is now bound and will ultimately be destroyed forever at the final judgment, when he and all his angels will be cast into the eternal hell of fire prepared for them by God **Matt.25:41, Rev.20:1-15.**

As already stated, the Bible DOES NOT give a definitive answer as to the origin of the devil, but we can find clues in the Bible that might help us arrive at a reasonable answer. Reasonable does not mean definite. What I write about the Devil's origin is only a possibility, based on my study through the years.

At some time in the far distant past before man was created, in some fashion, the devil came into being. The how and when it happened is the question very difficult to answer. I am certain God didn't create the devil to be evil, directly or indirectly. To claim that God created the devil to cause evil is against the character of God. We all understand that an accomplice is guilty when he lets someone else do the crime. To create Satan as the evil monster he is, would make God responsible for evil. It would also make Him unjust, to create a monster to do His dirty work, then when He is finished with him, to cast him into eternal hell fire **Matt.25:41.**

On the other hand, If the devil was created good and then fell, who or what tempted him to do so? **The Bible does not say.** God made all things good, good didn't make God. But evil exists and opposes good. I believe God created angels with free will, the power to choose evil or good, just as He did with mankind. Otherwise, they could not have rebelled. Since God created all things good **Jas.1:12,**

17, I know He did not create evil. How can perfect good become perfect evil? But if He gives free will to His creatures (even angels) then they have the ability to choose. I cannot say for certain, but to me it is more reasonable to believe that the devil at one time was an angel of high rank, maybe an archangel who chose to rebel against God and was cast out of heaven **Rev.12:1-9** than to think he always existed alongside God in eternal dualism.

This is the question of eternal dualism. Did both God and Satan exist together from all eternity? Are both good and evil **eternal**? **Jn.8:44** (from the beginning). Is this preexistence? There is a problem. I believe eternity is a peculiar attribute of God? How could the devil, a bitter enemy of God, enter into the presence of God, who allows nothing evil to be in His presence? I do not know the answer to these questions, but I understand that Satan is certainly not equal with God as we have already seen. One day he will be defeated **Rev.20:10-15**. No, God is not the origin of evil, nor did He create the devil as evil. God's goodness provoked a sacrifice because sin was introduced into the world by Satan. Satan's evil provokes fanaticism against God.

Sometime in my earlier years I remember reading something about an old Jewish rabbinical theory that taught that God created Satan on the 6th day of creation and assigned the earth as his domain. As a result, the other angels resented him. Their resentment caused him to rebel against God and fall. This may sound good, but it unsubstantiated by scripture. It is human tradition which can be notoriously unreliable. (I cannot recall the source since I didn't write it down at the time, but I don't believe I made it up out of thin air).

In the OT there are two passages people refer to in trying to explain the origin of Satan the Devil **Isa.14:12-14**; **Ezek.28:11-19**. Both passages are highly questionable in making such an application. Both are apocalyptic texts (code like, highly figurative language) to disguise the truth from the enemy. Note **Isa.14:12-14**. "*How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.*" The context of

the chapter, beginning in **v.4** shows that Lucifer is the king of Babylon. He is lifted up with pride, claiming he will ascend into heaven, and exalt his throne above the stars of God. But God will bring him back down to earth. Note the emphasis on "I" (5 times) in **vs.12-14**. "I" is the middle letter of pride and also the middle letter of sin. "*Pride goes before destruction*" **Prov.16:18**. It was "I" trouble that brought down the king of Babylon. We read in **Ezzk.28:11-19**, "*You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you...(then) I cast you to the ground...*" The context clearly shows Ezekiel is referring to the king of Tyre, not the Devil.

What about Lk.10:18?

In **Lk.10:18**, Jesus says, "*I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven.*" While there is a strong possibility that the Devil is a fallen angel, the context of this verse is not talking of the origin of Satan. It is a victory verse, where Jesus Christ is declaring that He will bind Satan and overcome his power **Heb.2:14**; **Matt.12:29**; **Jn.12:31**.

In reality, any conclusion we draw about the origin of the Devil has to be speculation, not revelation. If God had wanted us to know for certain He would have revealed it. God has told us of the Devil's nature and work in the world, but He chose not to reveal his origin. Since God didn't reveal it, any conclusion we draw must be based on opinion, not fact. When all things are considered, I believe the most logical conclusion to draw about the origin of Satan the Devil, is that he is a fallen angel. But, (and it is big but), while I think it to be a reasonable explanation of Satan's origin it will be an opinion and it will not solve all the difficulties.

Is the Devil a fallen angel? Both **2.Pet.2:4** and **Jude 6** tell us of angels who chose to sin by rebelling against God. These fallen angels "*did not keep their proper domain but left their own habitation*" (they despised their position and work God had assigned them). After they chose to rebel and sin against Him, God "*cast them down to hell and delivered them into everlasting chains of darkness, to*

be reserved for the judgment of that great day.” Was the Devil at one time one of these fallen angels? If so, why was he allowed to have more freedom and power than the other fallen angels? In article no.3 on angels, 2-6-22, I discussed the fact that angels have rank. That would also include the rebellious angels of the forces of darkness (sin) if you read **Eph.6:12**. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against host of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* The same definitions I gave for the different ranks of good angels (principalities, powers, rulers (dominions) would also apply to that of the rebellious angels.

To sum up what I have written about the origin of Satan aka the Devil, when all things are considered, the Bible does not tell us. We can only opine. Even with hints in the Bible that point toward him being a fallen angel, what I think is still only an opinion. I hope what I have written will cause you to think, search and study the subject for yourself **1.Thes.5:21**. While I cannot know for certain the origin of Satan, I can confidently accept the fact that God allows him to exist, that he is evil, and his mission is to keep as many people as possible from serving God. He is still very active today trying to destroy man’s relationship with God **1.Pet.5:8**. But he can be resisted if man has the will to do so **Jas.4:7**. One day he will be destroyed, and those who follow him will end up with him in the Devil’s hell **Matt.25:41**.

Demons

While this concludes my study of God’s good angels, I don’t believe the study would be complete without some thoughts about demons, the devil’s angels.

Even though “demons” are sometimes spoken of as “devils” (KJV) the correct translation is “demons.” There is a distinction in the words. The Greek word for the Devil is *diabolos* aka Satan, the slanderer, false accuser and he is only one being. The Greek word for demon is *daimon* or *daimonion*

(appearing 79 times in the NT) and means evil or unclean spirits **Lk.8:2; 10:17, 20; Mk.5:12-13**, and there are multitudes of them **Mk.9:5** (legion). Even though not directly stated, the actions of demons strongly imply they are the devil’s angels **Matt.25:41**. When Jesus cast demons out of a man, the Pharisees accused Him of doing so by “*Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons*” **Matt.12:24**.

One might ask, where and when did demons originate? Just as with the origin of Satan, the Bible is unclear as to their origin, so men have speculated. One implausible theory is they are the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race of beings that existed in the so-called “gap” period between **Gen.1:1-2**. This can easily be dismissed since there is no gap of eons of time in **Gen.1:1-2**, and the Bible clearly states that Adam was the first man created by God. Another ridiculous theory bandied about is that demons are the offspring of angels cohabitating with women before the flood. This is based on a misunderstanding of **Gen.6:1-4** (answered in an earlier article). Angels are sexless, thus the idea of a sexual union is very implausible **Matt.22:30**. A third idea is that demons are the spirits of dead wicked men who have been permitted to leave Hades to inhabit men, as suggested by Josephus in his work, but there is no scripture to support this view.

The most plausible explanation is that demons are the spirits of “fallen angels” who were bound by chains in everlasting darkness **2.Pet.2:4; Jude 6**. The chains are figurative, limiting their ability, and their abode of darkness is also figurative **1.Jn.1:6; Eph.5:11**, describing the sinful kingdom of Satan. These bound (limited in power) rebellious angels came with the devil when he was cast to the earth, to deceive the world after the battle portrayed in **Rev.12:7ff; Eph.6:12**. These demons (evil spirits) were active during Jesus’ ministry and knew a future judgment awaited them **Matt.8:29; Lk.8:31**. They knew that Jesus had the power to destroy them. They knew He was the Son of God, so they were not atheists who denied the existence of God **Matt.8:29; Mk.1:24; 3:11**, nor were they like the modernists who speak of Jesus as a mere man. They

believed that “torment” (hell) awaited them, and they trembled at the prospect **Matt.8:29; Jas.2:19**.

