

VOLUME SEVENTY

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S WORLD

The Answering of Prayer

Betty Burton Choate

I prayed for patience
And frustration came my way!
I prayed for strength
And could hardly bear
The burden of the day;
I prayed for faith
But there were challenges instead;
And I questioned:
 “Should I have left unanswered prayers unsaid?”

Tired, dispirited,
I closed my eyes in tears,
Doubting at the last
That the Father really hears,
But the rising of the sun
Brought new clarity of sight
And swept away the questions
Of the stillness of the night.

For frustrations made a patient growth
And the burdens doubled strength,
And faith had bloomed through challenges
That had pushed me to the brink.

So I bowed with tears of happiness
To thank Him for His care,
For the wisdom of His molding
Through the answering of prayer.

Marks of Identification for the Church that Jesus Built

Identifying Mark

The Founder
 The Foundation
 Date of Beginning
 Place of origin
 Name
 Membership
 Worship
 Work
 Doctrine
 Organization
 Government
 Message
 Unity
 Life
 Judgment
 Destiny

For Christ's Church

Christ, Matthew 16:18
 Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:11
 Pentecost, AD 33; Acts 2
 Jerusalem, Acts 2
 church of Christ, Ro. 16:16
 Acts 2:36-47
 Acts 2:42; 20:7; Col. 3:16
 James 1:22-27
 Only N.T., 1 Timothy 1:3
 Christ the Head; elders, deacons
 Autonomous congregations
 Revelation 22:18, 19
 One church, Eph. 4:4-6
 Be faithful unto death, Rev. 2:10
 Judgment for all, Rev. 20:13
 Eternal, Matthew 25:46

For Your church?

Started by man or by God?
 Does it build on God's Word?
 When did it begin?
 Where did it have its origin?
 What is it called?
 Conditions of membership?
 What acts occur in worship?
 What does it do?
 What does it teach?
 Who is its head?
 Where is its headquarters?
 Is it governed by a creed?
 Is it one of many denominations?
 Can one "fall from grace"?
 Who will be saved?
 Is there a heaven and hell?

Which of these identification marks matches the church of which you are a member?

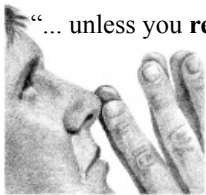
What must I do to be saved?

“... whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not *believed*? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not *heard*? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring *glad tidings of good things!*” *But they have not all obeyed the gospel...*



“... blessed are those who **hear** the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28)

“... if you do not **believe** that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24)



“... unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3)

“... whoever **confesses Me** before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32)

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
Galatians 3:27



“... as many of us as were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into His death... Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also

should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3,4)



“... as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

“... by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body...**” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

“... the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47)

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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Louis Rushmore
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Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

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Managing Editor: Rafael Barrantes

TELUGU EDITION:

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TAMIL EDITION:

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU
(ROMANS 16:16).



“It Is Written”

Byron Nichols

Most of us have read in Matthew chapter three about the baptizing of Jesus by the reluctant John the Baptizer (Baptist). We have read the last verse of the chapter where God speaks from heaven and says of Jesus, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* We then read the account in chapter four of Jesus being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, and it is there that Satan proceeds to confront Christ with a series of temptations. It is noteworthy that God’s Son responds consistently with the affirmation, *“It is written....”* By His doing so, Jesus is testifying to the merits of the Scriptures. He is here using the written Word of God as His basis for refusing to succumb to the attractive temptations created by Satan.

I have not counted them myself, but I am told that Jesus used this same phrase, *“It is written,”* 46 times in the New Testament. Christ again and again quoted from the Old Testament writers as He drove home points of spiritual significance. His repeated emphasis upon God’s Word reflected His confidence in the wisdom and truthfulness of the Scriptures. For example, notice His response to the false teaching of the Sadducees and their rejection of the doctrine of the resurrection. In Matthew 22:29 He answered them by saying, *“...You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”* The implication is quite clear: The answers to all meaningful matters, including the resurrection, are in God’s Book, the Scriptures. As religious leaders, they should have known better.

Jesus definitely endorsed and subscribed to what we know as Proverbs 30:5,6, where we read, *“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”* Jesus could endorse and recommend every word in God’s Word.

God regarded David as *“a man after My own heart”* (Acts 13:22), and

David certainly had the highest regard for both God and His Word. In Psalm 19:7-9 the Psalmist shows his allegiance to God and to His Word: *“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; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”*

How could anyone then or now fail to understand the supremacy of the Scriptures above all other writings and/or pronouncements? How could men reject the wisdom and commitment expressed to God by David in Psalm 119:11 as he declared, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”* David recognized the value of reading, knowing, and remembering the written Word of God. It is up to the church today to lead the way in showing to the world the value of the Scriptures that can help to rescue all of us in times of trouble and tribulation.

Jesus knew *“it is written”* because of His personal study of God’s Word. He knew it was *“written”* because of His familiarity with the Scriptures.

David was able to hide God’s Word in his heart because he read and studied it; David *knew* the Word. There were no Bibles like we have today for David and others to purchase and carry with them whenever and wherever they moved about. Thus it became important to him that he read that written Word very carefully and frequently and commit as much of it as he could to memory so that he could in that way have God’s Word with him at all times.

Jesus stressed things that were *“written”* because those were the things that were significant to God and to man’s obedience. Those things that were not *“written”* were more than likely the ideas of men, some of whom sought to secure a following for themselves.

The written Word is exceedingly important even in the midst of today’s high tech electronics, etc. Not everyone has access to or the training to know how to take advantage of some of the state-of-the-art technology that is available to many. I have certainly failed in some of my past predictions, but I will make another prediction — I predict that it will be a very long time, if ever, before copies of the printed Word and other materials dealing with that printed Word will become obsolete.

The advantages afforded by the printed copies are many. However, there are no advantages at all if we do not seize our opportunities to USE the printed material, both for our own benefit and for the benefit of others.

“It is written.”

Let’s READ it, STUDY it, OBEY it, and DISPERSE it.





The Wise Use of Wealth

Jerry Bates

The proper use of wealth is one of the primary topics of discussion in the Bible. One text which is not often used in connection with this subject is the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-13. This is a difficult parable to properly understand, yet I believe it has much

to say about the Christian's view of wealth. A steward in biblical times was an important man. He may have been a slave, although not necessarily. Regardless, he had the oversight of some or all of the property of his master's affairs.

In this story, a steward suddenly finds that he will soon have to give an accounting to his master. This steward was probably overseeing some rental land or maybe a loan agent. In any case, this man knew he was going to lose his job because he had wasted or squandered his master's money. He would be fired, with no severance pay, no pay for past service, nothing! What was he going to do? This steward quickly concocted a brilliant scheme. He would mark down the debts of each debtor, thereby incurring their gratitude. Therefore, when he was dismissed from service, they would be obliged to help him until he was able to find a more permanent solution. The master commended him for his shrewdness, and this is the difficult part of the parable. Why would the master commend this dishonesty, and why would Jesus use such a dishonest man as an example for His children? However, at times, lessons can be learned even from evil men. An ancient proverb said, "It is lawful to learn, even from an enemy."