We find no record in the OT of demons actually possessing anyone, even though demons were associated with pagan and false religions **Lev.17:7; Deut.32:17; 2.Chron.11:15; Ps. 106:37**.

Conclusion of series on angels with a short discussion of demons or evil spirits. While we find no record in the OT of demons actually possessing anyone, we find them associated with pagan and false religions **Lev.17:7; Deut.32:17; 2.Chron.11:15; Ps. 106:37**. But when we come into the NT, we find them actually possessing people. Jesus, during His ministry cast them out of people showing His power over them. He also gave power to His apostles to do so **Mk.5:8-9; 9:19-29** (some demons or evil spirits a little more powerful than others); **Lk.4:33-35; 8:28-29; Acts 16:16-17; 19:15**, to name a few.

Even though demons do not possess people today as they did in the first century the Bible does reveal that demon possession was a real, Biblical/historical phenomenon of the first century, and demon possession did not discriminate by sex or age. Such passages as **Matt.9:32** (men); **Lk.8:2** (women); **Mk.7:25** (girls) **9:17 ff.** (boys) are examples. Demons could come and go at will **Lk.9:39; 11:24**, possessing persons against/contrary to their will. They were able to speak through the person possessed **Mk.5:9** and had super-human strength **Mk.5:7; Acts 19:15; Mk.9:28-29**. They also knew who Jesus was and that He was superior to them. They knew their time was limited and even said so while Jesus was casting them out **Matt.8:29**. They also knew that eventually He would bring them into judgment **Mk.5:7; Mk.3:11; Lk.4:41; Matt. 8:29**.

While I believe demons still exist in the spiritual realm and do their evil work as agents of the devil, they can no longer enter into people and control them as they did in the first century. Demon possession was a phenomenon for New Testament times, the time of Jesus and His apostles **1.Tim.4:1; 1.Jn.4:1**. During the first century demons were allowed to exercise unusual power over people while

Jesus was on earth to allow Him to show His power visibly over Satan and his evil workers. When He cast out demons He was visibly showing His power to be far greater than that of Satan and his demon angels **Matt.12:28-29; Lk.11:14-23**. He gave His apostles the ability to do the same in order to confirm the word of God **Mk.16:15-20; Heb.2:3-4**. Demon possession was never intended to continue on after the lifetime of Jesus and the apostles. In fact, two OT prophecies, clearly Messianic, prophesied that the active demon possession was to cease. **Micah 5:12-13** reads, “*I will cut off sorceries...soothsayers.*” **Zech.13:1-9** “*...I will cause the ...unclean spirits to depart from the land.*” The point being made was that after the foundation for the church/kingdom of the Messianic age had been firmly laid (which began at Pentecost **Acts 2**), and once God’s revelation was completed, then the unclean spirits would cease being visibly active.

The NT writers affirm that God’s revelation was being completed as they spoke and when it was completed and brought together, the need for divine revelation would cease. Read **1.Cor.13:8-13**, esp. **v. 10**. Prophecies, along with tongues and special knowledge, would cease “... *when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*” Context and grammar show “the perfect” in **v.10** to be the completed word of God, not the person of Jesus. See also **Jude 3; Jas.1:25**. When divine revelation stopped so did demon possession. While actual demon possession stopped by the end of the 1st century (when John, the last apostle died) this does not mean their ability to deceive people ceased. They are still able to deceive the minds of people and cause them to believe the “*working of Satan*” aka “*the lawless one*” with “*all power, signs and lying wonders.*” Those who have no love of the truth can be deceived by such **2.Thes.2:9-12**. ” Satan’s workers use “*the doctrines of demons*” **1.Tim.4:1**.



Moral Implications in the Fall of Nations

*Earl Kimbrough
and
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The theme of this study should challenge us to a fresh study of conditions in our own time. In the study, we shall take a quick panoramic look at the nations of the past and their fall with a view to evaluating the place that morality and immorality had in the fall of these nations.

Morality is defined as: “moral quality or character, of being in accord with the principles or standards of right conduct.” Moral “implies conformity to the *generally accepted standards* of goodness or righteousness in conduct or character.”

The problem with this definition is that morality is determined by “the generally accepted standards of goodness or righteousness.” This makes man the

standard rather than God. In our time, the standard has been reduced to the lowest denominator. Most would consider murder a sin, but what about fornication, drunkenness, and profanity?

Many further dilute the rule of morality by making themselves the standard: “If it feels good, do it.” “If the conscious approves it is all right.” “Unless it harms another person, it is all right.” They do what is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25; 2 Cor. 10:12).

The only standard acceptable with God is his own moral law from creation, as amplified by the teaching of Christ (Rom. 1:18-32; Matt. 5:27-28; 19:8-9). So what we mean by moral is what the Bi-

ble calls righteousness and godliness (Prov. 14:34).

In this lesson we will consider the part that morality, or immortality, played in the fall of nations. Consider three points.

ISRAEL AND THE CANAANITES

When Israel entered Canaan under Joshua, it was with specific instructions from Jehovah that the nations occupying the land be completely driven out.

“Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you” (Ex. 23:30-33).

God was giving Israel land that had belonged to others. They would be driven out by the Lord and Israel. Israel was forbidden to make a covenant with them, or their gods, or to associate with them—the reason is that it would corrupt their morals (1 Cor. 15:33).

Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.... But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them’” (Num. 33:50-54, 55-56).

If the Israelites associated with the Canaanites, it would result in such moral corruption that God would cast them out of the land as he cast the Canaanites out. God gave this land to Israel because of the promise he made to Abraham, but he was taking it away from the Canaanites because of their gross immorality, which was made worse by their pagan religion.

God was driving them out and giving their land to Israel, but Israel is warned not to follow their example, lest they also be cast out.

“Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God” (Ex. 18:24-30).

God’s law included his moral commandments, as well as instructions for the worship of him alone. By Moses, he warned them to keep his commandments, and to not defile themselves with the abominations of the Canaanites. If they did, the land would “vomit you out.” Keeping God’s law would prevent Israel from becoming corrupt and being expelled from the land.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had dwelt in this land as strangers. God promised the land to them, but the promise was not fulfilled until 430 years later (Gen. 12:7-8). The patriarchs dwelled in the land at the

command of God, but they did not possess the land. They dwelled in the sparsely settled hill country, not with the Canaanites. They selected wives from Abraham's people at Haran, not from Canaanites. Lot dwelt among the Canaanites and it adversely affected his family. Esau married Hittite wives and they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. Before his death, Abraham sent his six sons by Keturah away into the East, not in Canaan.

Then [the Lord] said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years... But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:13-16).

This shows why God did not give Canaan to Abraham during his life time: the Amorites' iniquity was not full. Amorites were one of the nations in Canaan, here they probably represent all of the Canaanites.

"From these words we learn that there is a certain pitch of iniquity to which nations may arrive before they are destroyed, and beyond which Divine justice does not permit them to pass" (Adam Clarke).

He does not disclose that standard. But when the wickedness of a nation tips the divine scale, the nation falls.

In a similar manner, the removal of a congregation is determined by the Lord, but unknown to us (Rev. 2:5). God makes allowance for human imperfection, as in the churches of Asia. But he does not tolerate rebellion against his will.

"Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you. Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from

before you. It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Deut. 9:3-5).

The Israelites are warned not to think that Canaan is given to them because they deserved it. It is theirs as a matter of divine grace. Two things prompt this action by the Lord: (1) The wickedness of the Canaanites, and (2) God's promise to Abraham. The rise of nations is not by merit, but by the will of God, but their fall is through their iniquity. So it is of the blessings we have in Christ. Three things should be kept in mind:

1. Salvation is by the grace of God (Gal. 2:8).
2. He grants salvation even with our imperfection.
3. But we can lose it by rebellion.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND FALL OF PAGAN NATIONS

(The contribution of immorality to their fall.)