We must remember that in parables, it is often the surprising aspect of the story that teaches the lesson. So is the case here. Jesus is not necessarily commending the steward's actions. He is using this as *an example* of the

foresight of carnal people (Luke 16:9), in other words, of those whose hearts are wholly attached to the comforts, enjoyments, and satisfactions of this world. They use their opportunities to advance their selfish interests. They are often wise and diligent in their pursuit of their worldly goals, willing to sacrifice almost everything in order to achieve them. They strive to prepare for the future. In short, they use the things of this life in order to achieve their worldly goals, just as this steward used worldly things in order to protect his future.

The children of the world are in contrast to the children of light, Jesus' disciples. *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light"* (Ephesians 5:8). God also wants His servants to be good stewards of money. To some, this might be surprising since God doesn't really need our money. The reason is revealed in Luke 16:10-12. In these verses, little is contrasted with much; the unrighteous mammon is contrasted with the true riches; that which belongs to another is contrasted with one's own. If we are unfaithful in little things, we will certainly be unfaithful in big things. If we are unfaithful with the temporary things of this world, how can we expect God to entrust us with the far greater riches of His eternal kingdom?

Everything in this world belongs to God. Paul quoted Psalm 24:1 when he wrote, *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness"* (1 Corinthians 10:26). Since this world's goods belong to God, then we must use them wisely or as God wants them to be used.

Why is the use of money so important to God? Unfaithfulness in little things, such as the improper use of temporary things, exposes the true loyalties and attitudes of our hearts. One's attitude toward money reveals cracks in even the most impressive outward show of religion. Before we entrust other people with our possessions, we want to know if we *can* trust them. In this parable, Jesus is basically teaching the same thing. Before God will entrust us with His eternal riches, He wants us to show that He can trust us with lesser important things.

We know we can trust God, but can God trust us? One indication of the answer to that question is how we use the temporary riches of this world. Riches are not evil, in and of themselves, but they often lead to evil. Jesus refers to money as the *"mammon of unrighteousness"* because it frequently is used for evil purposes and commonly turns men away from God. Wealth or money is depicted as a rival to God in verse 13. Using God's possessions (money) for selfish purposes shows that we are not truly devoted to God. We are unrighteous, little more than thieves, and no better than this dishonest steward who was relieved of his stewardship. God knows our hearts (Luke 16:15). As one writer said, "Jesus demands wholehearted commitment to Himself and brooks no rivals, possessions included." Who are you really serving, God or yourself? †



What Does Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God Mean to You and to Me Today?

Louis Rushmore

Jesus said, "... seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ..." (Matthew 6:33), but what is the practical application today of seeking first the kingdom of God? Our Lord instructed, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment*" (Matthew 22:37-38), but is there anything or anyone who today God may permit to temper that primary allegiance to Him? Does it sound like Jesus was vague about the child of God's first commitment to Deity: "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matthew 10:37)? Yet, even Christians often falter in their loyalty to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, although they seldom admit it or maybe are even aware of this serious shortcoming.

The Christian's loyalty to God ought not to be infringed by his or her patriotic sympathies for the nation of which he or she is a citizen, and yet sometimes, for instance, American Christians may often unwittingly proclaim an Americanized, democratic Gospel in foreign lands. Neither our culture nor our form of government is part or parcel of the Gospel of Christ. Yes, we are obligated to obey the law of the land in which we live (Romans 13:1-7), as long as we do not have to break God's law to obey man's law (Acts 5:29); we must obey God's law first, before obeying man's law, to which we also owe our obedience. Seek first the kingdom of God before seeking nation or culture.

Further, from Matthew 10:37 we learn that God comes first before husband, wife, children, or other family members. However, though nearly all of us will readily admit this academically, frequently even Christians put family before God. Do Christians put family first when family members live

out of harmony with the Gospel? Do we put family ahead of worshipping God if relatives visit on assembly days and they are not faithful Christians? Seek first the kingdom of God before seeking family.

There are so many areas in life where even Christians demonstrate in their lives that they hedge on seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Does fidelity to a particular political party come before loyalty to Jesus Christ? Does racial or ethnic preference supersede commitment to our Savior? Does getting ahead in this world financially take precedence over placing God first in our lives (Matthew 16:26)? Are sporting events, recreation, and entertainment deserving of our chief attention over serving Christ? Seek first the kingdom of God before favoring politics, racial or ethnic identity, financial or material success, sports, recreation, and entertainment.

Matthew 6:33 is not nearly as difficult to comprehend as it is difficult to implement in the Christian life. The word “first” here means, “firstly (in time, place, order, or importance)” (*Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s*). Sequentially, nothing ought to come before seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness! Further, nothing is more significant than seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness!

This means that as authentic Christians we seek our Lord before we seek favor of or for our nation or culture! This means that as genuine Christians we seek Jesus Christ ahead of our allegiance to a political party – Democratic, Republican, or otherwise! This means that before I think of myself as white, black, Hispanic, or some other race, I think of myself as a child of God seeking the way of the Lord. Furthermore, before a spouse, a parent, a child, or other family member, I am first a Christian with a preferential dedication to Almighty God. Sports, recreation, entertainment, vocations, hobbies, or anything earthly has no place interceding between the Christian and the Godhead. Friends and brethren, we have not begun to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness as long as any of these things intervene between God and us.

Are you truly seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, or are you merely pretending? Pretending will get us nowhere we want to be eternally (Matthew 7:21-23). May you and I both honestly and earnestly seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness from this day forward, and we will spend eternity together in heaven with saints from every age in the very presence of our God. †

Works Cited

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

The God of All Comfort	Stanley E. Sayers	10
Some Things God Does Not Know	Randall Caselman	12
And Man Created God	Jack W. Carter	14
Jesus, Our Savior	Hans Dederscheck	16
God Must Be First Place in My Life.....	Tim Childs.....	17

EVIDENCES

Two Insects	Hugo McCord	20
You Can't Be an Evolutionist and Be a Christian.....	Andy Robison.....	22
What Are the Chances?	House to House, Heart to Heart.....	24

THE WORD OF GOD

Interpreting the Book of Revelation.....	Kerry Holton	25
The Place of The Old Testament	Jimmy Jividen	27
Safeguards in Scripture	Betty Burton Choate	28
Eye of a Needle	John Allan.....	31

SALVATION

Who Is Covered by the Grace of God?.....	J.C. Choate.....	34
A Call for Help	David A. Sargent.....	36
Time, Don't Run Out on Me!	Michael L. King.....	38
Baptism, A Figure?.....	Owen D. Olbricht	40
The Sacrifices of God.....	Don Campbell.....	43
Is It Nothing To You?.....	Maxie B. Boren.....	45

THE CHURCH

We Believe.....	Bobby Key	46
You Are the Temple of God.....	Kevin L. Moore	47

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Instrumental Music, Biblical or Not?	Charles Box	49
True Religion.....	Bill Dillon.....	50
Weaving Out and In, or Two Steps Forward.....	Raymond Elliott	51