We see the principle of God's dealings with nations in the small nations surrounding Israel: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab.

Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad. I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, And cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven, And the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden. The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir," Says the LORD (Amos 1:3-5).

The expressions "of three and four," repeated eight times in chapters 1 and 2, mean repetition, abundance, and anything that goes towards excess. The number is indefinite, but excessive. The excessive sins of Damascus would bring its destruction.

Damascus was the capital of Syria. Among its many sins under Ben-Hadad was its cruelty against God's people in Gilead. With threshing instruments of iron; means by dragging over them threshing sledges, set in wooden beams. This may be figurative of great cruelty.

For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they took captive the whole captivity To deliver them up to Edom. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, Which shall devour its palaces. I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish," Says the Lord GOD (Amos 1:6-8).

"Not turn away its punishment" means punishment is sure. The chief sin of Edom has been slave traffic; they raided villages of Gilead and carried away all captives.

Among other cruelties of these pagan nations were:

1. Tyre: also for slave trade and for not remembering the covenant of brotherhood between David and Hiram.
2. Edom: pursued his brother, Israel, with a sword and cast off all pity.
3. Ammon: ripped open women with child in Gilead. This may be figurative of being treated with the utmost cruelty.

As God dealt with the smaller nations, so also he dealt with the greater nations of the earth. We notice Assyria and Babylon.

"As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?" Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the

glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, And by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, And have robbed their treasuries; So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, And as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved his wing, nor opened his mouth with even a peep" (Isa. 10:12-14).

Back of all Assyria's wickedness was idolatry. Its chief male god, Assur, was a god of war and conquest, which led to excessive cruelty. Nineveh, its capitol, was a bloody city and extremely arrogant, which is natural of those who replace God with man, including themselves, as the standard. Nahum describes the bloody city as full of lies and robbery. "Its victim never departs." There is continual war:

the noise of galloping horses and clattering chariots, horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. Multitudes are slain (Nah. 3:1-3). Nahum further says:

"Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries" (Nah. 3:4).

The goddess, Ishtar, goddess of fruitfulness, was worshiped by temple prostitution, which led to excess immorality.

Put yourselves in array against Babylon all around, All you who bend the bow; Shoot at her, spare no arrows, For she has sinned against the LORD.... You have indeed been trapped, O Babylon, And you were not aware; You have been found and also caught. Because you have contended against the LORD.... Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; Let none of them escape. Repay her according to her work; According to all she

*counterfeit reproductions are
one of Satan's chief weapons.*

has done, do to her; For she has been proud against the LORD, Against the Holy One of Israel.... A drought is against her waters, and they will be dried up. For it is the land of carved images, And they are insane with their idols” (Jer. 50:14, 24, 29, 38).

Notice the bill of goods against Babylon: she sinned against the Lord, contended against the Lord, was proud against the Lord, and gone crazy over idols. The punishment and fall of Babylon is just.

Habakkuk lists five woes against the nation.

1. The first is against is lust and plunder.
2. The second is on their disposition to build an empire through cruelty and godless gains.
3. The third against those who build cities with slave labor, who hold life cheap, and ignore the misery of those employed.
4. The fourth is against those drunk on the wine of power and conquest and through these mistreat and degrade those whom they conquer.
5. The last is upon idolatry, against its materialism in general and its worship in particular.

In the development and fall of nations we see that their rise is through will and purpose of God, not because they merit statehood, and their fall is directly associated with their immorality and godlessness. They deny the Lord and serve idols and they unleash their cruelty and lust that violates every moral commandment of God.

Thus their fall is inevitable.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH: MORALS WHICH LED TO FALL.

In the fall of nations through their godlessness and immorality, we see the fall of pagan nations, small and large. But what about a nation of God's own people? The kingdom of David and Solomon divided and so there were two: Israel and Judah.

First, consider the northern kingdom of Israel.

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom

may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.” Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!” And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense” (1 Kings 12:25-33).

When Jeroboam founded the northern kingdom of Israel, he showed distrust in God and the people. God had given the ten tribes to him to reign over, but he did not trust God and devised his own system. He was afraid that if the Israelites in the northern tribes went to Jerusalem to worship, as God commanded, that their hearts would return the house of David. So he set up a false religion, every aspect of which was changed from that which God commanded: the place, the altar, the object of worship, the priesthood, etc. He made it a religion of convenience, not faith. He made it to *resemble* the true religion: counterfeit reproductions are one of Satan's chief weapons. So Jeroboam introduced idolatry and false religion.

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over

Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him (1 Kings 16:29-33).

Jeroboam set up a false religion to worship Jehovah by means of an idol and a false system of worship. Ahab plunged the nation into the depths of idolatry. He was the worst of Israel's kings and reigned twenty-two years, long enough to do a great deal of mischief. He exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness, did evil above all that were before him. He married one of the most wicked women who ever lived; she brought in the worship of Baal, and he seems to marry her with that design. Her father was king of Zidon and priest of Ashtaroth (Astarte). She never rested until she got all her native pagan worship brought into Israel.

Gross immorality naturally followed: greed, sexual promiscuity, disregard for personal rights (Amos 2:6-8).

"A man and his father go in to the same girl [have sexual relations with the same maiden], To defile My holy name. They lied down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, And drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God [which has been extracted from those unjustly condemned]" (verses 7-8).

Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With blood-shed upon bloodshed (Hos. 4:1-2).

The condition in the time of Hosea – the time of Israel's last six kings. Wickedness abounded.

Negative (not doing): no truth, goodness, or knowledge of God in the land. Positive (active): swearing, breaking faith, killing, stealing, adultery, violence, constant bloodshed. Consequently, the nation would fall.

"Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away (Hos. 4:3).

The basic cause: lack of knowledge of the Lord (Hos. 4:6) – "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

Judah, the southern kingdom consisting of two tribes—Judah and Benjamin—was reserved by the Lord for the house of David. It has some good kings and lasted some 200 years longer than Israel. But it, too, was beset by idolatry and paganism, which led to its fall.

Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have despised the law of the LORD, And have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, Lies which their fathers followed. But I will send a fire upon Judah, And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem" (Amos 2:4-5).

There is a progression in their sins: they despised God's law, they did not keep his commandments, they trusted in lies—in idols—which led them into idolatry. The lies of their fathers, the lies in which their fathers trusted. When people reject God's word as their guide, they do not obey its commandments, and such will inevitably turn to lies—false religion or philosophies from which they draw false hopes.

Immorality among any people follows this course: rejection of God, or his law, refusing to obey his word, trusting in lies that justify them in their

sins, and the practice of flagrant immorality.

Now hear this, You heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And pervert all equity, Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us." Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest (Mic. 3:9-12).

Immorality was found throughout their society. The religious leaders taught not for truth but for gain. Their trust in the Lord was misplaced for they claimed his protection and care while despising his law and practicing immorality.

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water... Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number" (Jer. 2:13, 32).

"An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" (Jer. 5:30-31).

The people had forsaken the Lord and devised for themselves their own way. But like empty cisterns, they are of no benefit to them. While they claim to serve the Lord, in reality they had forgotten him. Serving him requires turning from evil and doing what he commands. Just claiming to serve God is not the same as serving him.

The prophets prophesied falsely, the priests rule by means of the false prophets, not the law of God, and the people are pleased to have it so.

"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done

as you and your daughters have done. Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore, I took them away as I saw fit. Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done. You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters" (Ezek. 16:48-52).

"Judah's guilt was not positively, but *relatively*, greater than Sodom's; because it was in the midst of such higher privileges, and such solemn warnings; the guilt of unbelievers in the midst of the highest of all lights, namely, the Gospel, is the greatest." (JFB)

"God estimates the guilt of transgressors by the light which they have enjoyed, and the means which have been used to bring them to repentance. At the last day he will regard and treat as the greatest sinners those who have rebelled against the most faithful instruction and reproof. (Family Bible Notes)

For all these sins, the nation fell, God's judgment came upon her because of her immorality, which resulted from their rejecting God and his word and going their own way. Thus the immorality of Judah took its toll in judgment.