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Here Am I, Send Me	Gary C. Hampton	55
Burger King and Eleven Cents.....	Steve Higginbotham	56
Reach Out and Touch Someone	Dwight Fuqua	57
Why Share the Gospel?	Dan R. Owen	58
We Are at War!	Harvey M. Starling	60

WORSHIP

Worship	Shan Jackson.....	62
Importance of Public Worship.....	John Gipson	66

Must We Sing?	Mike Hinton.....	67
----------------------------	------------------	----

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

How to Tell Right from Wrong	Neal Pollard	70
The Foot	Owen Cosgrove	71
I Have Got It Made!	Mike Sinapiades	72
Defining Love	Bill Nicks.....	74

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

What I Want for My Children	Jimmy Ferguson.....	77
Mother’s Load	Dan Gulley	79
WILD Undisciplined Children	Don Deffenbaugh.....	81
Ecclesiastes for Young People	Paul Holland	82
Father, Lead Me!	Clyde M. Hartley	83

PROVERBS 17:22

Humor		84
--------------------	--	----

HEY YOU KIDS!

The Use of Time	SPC Alex Gibson	86
------------------------------	-----------------------	----

TEXTUAL STUDIES

He Departed for a Season	Bonnie Rushmore.....	89
“He Endured”	Jimmy Clark	92
Speaking in Tongues	Royce Frederick.....	94

BIBLE HISTORY

Archaeological Evidence of Joseph in Egypt?	Rex Banks	95
--	-----------------	----

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

Some Things We Can Know	J.A. Thornton	96
Some Things a Sinner Learned Too Late	Curtis Camp	98

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Abraham: A Man Known of God	Jimmy Young	100
Dorcas	Glenn Colley	102

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Do Men Have the Right to Be Wrong?	Ken Tyler.....	105
Born a Sinner?	Mike Benson.....	106
Where Did Satan Come From?	Bobby Dockery.....	107

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

“It Is Written”	Byron Nichols	4
The Wise Use of Wealth	Jerry Bates	6
What Does Seek Ye First... Mean?	Louis Rushmore	8
Verse Search: Romans 9:30-10:13	Jerry Bates	32
5 Minute Bible Study: Eternal Life	Paula Bates	69
Bible Find: Qualifications of Elders	Bonnie Rushmore.....	88
Who Am I?/Where Am I?	Rebecca Rushmore	104

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

Stanley E. Sayers

Often in times of deep stress and sorrow, or panic-gripping fear, when we turn inward we tap a great reservoir of strength. To say that we are drawing upon adrenalin, the subconscious, or something residual within us is hardly sufficient. I am persuaded, with the wearied apostle of global experience, that it is nothing other than “*the God of all comfort*” who becomes our strength (2 Corinthians 1:3). He stands only too ready to sustain us. As goes the hymn, “Our God is able to deliver thee”! This thought has brought consolation to my heart for many years of preaching, and I am certain I do not stand alone.

David did a solo with his soul when he declared, “*0 Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me...Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there...*” (Psalm 139:7;8). So often we read the grand promises of the Scriptures without taking them with adequate conviction, but then there are those times we rush in and see for ourselves if they are truly what we have been preaching they are! Truly, we walk by faith and not by sight, but sometimes we are drawn to God.

Can He really sustain us, and in such a way that we can be aware of it (Psalm 55:22)? Will He indeed summon all things for our own good (Romans 8:28)? Will He surmount the walls of prevailing circumstances to rescue us in impending peril? I believe that He will. I cannot explain things that go a-miss in life, but neither can I totally comprehend divine providence. I simply know that the Bible teaches it, and I shall accept it and rejoice. Angels unaware may come in the form of sickness, distress, accidents, etc., but if we truly trust God, everything will always work out for the best.

It is a bold optimism that can say and mean, “Lord, you know my weaknesses and limitations; you know Satan wants me, so I am turning this problem completely over to you.” Now mean it, and abide by it. God despises not the prayers of a painful and frustrated human being who will not give up until he gives God a

GOD

chance at it. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

I am content to let what happens to me rest in the hands of the One who supremely loves. This was the philosophy of contented Paul. If we will deliberately and trustingly place ourselves in the hands of God, whatever avails will be for our good (Romans 8:28; Psalm 11:1). Is faith a problem for you? Then read again Hebrews 11 and commit it to your troubled heart.

God’s affectionate eyes are most protective and fixed upon His people of prayer (1 Peter 3:12). He withholds no good thing from those who walk upright (Psalm 84:11). His vision encompasses the earth (Psalm 66:7). He is there like a net to catch us when we lose our footing on the tightrope of life. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved (Psalm 55:22). Blessed is the man who puts his trust in Him (Proverbs 28:25).

An elderly saint conceded that in the earlier years of her life she experienced the sweetness of her religion, but in later years sorrow struck and she had to enter into the power of her religion. I think it is here that God becomes most real. She had advanced into the arena where she could no longer go it alone and had to reach out for and lean upon her Lord, and He was there.

Tens of thousands of voices would blend as one in this personal tribute — God is! Through the centuries men have had to seek out Jehovah! Abraham Lincoln during the duress of the Civil War confessed that he often had to fall on his knees, for he had nowhere else to turn. It is during the embattling of the hottest conflicts, when we can do nothing for ourselves, that God breaks through our resistance and makes true believers of us. It is here that He heavily underscores the testimonies of His sacred Word. It is here that the Bible we have been believing all these years suddenly is implanted so deeply in our hearts that nothing can jar it loose!

In the turbulence of chaos, men learn two significant lessons — they cannot weather the storm alone, and there is a God in heaven! He still rules among the affairs of men, especially those of His dear children. He is manifestly the God of all comfort, and I love Him with my entirety. *“Blessed be the ... God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”* (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

The brave apostle to the Gentiles wrote, *“But if any man love God, the same is known of him”* (1 Corinthians 8:3). †

Some Things God Does Not Know

Randall Caselman

God is omniscient and omnipresent. That means He knows all things and is anywhere He chooses to be anytime or all the time. David said it so well in Psalm 139: *“Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; If I make my bed in the grave, You are there. If I rise on the wings of dawn or settle on the far side of the seas, Your hand will guide me. You know my footsteps before I take them; You perceive my thoughts from afar.”* If this is true, how can there be anything God does not know?

1. God does not know a sin He does not hate. *“Six things God hates...Yes, seven are an abomination in His sight”*. Indeed, God does hate sin. He has excluded sin and the sinner from His presence. Not only does God hate sin, He commands that we do also. *“Let those who love the Lord hate sin”* (Psalm 97:10). *“Hate that which is evil”* (Romans 12:9b).

Sometimes we play a game with sin. We size it, categorize it, color

it, and justify it. No! Sin is sin is sin. There are no little sins and big sins. Folks contend that some sins are worse than others. If that is so, name one sin that will not destine us to eternal separation from God, if left unforgiven. Sin is sin, and it is soul-damning. Sin is not to be sized, categorized, colored, nor excused, but avoided by each of us.