Summary

A study of the nations of the Old Testament indicates rejection of God and his word and the subsequent immorality that inevitably followed led to their destruction. Religious apostasy and rejection of the truth of God leads to the same ends now as it did them.

Let us take warning.

A Vacation in Hell

Josh Vires

For the most part, preachers have moved on from the “fire and brimstone” lessons of decades past. Messages are presented in a way that no longer scares people into being saved from hell, and rather focuses on sharing love with those that need to know it.

But Hell is an important Biblical and relevant topic to consider.

The beginning of Luke chapter 16 discusses God and money. Immediately following that teaching, Jesus tells the story of the “Rich man and Lazarus.” It’s a text that again considers the cost of seeking riches.

However, something interesting is sandwiched in between these two texts. Just for your own consideration, look what Jesus says in Luke 16:18:

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

As I’ve been studying this chapter, I have to ask the question, why is this here?

To answer that, we have to go back to the context of the verses before that. As Jesus concludes his thought regarding one’s inability to serve both God and money, he says to the Pharisees beginning in verse 15:

“You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”

Whether its concerning money or relationships, Jesus is concerned with the Pharisees’ misuse and perversion of the old law. They have lowered the standard on divorce just as they have lowered the standard on the impact of money on faith.

Continuing that thought – Jesus’ teaching regarding money is not complete.

My grandfather, my mom’s dad, my Papa. That’s my answer. That’s my answer to the question, “*Who can you not wait to see in Heaven?*” My grandfather is one of the godliest men I have ever known. He was a song-leader, a deacon and an elder. He knew his Bible and how to teach it to others. He gave to those in need. He fed the hungry. He visited the sick. He wasn’t perfect. He probably would have been the first person to tell you just how badly he needed the blood of Jesus to cover his sins, but I know that he is in Heaven and I cannot wait to see him again there someday.

We all have people we long to see in Heaven someday. Maybe it’s your parents, your grandparents, an aunt, uncle, your spouse, your children. We long to have our heart be made complete again when the hole that their death left is filled again for eternity.

Maybe I misspoke a little bit earlier. I hinted this article was about Hell. That isn’t the whole truth. Really, we are going to look at Heaven *and* Hell. Let’s pause and read the entirety of the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus beginning:

“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs

came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

(Luke 16:19-31)

Parable or Not?

There's a pretty lively debate among Bible teachers, preachers, and scholars about whether or not this story told by Jesus is a parable, that is, a fictional story with eternal implications, or a literal retelling of an event.

Those who argue that the story is a literal event point to the fact that in the 38 recorded parables of Jesus in the New Testament, He never once called any person by name. And in this story, He identifies Lazarus and Abraham.

Those that argue it is a parable point to the similarities in structure and teaching emphasis.

Regardless of which side you are on in that disagreement, that is if you take a side, there are great, powerful, and humbling truths within this short story told by Jesus.

We are going to divide those truths into two sec-

tions, but before we do that, I want to ask you a question: Have you ever taken a trip or a vacation to someplace you just really didn't want to go, but you knew there was something important to be gained? Maybe you've gone to Disney World, dreading the cost and the crowds, but you knew the love that would fill you as you watched the smiles on your children or grandchildren's faces. Or perhaps you've gone to Washington D.C., again dreading the crowds and also the security you must work through, but understand the importance of knowing the history of the city and its surrounding areas.

If you could take a vacation, a short trip to Hell, would you do it?

The question of what hell is like isn't answered just thoroughly in the Bible.

- In Revelation 21:8 it's described as a lake that burns with fire and sulfur.
- It's described as a place of eternal punishment and destruction (Matthew 25.)
- Jesus says in Mark 4:48 it's a place "*where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.*"
- It's a place a way from the presence of the Lord.

So we know that hell is painful, it is bad and it is eternal.

Throughout the Bible, we read from the prophets about great things happening in Heaven, the praise, the presence of the Glory of God. However, we only have one first person perspective of hell, and that is the rich man of Luke 16.

So if you could have the first hand perspective of the rich man here, without it being permanent, would you do it? That's what Jesus gives his students in this teaching. He paints for them a picture of a place they do not want to go. It's a timely picture. It's a terrible picture. And it's a true picture.

And back to what I said earlier, we want to place these truths into two categories. The first one is...

The View from Hell

It's interesting. We mentioned earlier that Jesus

identifies the poor man as Lazarus, the one in Heaven as Abraham, but the rich man is never named, but in his community, among his peers, his family, his servants, most likely everyone in his town would have known his name. When he died, the funeral would have been well attended by prominent people of the time, dignitaries, royalty, others. Speaker after speaker would have gotten up and talked about what a wonderful, maybe even religious man this was. If you look at his life, you could see how much God blessed him by all the wealth he enjoyed. And I am sure the consensus was he had gone on to his further reward in Heaven.

These folks had a firm grasp on the prosperity Gospel. The prosperity gospel isn't a 20th century invention. See, the prosperity gospel is this basic belief among some that call themselves Christians that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positivity, and generosity will increase one's material wealth. It really found its way onto the world stage when televangelism took off in the 80s. You can turn on your TV today and see the message of the Prosperity Gospel is alive and well in the 21st century, but we can see in the story of the rich man and Lazarus that it had a place long before now.

Seeing Heaven from Hell

So the rich man dies, and it took him just a moment to realize that something wasn't right. The text says, "*and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side...*" The Greek word that gets translated *torment* comes from the word for an instrument of torture. And part of this torture is what? It's what he can see.

If you go to the beach and you stay in a hotel, you are given the option of beach view or not. The beach view or water view is almost always more expensive? Why? The cost of the better view is more. This Rich Man is paying a premium price for the best view. He can see Heaven from Hell.

When Lazarus dies, the text doesn't say he was buried like it describes the rich man. His body was

probably taken out of the city and dumped in a garbage pile. But Jesus says in verse 22 that, "*the poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham's side.*" Any Jew that heard this, such as the Pharisees, would understand "Abraham's side" to be Heaven.

Some may ask whether or not we will recognize one another in Heaven. I truly believe we will. The rich man looked up from hell and recognized Lazarus and Abraham. If he can do this from a place of torture, then I believe we who are in a place of paradise will recognize others.

So yes, the Bible includes descriptions of fire and pain in its description of hell, but I can't imagine anything more torturous than being able to see those who are in Heaven from your place in Hell. Imagine: Lost husbands seeing their wives in Heaven. Lost parents seeing their children in Heaven. I can't imagine anyone wanting to endure that.

Like the rich man, we have got to lift up our eyes and see that picture of Heaven. It is a real place, populated by real people. How do you get there? It's not by being good. Nobody is good enough to get to heaven. It's not by religion alone. The rich man was a devout Jew. When he called out to Abraham, he said "Father Abraham," and Abraham even called him "child." It is only by being a child of God that one may enter into Heaven.

Seeing Your Life From Hell

There is one other view from Hell that must be considered. That is the view that the rich man had of his life on earth. In verse 25, Abraham said, "*Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things...*" Child remember...

Those in hell carry their memories of life with them. They will remember every Gospel message they have heard. They will remember each time someone tried to pray with them, invite them to church or encouraged them to become a Christian. There's times when people want to erase memories in this life. They want to forget. They want to remove their pain. They drink. They do drugs. They commit suicide. But there will be no lost memories

in Hell. It will be a place to remember. A place to regret.

Have you heard the phrase “buyer’s remorse”? It describes someone that spends money on impulse and regrets it later. Now, the good thing for those that experience this is that most things can be returned or exchanged. One preacher has said that in Hell, there will be a lot of “invitation remorse.” In Hell, those that are there will likely won’t have nearly as much remorse for what they did as much as they will for what they didn’t do: that is to allow Jesus to save them.

You have heard lessons from Acts 2 before. Do you remember Peter’s sermon? He concludes it in verse 36 by saying, *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* The event continues in verse 37 by saying, *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart...”* And went home and talked about how bad they feel. Right? No. It says:

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

(Acts 2:37-41)

They were filled with the remorse, with the pain of their sin and they did something. The simple fact is that God loves you and He does not want you to go to Hell, to go to this place of pain and torment. In fact, we can understand from the Bible that Hell was never intended as a place for humans to be. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41: *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the*

eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Hell was designed for Satan and his messengers, not people. But because of the sinfulness of man, it became the eternal destination for the souls of the lost. But when we come to know Jesus, to know the love that God showed us through him, when we accept that love, the need for our Lord, in baptism, we are forgiven of our sins and our view of Heaven in eternity becomes a reality.

But we need to consider more than the view from Hell, we need also to consider...

The Voices from Hell

Consider the words of the rich man. The first words that came from him were a cry for mercy. He wanted a break from the pain and agony. It was a prayer, right? What do we learn from this? Eternity is very much a physical place. The rich man was filled with pain and his desire was for Lazarus, this man that he wouldn’t have walked by within measurable distance when he was on earth, his desire was for this man to dip his finger, part of the physical body, into water so that his tongue, another part of the physical body, may be cooled.

But in this, he made the same mistake the woman at the well did. The thirst was being caused by the lack of God’s presence. Jesus said in John 7:37, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”*

It doesn’t take long to realize that our culture has made hell a joke. They laugh at it. They tell others to go there. They readily admit they are going there. Nothing could be more inappropriate.

Hell is a place of darkness. It’s a place of gnashing of teeth. It’s a place of isolation, of loneliness. It’s a place of frustration. Remember, this isn’t a prophet like Isaiah describing some weird vision of the afterlife; this is Jesus describing a very life-like situation.

Of course Abraham responds to the rich man’s request by describing the chasm that is fixed between Heaven and Hell. It cannot be crossed. After death, it’s too late to change your eternal destination. So this prayer for relief went unanswered. But the rich man’s requests are not over.

He considers his pain and doesn't desire it for anyone else. So beginning in verse 27, he begs that Lazarus would visit his family and warn them. He had five brothers. It's likely that most of them were just like him. Wealthy. Religious, but lost. He would do anything for them not to join him in this place of torment. So now that he's in a place of eternal punishment, the rich man becomes a wannabe evangelist. He adapts the missionary mindset. He's finally concerned about the lost. Too bad this didn't happen *before* he died.

Understand, this is a powerful warning to those that have yet to become disciples of Jesus Christ. This is further clarified in Abraham's response. He says, *they have the Law and the Prophets*. They have the Bible, the Word of God. If they will read it, believe it and act on it, they can be saved.

But that's not what the rich man wanted, right? He insists that if a dead man could go back and talk to his brothers, they would turn from their sins and repent. The rich man knew what repentance was! Why didn't he act on it in his life?!

So he wants Lazarus to go back and warn his brothers. Because when they see a man from the grave warning them, he is certain that they will repent. I really don't think he's wrong. Do you? If I opened the door and someone walked in whose funeral I was at a few days earlier, I'd probably listen to whatever they had to say.

But Abraham wasn't having it. They have the word of God to follow! They have the voice of God to hear!

Conclusion

The challenge for us is twofold. First of all we need to understand there will come a day when it is too late. We cannot wait for that day to allow ourselves to be saved by Christ through the water of baptism. 1 Peter 3:18-22 says,

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. "

We have got to know who we are and what we have done and who Jesus is and what he did!

But the second challenge is this: Do we have a burden, a passion, for people that are headed for Hell? Have you cried over the lost people in your family or circle of friends? Paul expresses this in Romans 9:2-3:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

What if God offered to let you spend 30 seconds in Heaven or 30 seconds in Hell today, which would you choose? Remember, this isn't for eternity, just a quick, 30 second visit. Which location do you believe would make you a stronger, more mature follower of Jesus Christ? Seeing the perfection, the beauty and the glory of Heaven would likely increase your faith, but would it give you a greater passion, a greater burden for the lost?

Each one of us that knows the Lord will see, will be in Heaven someday. But those that do not will see a very, very real place that is Hell. It won't be a vacation. It will be an eternity.

*Hell won't be a vacation.
It will be an eternity.*

The Connections of PROSELYTING, BAPTISM, AND JESUS' INTERACTION WITH NICODEMUS

Johnny O. Trail

As one studies the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that many people who were formerly pagan converted to Judaism. This surprising fact is sometimes overlooked by students of God's word. When one seriously studies this topic, it becomes apparent that those who converted were required to observe certain rituals involved with becoming a Jew.

At various points in the Old Testament, prophets and historians record that many pagan people would proselyte to Judaism. God always had an interest in all of humankind, however the Israelites were uniquely chosen to be God's covenant people (Exodus 19:5). For a moment, we will note a few passages underscoring this fact.

In anticipation of return from Babylonian exile, Isaiah talks about "strangers" who would return with the faithful remnant. Consider Isaiah 14:1:

"For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob."

Later language identifies these people as proselytes. Certain individuals from foreign nations would forsake homelands to seek residency and life with the Israelite people.

These "strangers" or people from foreign lands would be joined with the house of Jacob. Isaiah 55:5:

"Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."

While various passages that clearly reference Gentiles have Messianic import (cf. Isaiah 2:2-3), there was a realization of this coming to fruition in a limited sense in post-exilic Judah.

The New Testament mentions “strangers” (i.e., people from foreign lands) who proselyted to Judaism and later Christianity. Acts 2:10 says, “Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” (cf. Acts 6:5). The implication is that some of the proselytes mentioned converted to Christ on the day of Pentecost and other occasions. Both the Old and New Testament make it clear that people were converting to Judaism.

If one wanted to proselyte to Judaism, he was expected to do certain things. There was a three-part ritual that all proselytes had to follow to become a Jew. For one thing, all males had to undergo circumcision. While this was originally an Abrahamic covenant, it was enforced under the Law of Moses too. Considering this fact, one commentator says,

Because of the first of these requirements, full proselytization was more common among women than men. Many men were content with that looser attachment to the Jewish religion usually indicated by the term ‘God-fearers.’” (Cf. Acts 10:2)¹

The biblical text records that many individuals proselyted to Judaism out of reverence towards God and “fear” of the Jews. Esther 8:17 says:

“And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast, and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews because fear of the Jews fell upon them.”

Ergo, there is evidence in the Old Testament of people who were formerly idolaters converting to the Old Testament Law.

Next, the proselyte had to undergo a “purificato-

ry” baptism in the presence of witnesses, and the new convert had to offer a sacrifice. Consequently, water was used in various purificatory rituals in the Old Testament. One is referenced in Numbers 19:11-12. These verses say:

“He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.”

A person had to wash themselves before they could be cleaned (Heb. *Taher*) from touching a corpse and in connection with making physical contact with persons, or things that were unclean under the Law of Moses.

Keeping these things in mind, the confusion of Nicodemus regarding his discourse with Jesus comes into full view. John 3:9-10 says,

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?’”

Nicodemus, being a “teacher of Israel” was most likely familiar with the purification rituals associated with any person who wanted to convert to Judaism. He most likely marveled at the idea of needing to be ceremonially washed in the same manner as a Gentile converting to Judaism.

Indeed, it might stand to reason that many of the Jews in Jesus’ age were against John’s baptism because of what is stood for *in their minds*. Luke 7:29-30 says:

“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.”

Even though they might have had their reasons, their reasons were wrong and resulted in an outright rejection of the “will of God.” Although we are no longer bound to the “baptism of John” (cf. Acts

¹ Bruce, F.F. (1984). *The Book of Acts*, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, F.F. Bruce, ed., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

19:1-5) by the New Testament, those who reject the teaching of the Apostles' (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21) and Christ (cf. Marks 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19) regarding baptism are, for all intents and purposes, rejecting the will of God.

Still, there is much to support the idea of baptism predating John the Immerser, Jesus, and the Apostles. The washing or immersion in water was carried out in places called "mikvah" or "gatherings of water." These immersion sites have been found throughout various regions of Israel. One source says the following about these immersion baths.