2. God does not know a sinner He does not love. God hates sin and loves the sinner! Do we? God is a friend of sinners. His Son lost His life because He was a friend of and to sinners. *“For God so loved the world (sinners) that He gave His only begotten Son...While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...”* (John 3:16 and Romans 5:8). We must stop trying to understand and explain God and His love and just accept His amazing grace. That’s Christianity. God does not know a sinner He doesn’t love.

3. God does not know a soul He does not want to save. Jesus said, *“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”*. That’s

GOD

all of us, isn't it? Paul concluded in Romans 3 that "*All have sinned... There is none righteous, no not one*" (Romans 3:10,23). Peter put it in these words: "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promises...but is patient toward us...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" Isn't that great! It is never too late for you to turn your heart and life to God. He does not know a soul He doesn't want to save. That includes you and me, regardless of our sin and its ugliness.

4. God does not know a better way to save. We catch our first glimpse of promised salvation in Genesis 3:15, and then like a thread, it winds through Noah and the flood, the promise to Abraham, the Red Sea crossing, the deliverance of the remnant through Esther, the virgin birth, the cross, and the resurrection. God worked His plan through 3,000 years of human history. If there were a better way, He would have used it.

It is unfortunate that many of us think that we know a better way. "*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.*" Spiritual blessings, including salvation, are to be found in Christ. Paul tells us, "*As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ [are clothed with Christ].*" Are you in Christ? Outside there is no salvation. Peter in Acts 4:12 tells us, "*Salvation is in none other.*" God knows of no

better way to save us than through His Son Jesus. Accept His way!

5. God knows no better time to be saved than today. "*Today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. Today if you hear His voice burden not your heart!*" (2 Corinthians 6:2 and Hebrews 4:7). The Book of Acts is filled with people who accepted Jesus and were saved: 3,000 in Acts 2, the Ethiopian treasurer in Acts 8, Cornelius in Acts 10, the jailer of Chapter 16, Lydia by the river. These people were saved the day they believed and obeyed. Read each of these conversion narratives carefully. When we do, we find the following verse descriptive of each conversion. "*And those who accepted His message were baptized*" (Acts 2:41). Will you accept the Gospel of Jesus? Don't put it off. God knows no better time than today. We have no promise of tomorrow.

These are five things that God does not know. But still He is omniscient. Still He looks into our hearts, and knows the real us. Still, we can say, with David in Psalm 139, "*Search my heart, O God, try me and know my thoughts. Lead me in your everlasting ways*". The real question of this moment is — "**Do you know God?**" †

Randal Caselman preaches for the Lord's church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

GOD

AND MAN

CREATED

GOD

Jack W. Carter

Anthropomorphism is defined as “the attribution of human form and character to God.” God did say that we were to be created in His image. Does this mean God resembles us, or that we resemble Him?

Recorded in the book of Psalms are statements from God that should prompt us to be cautious. His people of that day were picking and choosing just what they thought would surely be pleasing to Him. God said of them, “...you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you” (Psalm 50:17). Regarding this, He continued, “*These things you have done and I kept silence*” (verse 21). Then He concluded, “*You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eye*” (verse 21). God issued a serious warning concerning all of this.

How insulting would it be to suggest that the same kind of unacceptable practice is rampant today?

It is clear to all that our world is engaged in a terrible spiritual conflict. A great mass of people believe that the true God is a God of intolerance, hatred, and violence, while so many others believe that He is a God (purportedly the same God) of love, and expects His children to be just as loving, and certainly not violent. What amazing disparity!

However, diverse reasoning will not serve to alter the Almighty God. He will be who He is, regardless of what we may decide He should be.

What about Christians? Are we seeking to fashion a God to suit our values? Let’s peek at some realities.



GOD

Some Christians today are convinced that their God will accept all who believe in Him. *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. **Even the demons believe — and tremble!**”* (James 2:19)

Others are persuaded that their God expects a commitment. *“Then He said to them all, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”*** (Luke 9:23).

Some believe that theirs is a God who will punish sinners in a place of torment. *“He will also say to those on the left hand, **“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...”*** (Matthew 25:41)

Others conclude that they worship a God who is much too loving to ever do that. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but **he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”*** (John 3:16-18).

Some see God as one who expects full obedience. *“If you love Me, **keep My commandments”*** (John 14:15). Others suggest that we should see Him as a God who winks at disobedience, as long as one professes to be a believer. *“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands all men everywhere to repent...**”* (Acts 17:30). Some hold fast to the conviction that the true God wants us to honor His Word without deviation. Others feel that this God allows it to be altered to accommodate cultural changes or human evaluation of pertinence. *“If anyone **adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life...**”* (Revelation 22:18,19).

There isn't enough space or time to provide a complete list of inconsistencies. It really isn't that necessary. We all know that it is fashionable today to create God as *we want* Him to be.

We can only say, one more time, that the God we sculpt will change nothing about the God who is unchangeable. Paul wrote, *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself”* (2 Timothy 2:13). Remember the rebuke! God censured His people because they thought He was like them. How wrong they were! Remember also the stated cause, *“...you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you.”* †

Jack W. Carter is a preacher living in McAlester, Oklahoma, USA.

GOD

Jesus, Our Savior



Hans Dederscheck

The life of people can be beautiful if given circumstances that permit it. With money, many things are possible: feasts, celebrations, trips, purchases, luxury or, at least, a good living standard. But Jesus tells us that nobody can buy freedom from sin with money. The amount is not important. Only Christ can set us free from sin. His death and resurrection make salvation possible for all who will come to Him.

Sin is explained in Scripture as the transgression of God's Word. Disobedience towards the Gospel is refusing the authority of God, and this attitude results in separation from Him, and the spiritual and physical death of man.

Sin, the transgression of God's laws, becomes a wall between God and man. Sin offends (insults) the Lord in His purity and justice. It is true that God loves *man* contaminated with sin, but He hates *sin*. Jesus Christ, with His sacrifice on the cross, not only forgives the sins of believers in His truth, but He also reconciled us with the Heavenly Father.

Precisely for this reason, Jesus came in order to take our sins on Himself, obtaining in this way — for all human beings — the forgiveness of their sins (through His blood). Pardon is extended to all who accept His sacrifice, living in accordance to His teaching.

Without the Lord Jesus Christ there is no forgiveness of sins. Without Him there is no freedom from sin. Without His work there is no coming back to the Heavenly Father, and neither is there a resurrection and life eternal for man. Many people do not believe in that message because the world, with all its attractions, blinds people, closing their ears so that they may not hear and be saved.

God made heaven and earth, and He gave life to all human beings. Therefore, He has the right to define in what moral form we have to live before Him. **The Lord knows all**; He hears everything, and He sees all. Our lives before God are open and naked; nothing escapes from His eyes, which observe our lives. †

Hans Dederscheck is a preacher of the Gospel in Vienna, Austria

God Must Be First Place in My Life

Tim Childs

The Living Word of God has much to say about relationships. When we are Christians, our relationship with each member of the Godhead (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) is to take top priority. It is imperative that you and I draw near to God daily (James 4:8), as there are so many worldly influences trying to come between us and God, to lure us away from our Savior.



What is to be the nature of our relationship with God? God knows man inside out. He knows all about our DNA and every fiber and cell that make up our composition. He knows what is best for us, and because of His deep abiding love, He seeks to provide guidance and strength for us to overcome temptations and maintain our fellowship and spiritual union with Him.

Just as Jesus was “*one with the Father*”, so it is heaven’s objective that you and I be “one with God”. God wants you and me to be likeminded with Him, and so we are called upon to grow up spiritually into the image of His dear Son. We are to grow in our love and affection for God to such a great extent that we, too, are willing to meaningfully pray: “*Not my will but thine be done.*”

God has created us as social beings, and so we are able to communicate and interact with one another. Having been given this blessing, He has also taught us how to conduct ourselves when in the presence of others. The world says either, “There are no boundaries,” or “You set the boundaries, if you want them.” We, being Christians, must acknowledge the boundaries God has set and live within them, or else find a severed relationship with God as did the prodigal (Luke 15:11ff). That route leads to death. †

Tim Childs preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Baldwyn, Mississippi, USA.

Two Insects

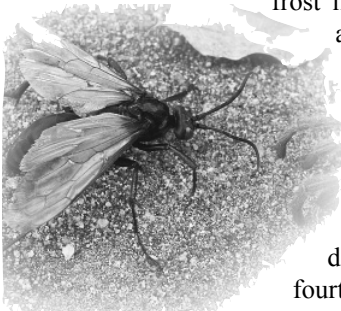
Hugo McCord

A tiny, frail, land-bound maggot, able only to wiggle, somehow transforms itself into a skillful flying machine, complete with antennae, gyroscopes, and wings (Rutherford Platt, “Those Remarkable ‘Two-Animal’ Animals,” *Readers’s Digest*, July, 1970).



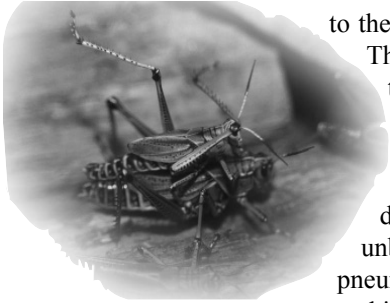
The pilot in that remarkable airship, flying faster than the eye can follow, executes a half-roll and lands upside down on the ceiling on six legs. From there, without the use of a runway, he can take off instantly. Helpless scientists can no more explain the change from larva to pupa to adult than they can explain the fly’s aeronautical ability. When they speak of inborn “blueprints” or of “instruction data from the DNA,” or of “the DNA code script”, they are saying they have gone as far as they can, and have no answer without using the name “God”.

Another example among thousands is the cicada, often called “the seventeen year locust”. Cicadas have various cycles, with the longest being seventeen years. Almost exactly on May 24 each seventeenth year, these insects climb out of a seventeen-year period, spent some 18 inches below the frost line, underground. When they emerge, they are still encased in a protective subterranean suit, resembling plastic. After shedding the transparent suit, wings, never before used but now ready for a new life, are dried in the breeze.



After mating, the female, equipped with a sharp blade, cuts under the bark of a twig, deposits her eggs, and then cuts the twigs three-fourths through. As a result, the twig dies, falls

EVIDENCES



to the ground, and carries the eggs to the soil. Then the eggs hatch, and the larvae dig into the ground.

The adults live only about three weeks, and never see their offspring.

What makes them operate so? Their defense from being eaten by birds is an unbearable noise, equivalent to that of “a pneumatic hammer or a subway train screeching to a halt in an underground station”.

Dr. James A. Simmons, Princeton University Auditory Research Laboratory, says the intense noise is 80 to 100 decibels, measured 60 feet away.

The noise damages eardrums, driving away birds and all other animal life. But some source gave the cicada a tiny muscle, which automatically collapses his eardrum just before he “sounds off”. Scientists know how the muscle operates, but they do not know how it could have “evolved” in one springtime to allow one generation of cicadas to mate and to preserve the species, nor can they explain the inborn seventeen year almanac which the cicada carries with him underground. †

Hugo McCord, now deceased, was a preacher and writer in the church of Christ.

If evolution is true, and man is only an accident, an aimless wanderer in time and space, moving futilely between points of illusionary happiness, tragedy, achievement, pain...

If man is, himself, the greatest power over his existence and yet, in the multitudinous causes and effects surrounding him, even he has almost no control...

If man’s hope is no more than to exist until by chance he ceases to exist —

If evolution is true, then there is no existence more miserable than man’s because, of all living beings, he alone is hopeless and miserable, and he alone has the awareness of self to know it.

Who would champion such a depressing belief? And who would want to convert others to it, through subverting and destroying a faith-based hope for a better life to come? — **Betty Burton Choate**

EVIDENCES

You Can't Be an Evolutionist and Be a Christian

Andy Robison

Some still try to massage the Bible into agreement with unproven and unprovable macroevolutionary theory. Such compromises as the Day-Age Theory (redefining the days of Genesis 1:1,2) and the Gap Theory (inserting billions of years into Genesis 1:1,2) have been answered adequately and repeatedly (Niessen, Morris). So-called “Progressive Creationism” is refuted by Genesis 2:1-3 and Psalm 33:6,9. Yet, some still attempt the impossible union of Christianity and Darwinian Evolution.

The course most Theistic Evolutionists take begins with an attempted relegation of Genesis 1-11 to the literary genre of mythology. It is not historical, they allege, since snakes don't talk (Genesis 3), and universal floods don't happen (Genesis 6-9). Never mind that Christians believe in other recorded miracles, like a donkey talking (Numbers 22) and a Savior's resurrection. The consequences of such an irresponsible dismissal seem to escape them. In short, to wipe aside, or even metaphorically interpret Genesis 1-11, is to dismantle all of the Christian system.

The system of Judaism, the precursor of and tutor toward Christianity (Hebrews 8; Galatians 3), focused highly on the Sabbath-rest theme. Yet, a Sabbath rest is based solely on the solar creation days of Genesis 1 (Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:4). Without the reality of Genesis 1, the entire Jewish economy collapses.

Jesus Christ (“Lord of the Sabbath” – Mark 2:28), the culmination of that Jewish system in law-keeping, prophecy and genealogy, loses all credibility if Genesis 1-11 is not historical. He taught, just as Genesis, that *“from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female”* (Mark 10:6). He further alluded to Noah's flood as if it were fact (Matthew 24:36-39). Theistic evolutionists argue He was just thereby accommodating the masses' false, ignorant viewpoint of Genesis' historicity. However, it seems contradictory to say that *“the Truth”* (Jesus — John 14:6), who came to *“bear witness to the truth”* (John 18:37), promising truth's revelation through apostles (John 16:13) and availability to all men (John 8:32), would even passively allow an erroneous belief to go unchecked. Such

EVIDENCES

blatant dishonesty would destroy His claims to Divinity.

Further, the historical nature of the Christ is tediously verified by the genealogies peppering Scripture, being fully stated in Luke 3. If Genesis 1-11 is not history, then the first twenty persons leading to the Messiah (Adam through Terah) disappear. Are we called to follow a real Christ who descended from mythological creatures? That deals a blow to the credibility of Christ and the writing of Luke (and others).