The word "mikvah" (also, *mikveh*, *mikva*, *miqve*) means "collection" and refers to a collection of water that was used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. They are ritual baths. The Jews would purify themselves before several activities or after certain events that made them unclean. Conversion to Judaism requires submersion into a mikvah. The area around the Temple Mount, especially to the south, is filled with mikvah. Many of them were most likely used on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) to baptize the converted Jews in Jesus' name... A mikvah had to be large enough to allow an average sized person to immerse his whole body. Stairs would be used to descend into and ascend from the mikvah. Often there was a wall separating the clean side from the unclean side.²

These mikvahs have been found by the hundreds throughout various regions of Israel. A *Smithsonian Magazine* article says,

Worshippers immersed themselves fully in a bath drawn from a natural source, such as a spring or rainwater, for purposes ranging from religious conversion to healing and preparing for marriage. Dozens, if not hundreds, of historic ritual baths are scattered across Israel. Though most are found in private homes and public buildings, a small number were built in more open spaces, near agricultural structures

and tombs.³

Thus, ceremonial cleansing was widely practiced in the day of John, Jesus, and the Apostles, and Nicodemus should have had some inkling of what Jesus meant regarding the idea of being "born again."

This informs our understanding of 1 Peter 3:21 which says,

"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In other words, Christian baptism is more than a purificatory washing of ceremonial uncleanness from ones' body, it is the honest, informed, positive response to God's word regarding His commands for baptism to "wash away one's sins" (Acts 22:16).

Jesus told Nicodemus that he could not inherit the kingdom if he was not baptized. John 3:4-5 says:

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

When the kingdom was established in Acts two on the day of Pentecost one requirement for entrance to the church or kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19 cf. Acts 2:47) was baptism (Acts 2:38).

Considering what scripture teaches, one should never be guilty of denying the essential nature of baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or for the purpose of washing sins away (Acts 22:16). To do so, would be tantamount to what the Pharisees and lawyers did in denying the baptism of John and being guilty of rejecting "the will of God for themselves."

² [Mikvah, the Ritual Baths - Jerusalem 101 \(generation-word.com\)](http://www.generation-word.com)

³ Davis-Marks, Isis (2020). "Researchers Unearth Ritual Bath Dated to Jesus' Time Near Garden of Gethsemane." *Smithsonian Magazine*. [Researchers Unearth Ritual Bath Dated to Jesus's Time Near Garden of Gethsemane | Smart News | Smithsonian Magazine](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/researchers-unearth-ritual-bath-dated-to-jesus-time-near-garden-of-gethsemane-180972222/)

QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

On Instrumental Music in the Christian Connexion

The change did not occur without a fight. The largest congregation in Maine, the Casco Street church in Portland, split down the middle in 1829, when a majority of the church introduced organ music into the worship. More conservative members left and formed the Temple Street church. The breach was never healed. In the minutes of their 1832 annual meeting, the preachers of the New Hampshire Christian Conference gave the following warning to their churches:

We would also let you know that it is our general opinion that the use of instruments of music in public worship are so far from being conducive of good that they are contrary to the spirit and genius of the Christian religion as revealed in the New Testament, and highly detrimental to the progress of holiness and spirituality in the church of God; we therefore recommend that scriptural liberty, divine spirituality, and primitive simplicity be conscientiously observed in all our churches.

James Gardner

The Christians of New England (2009)

An Interesting Way to Describe Your Dad's Writings...

On the first of January, 1825, [David Millard] issued the first number of *The Gospel Luminary*, with seven hundred subscribers. During the year the list was considerably augmented. Though this monthly was quite inferior in size to the religious publications of the present day, it was certainly an interesting and spicy paper, and still has some historical value.

David E. Millard

Biography of David Millard

On American Slavery

Sir, American slavery is either right or wrong. If it is right, we are certainly doing wrong to oppose it.... On the other hand, if chattel slavery is wrong, all of us ought to stand opposed to it to a man. In my judgment, the question involves too high responsibility to admit of one inch of neutral ground.

David Millard

An Odd Eulogy

Orin Marsh... became a talented preacher in the Christian Church, in which connection he continued until his death, with the exception of one year, when he was a Universalist. After his return to the church, he was a zealous and earnest worker until, in consequence of becoming deranged, he committed suicide.

E.W. Humphreys

Memoirs of Deceased Christian Ministers.

People Haven't Changed...

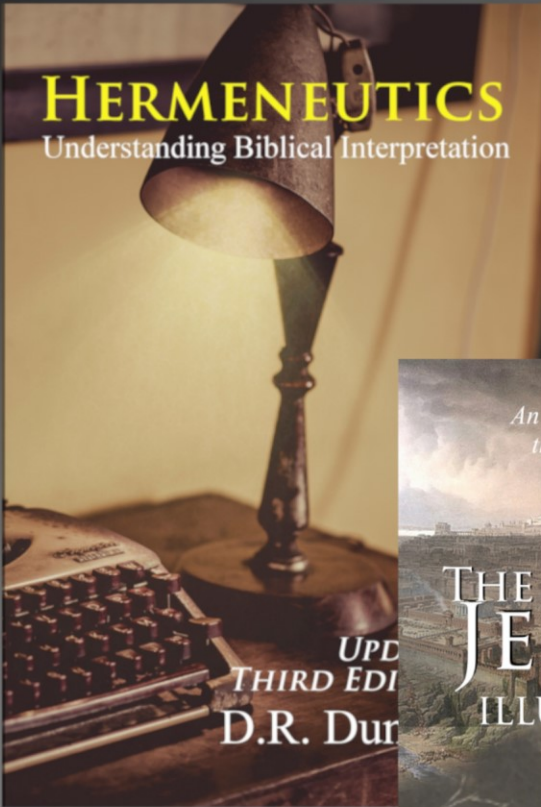
December 2d and 3d, the traveling was bad, but religious slothfulness worse. My soul was sick of vain excuses. People can go where business calls them, in nearly all degrees of weather and traveling, but will not go to meeting to serve the Lord.

Mark Fernald

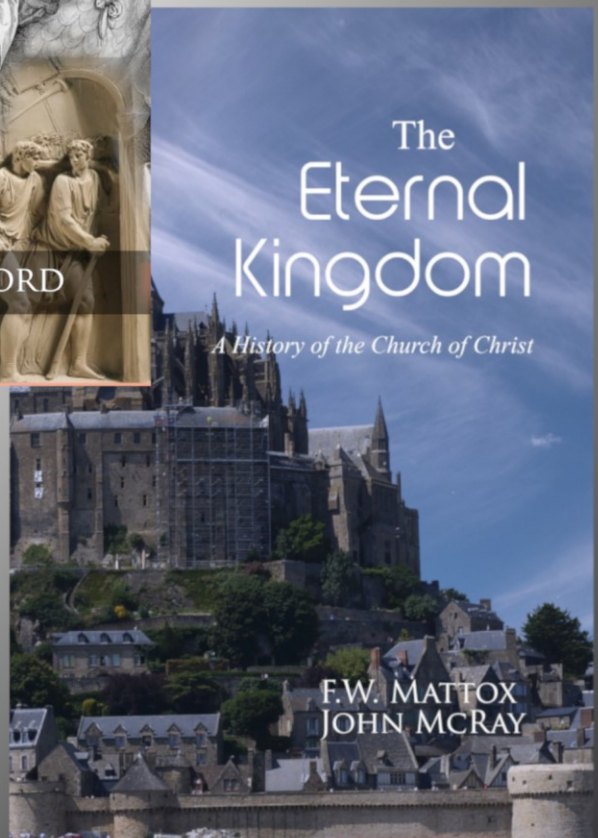
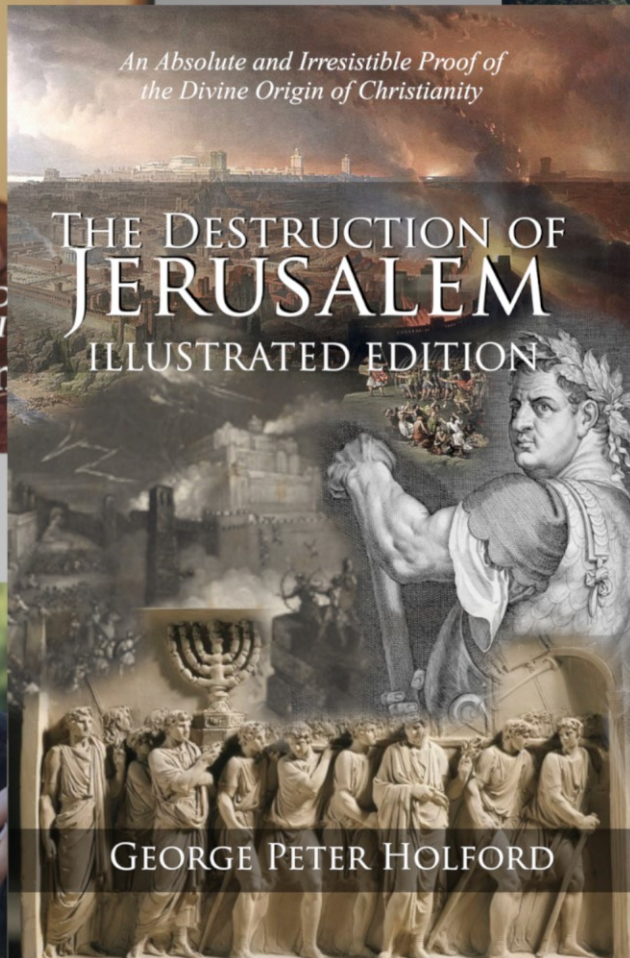
Autobiography

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WHAT DOES ACTS TEACH US ABOUT UNITY?

Jake Schotter

The book of Acts gives us amazing insights into how the early church was established and continued to grow. One does not need to look any further than verse 8 in the first chapter to see the progression of the gospel to the world: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” According to K.N. Giles,

The Lucan writings bear witness to a point in history where the Christians are coming to see themselves as a distinct new entity, having their roots in Israel, but now independent of Israel. They are the community of salvation, the ‘church of God.’ Entry is through faith in Christ, not through descent from Abraham or by keeping the law; however, time-honoured titles for Israelites such as ‘brethren’ or ‘the people of God’ are not denied to Jews as yet, but they are being taken over by Christians.¹

This new community that was established on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47; in fulfillment of Daniel 2:44) is the beginning of a new group that needs to be unified. In order for the church to grow and be effective, unity is absolutely

needed. How will they accomplish this when there are people flocking to Christianity that are known as Jews and Gentiles, men and women, young and old, and from all over the known world? Acts teaches us a lot about unity because we see the history of the church growing from infancy into maturity with apostolic teaching, fellowship, communion, prayer, and sharing things together (Acts 2:42, 45-47). This passage and many other elements that we see in the book of Acts help us to learn about unity in the church!

A very pivotal chapter covering the early unity of the church is found in chapter two. This chapter closes with the Holy Spirit working through these people, creating a community of people pierced to the heart with the Gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14), repentant, obedient, forgiven (2:37-38). “So then,” according to Luke, “those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (2:41). This was the basis of their unity. This unity was primarily spiritual (2:41, 47, 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7) but there is also a physical aspect to their unity. It was God who “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth... that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (17:26-27). In Genesis 1:27, the author declares

¹ Giles, K.N. *What on Earth is the Church? A Biblical and Theological Enquiry*. SPCK, 1995: 92.

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God.” When a person submits to the will of God to enter the church through faith in Christ, he has been united physically with His creator again (Romans 5:11) and with spiritual brethren (Galatians 3:26-28).

A key summary of what we see at work in Acts 2, which gives a fundamental understanding of the progression of the book, is given by Alan J. Thompson. He wrote:

Thus God’s people are those who have responded in repentance, embraced the risen Jesus as the suffering Messiah and reigning Lord, and have received the new-covenant blessings of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. The summary passage that follows in 2:42-47 then provides a portrait of this restored community who have received the Spirit.²

The use of the Greek term for church that means an assembly implies unity. When there is a gathering, there is unity because you are all coming together for a common purpose. Darrell Bock noted this unity came from the reality that the church was “A vibrant community [that] extends itself in two directions: toward God and toward neighbor. A veiled reference to obedience to the great commandment appears here.” He would go on to describe this community in its totality.

In sum, Luke affirms the internal fellowship, intimacy, and engagement of the community. This positive activity is accompanied by joy and glad hearts, and their worship and praise of God are ongoing. But this is not an isolated, private club or a hermetically sealed community. Their reputation with outsiders also is good.³

This unity they experienced was because they were united in doing the same things together (as seen in 2:42-47).

² Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s account of God’s unfolding plan*. Ed., D.A. Carson. InterVarsity Press, 134.

³ Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Academic, 2007: 154.

In chapters 10 and 11, we see the church extends a welcome to those who are Gentiles. “Luke explicitly emphasizes the fact that the giving of the Holy Spirit means that there is one people of God under the one Lord.”⁴ Racial reconciliation is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall... and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross”

(Ephesians 2:13-14, 16).

The conversion and subsequent signs of approval show this was the exact plan of God (10:34-37; 11:1-18). John B. Polhill commented, “Paul had himself been convinced of God’s inclusion of the Gentiles. Now his fellow Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem needed convincing.”⁵ The church is to be considered universally applicable to all people regardless of their background. If they have submitted to Christ in baptism (2:38; 8:5-13, 36-38; 9:10-12, 17-19; 10:47-48; 16:27-34; 18:5-8; 19:1-5; 22:14-17), they are in the body of Christ (2:41, 47, 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7).

We also see a major emphasis on faithfulness to doctrine in the book of Acts. A major feature in this book is the series of sermons preached by Peter, Stephen, and Paul. There are eleven in total and all are focused on preaching Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2) and reaching the lost sinners (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 7:1-53; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:22-31; 20:18-35; 22:3-21; 24:10-21; 26:2-29; 28:25-28). The foundation of the church is her apostles and the teaching they gave, verbally and in writing (Ephesians 2:20). We see the teaching of the Word of God had a great impact on the church:

⁴ Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 137.

⁵ Polhill, John B. *Acts*. Broadman Press, 1992: 265.

“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith”

(Acts 6:7)

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord”

(Acts 9:31)

“But the word of God continued to increase and spread”

(Acts 12:24)

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers”

(Acts 16:5)

“In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power”

(Acts 19:20).

This was in clear fulfillment of what we consider the purpose statement of the book of Acts (1:8). Growth was exponential, in part, because

As a missionary Paul was not satisfied merely by individual conversions. His goal was to plant churches in specific localities. Only when such churches were established (1 Thess 3:1-10) did he feel his work was not in vain. The majority of his letters were addressed to the needs of such churches, instructing and exhorting them to stay true to the faith.⁶

Many of the churches Paul visited during his missionary journeys were written to and encouraged to keep the faith (the teaching of the apostles) and be united based on that doctrine. Some congregations of God's people struggled with how this was to take effect in the churches. We see the Romans struggling to be united over matters of opinion (Romans 14-15). The Corinthians struggling with how to be unified (1 Corinthians 8-11). The Philip-

pians were struggling because of disharmony because of two women in the assembly (Philippians 4:2-3). The Galatians and Colossians struggled with works-based heresies and mind-twisting speculations (Galatians 1:6-9; 2:1-10; 3:1-14). There was a struggle in these places out of the teachings of Paul when he traveled to these cities and people had twisted what he had said. So, while he was with these people, he encouraged them to be united and he reminded them in correspondence. Passages such as Ephesians 4:1-6 and Philippians 2:1-11 makes the imperative for unity all the clearer.

In Acts 15:28-29, Luke recorded a letter some apostles and elders had sent out imploring the churches for unity over the circumcision issue. They implored for unity and to focus on justification by faith in Christ Jesus and to live obediently in love. They wrote,

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.”

A few verses later, we see this letter with the intent to produce unity did that exact thing: “When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.” This is the result of faithful teaching and preaching the word of God (15:35).