The carnage to Christian Scripture does not stop. Without special Creation, Paul is wrong in Romans 1:20 to claim evidence for God's existence from "*things that are made*". The Hebrews writer would be in error by claiming "*the worlds were framed by the word of God*" (11:3). Peter would follow suit (2 Peter 3:5).

Perhaps theistic evolutionists could learn from Peter's target in that chapter. Scoffers denied Christ's return by appealing to uniformitarian doctrine – assuming things always were in history the way they were in their generation (2 Peter 3:4). Modern man bases geology on the same error, whether in dating sedimentary build-up or a rock's radioactive decay. "*This they,*" like Peter's contemporaries, "*willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water*" (2 Peter 3:5-6). In short, catastrophism is the biblically correct scientific prism. Without the Bible's beginning, the rest of it, with its religion, is destroyed.

*Addendum: If God guided evolution from microbe to man, at what point was the soul instilled? Did any being have a half-soul? Was any creature before man subject to sin and salvation? Then, to what will man evolve? Will he have a higher soul, in need of another redeemer? †

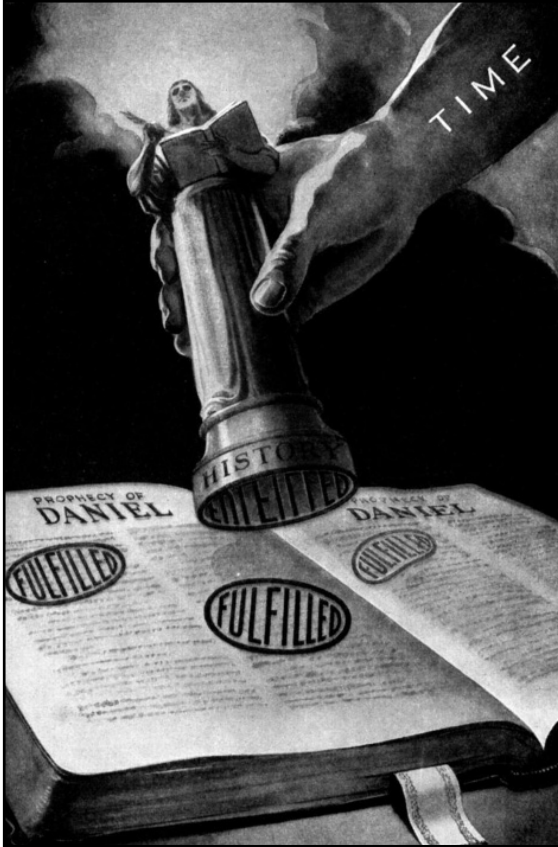
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Andrew Jackson Robison IV is a Gospel preacher who lives in Washington, West Virginia, USA. He is an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching and Editor of that school's journal, *Publishing Peace*.

EVIDENCES



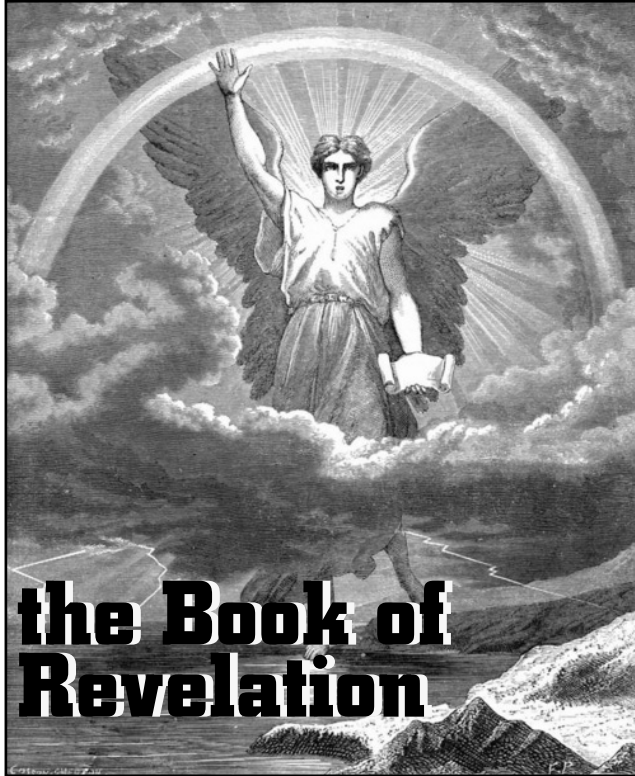
What Are the Chances?

House to House, Heart to Heart

There are more than three hundred prophecies from the Old Testament fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The prophecies were made centuries before He was born and contain startling details (e.g., the name of the city of His birth, how He would die). In the book *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner writes of the probability that only eight of these prophecies were ful-

filled accidentally in the life of Jesus. The odds here are 1 in 10 to the 17th power, or 100,000,000,000,000,000 to 1. Stoner illustrates this impossible number by suggesting that if one covers the state of Texas with that many silver dollars, the entire state would be covered in coins two feet deep. If you mark one of the coins, mix the coins thoroughly, and then blindfold a man and tell him to pick up the marked coin on the first try, that would be the same probability of just eight of the messianic prophecies coming true by coincidence. “*Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.*” †

Interpreting



Kerry Holton

The book of Revelation belongs to a class of writings called apocalyptic literature. This style of writing was used during persecution and utilized symbols which were revealing to the initiated, but baffling to the outsider. The question is: What do the symbols represent? How should they be interpreted? Four basic answers have been given to this question.

The past (Preterist) view of Revelation is that it was a tract written for the first century and has no primary application to us. Extreme preterists see

THE WORD OF GOD

the whole book as being fulfilled within two or three centuries of its production. Moderate preterists relate the bulk of the book to the struggle between the early church and the Roman Empire, while seeing chapters 20-22 as looking to the end of the Christian era. This is the most sensible way to interpret the book.

The future (Futurist) view holds that Revelation is a chart of the end of time. Advocates of this view believe that the present “church age” is covered in chapters 1-3, while chapters 4-19 will be fulfilled during a seven-year period of Rapture and Tribulation. They pride themselves on giving the book a literal interpretation. This view renders most of Revelation meaningless to its original readers since it completely separates the book from the first century church to whom it was addressed.

The outline of history (Continuous-Historical) view sees Revelation as a summary of church history from the first century to the end of the world. Such interpreters find the popes, Mohammed, Hitler, and other notable figures in it pages. This approach, like the futurist, makes Revelation practically meaningless to the original readers. Too, it always places the generation of the interpreter in the last age prior to the Lord’s return.

The Symbolic view sees great principles of conflict between good and evil in the book, with Christ’s cause enjoying the ultimate victory. This theory does not apply the message of the book to any specific historical age, but rather sees the symbols as simply a series of visionary descriptions of God’s triumph over evil.

Likely, the key to understanding this difficult book is to be found in combining elements of several theories of interpretation, as Frank Pack concluded in his *Living Word* commentary on Revelation.

The preterist approach has value. Surely, the primary message of the book was for the seven churches of Asia who originally received it from John the Apostle (Revelation 1:4). On the other hand, chapters 20-22 seem to describe events yet to occur, the final judgment and the church in heaven. In addition, there are eternal truths in Revelation which are relevant in various ages of the church’s struggle with evil. Every age needs to hear that God reigns and that His cause will triumph.

Because Revelation is full of colorful symbols, some televangelists and modern-day “prophets” are having a heyday with it! We should not swallow many, if any, of their conclusions. But, neither should we ignore Revelation and give up on understanding this inspiring book! †

Kerry Holton taught Bible for several years at York College, but is now working for the Lord in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

The Place of The Old Testament

Jimmy Jividen

I received a letter from a woman who said she had heard the church of Christ did not believe the Old Testament. “It this true?” she wanted to know. My response will be what the New Testament itself says about the Old Testament.

It is evident that the Old Testament was the Bible of the early church. It was the Scriptures that Timothy knew from his youth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Scriptures Jesus quoted in His personal ministry were from the Old Testament. The New Testament is full of Old Testament quotations. It was about the Old Testament that Peter said *“men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”* (1 Peter 1:21).

The Old Testament Scriptures are inspired by God, profitable for study, and true in every way. The New Testament says they are:

- Written for our instruction (Romans 15:4)
- To be used as examples for Christians (1 Corinthians 10:11)
- That which leads one to Christ (Galatians 3:24)
- Fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 5:17,18)

Children’s Bible classes emphasize Old Testament characters. One must know the Old Testament in order to understand the language of the New Testament authors who quote from it.

The Old Testament, however, should not be considered the standard for the worship and work of the church, any more than the epistles of Paul should be regarded as a standard for the work and worship of Israel in the wilderness. Christians do not build altars, offer animal sacrifices, or have a priesthood like Israel did in the Old Testament. The Old Testament should be understood within the context of God’s dealing with His people before the coming of Jesus Christ. The attempt to bring the rituals and laws of that age into the church are not the product of Old Testament study. It comes rather from a lack of study of both Testaments. †

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher in Abilene, Texas, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

Safeguards in Scripture

Betty Burton Choate

How wise God is, and how beautifully His wisdom is demonstrated in the Bible! You ask, “How so?” Let me explore with you some of the evidences of His wisdom:

✪ **First, the method He chose to preserve His revelations, directives, warnings, and promises has proven to be the best possible way.** What is that method? It is a written document, confirmed initially by miraculous signs performed in the presence of witnesses.

Why is the “written word” preferable to ongoing verbal messages? Because the Bible is a completed revelation, closing with the warning that nothing is to be added to it or taken away. No additional revelations would be given by God; His Word is complete: *“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Today, there are pseudo religious leaders who claim that God has spoken directly to them, giving them a new message. If, through the centuries, God’s ongoing method of communication with humanity had been direct and individual revelation, we would be at the mercy of everyone making claims of inspiration (Ephesians 4:11-15). With mass communication being what it is today, it would be virtually impossible for us to distinguish a true “prophet” from a false one. Jesus warned in Matthew 24:24 that false teachers would arise in His name. Even in the Old Testament, God warned, *“The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so...”* (Jeremiah 5:31).

By having the confirmed written message, the Bible, we are protected from falling prey to this kind of deceit. We know not only the details but also the completeness of the Lord’s will for humanity today.

✪ **Second, we see God’s wisdom in the unique arrangement of the subject matter.** Sometimes the statement is made, “I wish God had just written out His rules as 1,2,3,4...”

But if He had done that, it would be a very simple thing for the single recording of a truth to be lost or mistranslated, and that vital part of the

THE WORD OF GOD

message would be ruined forever. Instead, God devised a two-purpose plan. By stating one truth in numerous passages, He guaranteed its preservation. No one locates all of the passages for mistranslation; invariably, even in a poor translation, some passages are overlooked. This may result in a seeming “contradiction”, but it should also raise red flags in the mind of the student, causing him to compare with other versions and, thereby, to identify the error in the faulty translation.

The second benefit from God’s wisdom in imbedding nuggets of the same truth in numerous passages is that the searching student will be continually adding to his knowledge on that particular subject. Having realized that there is always more to be learned, he will be eager to “*search the Scriptures daily...*” (Acts 17:11).

✪ **Third, God safeguards particular truths by inserting “checks” against error.** In my personal study through the years, I’ve noticed that the favorite “texts” selected to teach religious error usually have statements (either in the verse before or just after) as a safeguard against the false teaching. For instance:

✚ **“Saved by grace only...”** Ephesians 2:8 says “... *by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works...*” This passage has been used to teach that we can do nothing, in and of ourselves, to be saved.

But verse 10 says we were created anew **for a purpose:** “... *for good works...*” Therefore, our own good works, in Christ, are very definitely a part of the plan for our salvation.

✚ **“We are saved by faith...”** Galatians 3:26 explains beautifully “...*you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*” And so this has become a “proof text” to teach that we are saved by “faith only”.

But verse 27 checks this erroneous conclusion by stating clearly, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*”

✚ **Even in the first century, there were those who tried to teach that salvation was by “faith only”,** as explained in James 2:14-26. This is the only passage in the New Testament that speaks of “faith only” and the text says, “*You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not** by faith only*” (James 2:24).

✚ **1 John 5:1 is also used to teach that if we believe in Jesus, we are “born of God” — saved:** “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...*”

THE WORD OF GOD

But verse 3 goes on to explain that if truly we love God and are born of Him, we keep His commandments. *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and **keep His commandments.**”*

✦ **There are those who say that we are forbidden to judge anyone.** They base their conclusion — and their shield from any judgment — on Matthew 7:1: *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”*

However, this is not actually a condemnation of *judgment* but of *hypocrisy!* Verses 4 and 5 clarify: *“...how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and **then** you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”* Righteous judgment, based on Scripture, is the only hope for an erring brother, or for any sinner. But no hypocrite is in position to help anyone, so this passage is simply saying that we must have our own lives straight with God before we can presume to try to help the erring.

✦ **Some teach that all babies are sinners at birth,** basing this doctrine on an erroneous understanding of Psalm 51:5: *“I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”* A careless reading of the verse that mentions both sin and birth has resulted in this false belief. Did David say, “I was born *with* sin”? Did he say, “I was a sinner at conception”? No, he said that *his mother* [parents] was a sinner, and that he was born *into a world* of iniquity. Of course, these are true statements. All who have reached the age of accountability are sinners, and the world is a sinful place, but this verse is not saying that a baby is born with the guilt of his parents’ sins or of the world’s sins (Ezekiel 18:19,20).

✦ **Most denominational people believe that Christ will return to the earth and reign for 1,000 years.** They base this teaching on their interpretation of Revelation 20:2, which says that an angel *“...laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”* But, reading further in the passage, we learn that it is during that time that *“the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus ... lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”* The scene is a heavenly one, not on the earth, and is taking place now, as Christ reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 1:5,6).