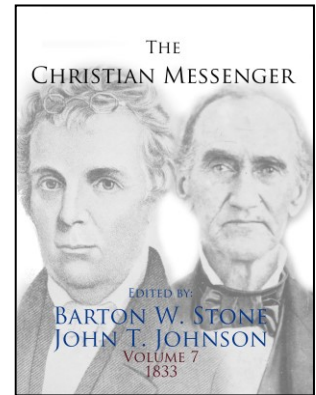
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⁶ Schreiner, Thomas R. *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*. InterVarsity Press, 2001: 331.

RESTORATION JOURNALS: THE **CHRISTIAN MESSENGER**

Kyle D. Frank



This venerable paper was edited by Barton Warren Stone and had its run from 1826-1844.

The editor, B.W. Stone was very well-known and is often called one of the “founders” of the Restoration Movement. His paper, the *Christian Messenger*, was a vehicle by which he was able to express his views on Scripture. The subscriptions grew exponentially each year and his subscribers were not only of the west of that day (Kentucky) but all over the United States and Canada. Letters came from all over the place. With the passing of time writers began to seek answers to their religious questions and he was very knowledgeable and would answer them as they came in. He also used the pages to dispute with enemies of the movement.

The *Messenger* was constantly at war with sectarianism. Foes would write in, knowing of Stone’s policy to allow all reasonable questions or views space in his paper. He would then basically dismantle the opponent’s views and used it as an opportunity to teach proper views of the subject. This writer, while proofreading the *Christian Messenger*, gathered up all of the Q/As and put them into a book called “The Christian Expositor.” It shows the brilliance of Stone.

Perhaps something needs to be said about Stone’s life. He was born in 1772, and after his father died, young Stone used his inheritance to pay for tuition to a well-known school. He was not interested in religion but an address by a popular preacher changed his views and he went from law school to seminary. He graduated and ended up, after some misadventure, preaching. He was involved in the famous Kentucky Revival. Stone then married Elizabeth Campbell.

In 1803 Stone and four other ministers departed

from the presbytery they were under and formed the Springfield Presbytery. They after a year wrote “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery,” which ended the unscriptural organization. Shortly thereafter they were encouraged to take the name *Christian* by Rice Haggard. It was adopted. During that time, he was invited to preach for two local congregations, Caneridge [Cane Ridge] and Concord. These two congregations followed him into the early restoration movement. After many trials and tribulations Stone began The *Christian Messenger* in 1826. It was well received but never well-funded throughout its long tenure. Nearly every issue, Stone had to plead with his readers to pay for their subscriptions. It was a good part of his support, and he was greatly in need because brethren were too cheap to pay for their subscriptions.

In 1830 there was a union between the Campbell’s associates and Stone’s. At this time as a sign of unity, John T. Johnson became co-editor of the paper. He did this until 1836 when Stone re-located to Illinois, taking his paper with him. He published it from there until his death in 1844.

The *Christian Messenger* dealt with sticky questions and answers that troubled the brotherhood. I am not saying he fixed every problem, but he always brought a lot of light to the question. The paper dealt with Calvinism, Arianism, Slavery, Universalism, and a myriad of smaller things causing trouble among God’s people. It ceased publication when the last volume was completed by his co-editor at the end of 1844. For starting out as a primitive sheet it grew mightily.

About the AUTHORS

Cory Collins is a preacher, teacher, husband, father, and marriage counselor who blogs regularly at ServingAndSharing.com.

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.

Andy Erwin is passionate about training preachers, whether in a school setting or in a Paul/Timothy mentor model. He is the editor of *The Gospel Gleaner*, and the author of several books, including his latest, *Doctrines of Men*.

Kyle Frank spends his days reading, writing, texting, praying, singing, and helping others (especially the editor of this magazine). In addition to being a Civil War expert, he also offers digitization services at very reasonable prices. Contact him for more information (KyleDFrank@gmail.com).

Chris Gardner is a Christian, husband, father, preacher, and St. Louis Cardinals fan. Last we

heard, he would rather work for FedEx than UPS (but the editor disagrees).

Bill Howard is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his “retired” time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others.

Earl Kimbrough preached for over 70 years, and wrote several books on Restoration Movement personalities (including F.B. Srygley). He wrote for and helped edit *The Alabama Restoration Journal* for its 5-year existence.

John Krivak is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Stephane Maillet preaches in New Brunswick, Canada, where he was raised. He graduated from the Southeast School of Biblical Studies in Knoxville, TN. He enjoys spending time with his family, and creating material for digital evangelism (please go to AddedSouls.com and see some of it). His family is well worth supporting.

Jim Mitchell preaches in Oklahoma City, and

teaches Christians to evangelize using the Open Bible Study method, by Ivan Stewart. If you are interested in learning more about this training, contact him at JamesPMotiv8r@yahoo.com.

Travis L. Quertermous has been a gospel preacher for 30 years, all in the great state of Missouri. He currently works with the Thayer church of Christ. He and his wife Kelly have been married for 31 years and have two grown sons, Logan and Brandon. Travis is the author of one book, "The Hosts of Heaven: A Biblical Study of Angels" (Available from the Freed-Hardeman University bookstore).

Andy Robison preaches the gospel, and is the brains behind ChurchofChristSongs.com.

Larry Robbins worships with the Rosedale church of Christ in Bakersfield, CA. He has recently published a book on the history of the church in that city (see the article about it in this issue).

Charles R. Rose was born in a small farmhouse in the rural community of Red Oak, north of Marshall, Arkansas on September 21, 1942, and was educated in the public schools of Arkansas. He was baptized October 15, 1967 at Clinton, Arkansas by Brother Jimmy Duncan. Charles and his wife Lois have three grown children, and four grandchildren. He preached for small congregations in the hills of Arkansas, and his first full-time work was at Saint Joe, Arkansas. He has served churches of Christ at Saint Joe, Western Grove, and Northfork, Arkansas, Mexico, Leesville and Lincoln, Missouri. He has worked with the Lincoln congregation a total of 35 years. Although semi-retired, he still does their radio and media work. The present radio program airs on 97.1 FM from Warsaw, Missouri and is now in its 34th year of broadcasting. His writings have appeared in Four State Gospel News, World Evangelist, The Voice of Truth International, and many church bulletins. He has preached in numerous gospel meetings in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. He may be reached at crrose@iland.net.

Jake Schotter loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He begins work towards his Masters of Divinity at Freed-Hardeman University later this

year.

Devin Self designs metal buildings for a living, and is really good at it. He and his wife Kelsey (and their kiddoes) worship with the church of Christ at Gravel Hill (Dover, AR).

Matthew Shaffer lives in Brazil... Indiana. He has been married to Japonica for the last year and a half. He studied German and Classical Greek at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Andy Sochor is the owner of Gospel Armory Publishing (GospelArmory.com), the host of the Plain Bible Teaching podcast, a Christian, husband, father, and a preacher.

Tommy Thornhill preached the gospel for nearly 70 years. He passed on to eternity last month. He leaves behind a family legacy to carry on that includes faithful Christians.

Johnny O. Trail preaches for the Hillcrest church of Christ in Springfield, Tenn. He has preached the gospel for over 32 years. He and his wife, Jada, have been married for almost 25, and they have three sons Matthew (22), Nathan (20), and Noah (14). He has a B.S. in Political Science from MTSU, a Master of Ministry degree from Freed-Hardeman, and a Master of Divinity from Lipscomb. He completed his Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Amridge University in 2011. He is a state licensed marriage and family therapist with offices in Murfreesboro (at the Walter Hill church of Christ) and Springfield. He is an instructor at the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies.

Josh Vires was not asked for an updated bio. So please check *The Quarterly* Vol. 3, No. 3 to find out what he was like 3 years ago. Hopefully not much has changed since then...

Bradley S. Cobb is tired of Diotrephes showing up and causing trouble in congregations across the world. He has recently decided to embark on a massive multi-year writing project to correct errors and lies about the Restoration Movement, and to hopefully bring more unity to those who take Restoration of New Testament Christianity seriously. More on this (Lord willing) in the next issue.