Let us handle God’s Word carefully, praying to understand Truth. †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, missionary to Asia and founder and publisher of *The Voice of Truth International*. Betty lives in Winona, MS, USA,

THE WORD OF GOD

Eye of a Needle

John Allan

In Luke 18:25 Jesus said *“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”* Because the idea of a camel fitting through the eye of a literal needle is difficult to imagine, many people interpret the expression figuratively. I firmly believe that a figurative interpretation is well-intentioned but incorrect. Please consider the following points:

First, a fundamental rule of interpretation is that Scripture is to be taken literally unless something demands it be taken figuratively. A close look at the verse and the immediate context favors a literal interpretation; it certainly does not demand a figurative one.

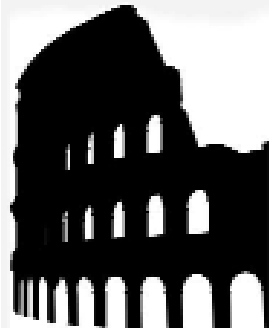
Second, we should remember the point Jesus is attempting to make by using this word picture. The rich young ruler (as good as he was) had just turned down the opportunity to follow Jesus Christ because he was unwilling to give up his riches. Jesus used this word picture to illustrate the vast difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom of God. A literal interpretation is certainly suitable for this illustration.

Next, the reaction of those who heard Jesus’ illustration is very important. *“And those who heard it said, ‘Who then can be saved?’”* The audience understood Jesus’ words to represent a physical impossibility. This harmonizes perfectly with Jesus’ answer to the question in Luke 18:27. *“But He said, ‘The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.’”*

Which interpretation most effectively illustrates the impossibility of a rich man being saved without God: 1) A figurative interpretation describing something that is difficult, but achievable? or 2) A literal interpretation describing something physically impossible for man (or beast) to achieve? A literal interpretation is undoubtedly more effective.

If a literal interpretation denied the possibility of a rich man being saved, then a figurative interpretation would be necessary. However, Jesus did not teach that a rich man cannot be saved; He taught that a rich man cannot be saved without God. I know of no Bible believer who would argue with Jesus on that point.

No man can squeeze a camel through the eye of a needle. Furthermore, no man (rich or not) can be saved without God. †



Romans 9:30-10:13

Jerry Bates

1. Why did the Gentiles attain righteousness? (vs. 30-32)
2. Why did the Jews not attain righteousness? (vs. 30-32)
3. Who or what was the stumbling stone that the Jews stumbled over? (vs. 32-33)
4. What prophet does Paul quote to prove this point? (v. 33)
5. Why was Israel's zeal for God worth nothing? (v. 2)
6. Whose standard of righteousness was the Jews following? (v. 3)
7. What does the fact that Israel was lost despite her zeal tell us about the belief that as long as one is sincere he will be saved?
8. "For _____ is the end of the law for _____ to everyone who believes. (v. 4)
9. How is the above statement true?
10. How could one theoretically achieve righteousness by the law? (v. 5)
11. How far away was God's Word from the people? (v. 8)
12. What response does God demand from His people? (v. 9)
13. What do we believe and confess? (v. 9)
14. Why does this verse not teach a faith only doctrine of salvation? (v. 10)
15. Is there a difference in the way a Jew and Gentile can be saved? (v. 12)
16. What does it mean to "call upon the name of the Lord"? (v. 13)

(see the back cover for answer)

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

10:1 Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him for the dead, you will be saved. 10 for with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scriptures says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Note: In this section Paul is contrasting why the Gentiles obtained righteousness while the Jews did not. The reason is faith. Salvation is available to everyone who is willing to believe in Jesus and publicly confess that faith. Salvation cannot be obtained on the basis of obedience to a set of laws. In general, the Jews were trying to be saved by keeping the Law of Moses. In spite of their great zeal, they were going to be lost because they did not accept Christ. This is a great lesson for us today. Many are likewise trying to be saved by keeping various beliefs with justification based on their own goodness.

Who Is Covered by the Grace of God?

J.C. Choate

The word “grace” means unmerited favor, goodness extended by God that men have not earned and do not deserve. In other words, the Lord saves us when we could not save ourselves.

The apostle Paul wrote, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *“For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8,9). These words are saying that man cannot save himself; neither can he do enough good works to earn or pay for his salvation. If he could, he could then boast of having saved himself, disclaiming the need for God. Instead, Paul declared that salvation is the gift of God. It is something that only God has the power to give. It is by His grace that we are saved!

Yet, though man is saved by grace, he is not saved by grace *alone!* If salvation were by grace alone then all people would be saved, for God loves all souls, and Christ died for all. However, Paul wrote, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5).

By comparing the statements in Ephesians and Titus, we can see that God’s Word is saying that one cannot be saved by his own good works, or even by doing the works of the Law of Moses, because salvation comes by the grace of God. Yet, salvation is conditional! The passage in Titus speaks of salvation being “by the washing of regeneration”, which has reference to our spiritual washing in baptism; and “renewing of the Holy Ghost”, which has reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit — renewed spiritual life — promised as the result of baptism, as stated in Acts 2:38. After Peter and the apostles had preached to a large group of people in Jerusalem, convincing them that Jesus was the Son of God, the listeners were cut to the heart and cried out, asking what they should do. *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

These passages mean that salvation is based on a person’s willingness to obey the Lord’s teaching. When one does all he can to comply with what is written in the Scriptures, God takes it from there and saves him through the extension of His grace and mercy to the penitent and obedient believer.

SALVATION

So what is the picture? That salvation comes by the outpouring of the grace of God to the *penitent, obedient believer*.

But what about the person who is not willing to obey God? Does grace cover him and save him in his sins? No. Even God is bound by what He has written, and cannot go contrary to His Word. That Word says that God's part in salvation is grace, but man's part is faith, faith that moves him to obedience. Without this combination working together, there can be no extension of grace.

We see by these Scriptures that God's grace does not and cannot cover everyone. It was promised only to those who believe and love Him enough to obey Him. Thus He saves them and adds them to His family, the church of His Son, Jesus Christ.

When a person has been saved from his past sins, he must remain a faithful part of the Lord's family for the remainder of his life if he is to be saved eternally. Never is salvation promised regardless of one's behavior and manner of life; rather, as is stated in Revelation 2:10, one must be faithful unto death if he is to receive a crown of life.

This does not mean that one's faithfulness has saved him, or that by his faithfulness he has done enough good works to merit salvation. Rather, it simply means that by his faithfulness he continually qualified himself to receive the grace being poured from the hands of his Father.

There are those (and some, even in the Lord's church who have become ignorant of what the Scriptures teach concerning faith and grace) who think that all sincere religious people — including those who are not a part of the church or body of Christ — will be saved by the grace of God. Their logic is that since even Christians are not perfect and must depend on God's grace to be saved, then those of other religions who are imperfect in other doctrines and practices can also be saved by God's grace.

Followers of such logic overlook one all-important thing: those people have not complied with God's will to be saved initially, to be born again through repentance and baptism, to be a part of the church that is God's one and only family. Just as is the case with our human families, those who are not our children do not have the privileges of those born into our family, so also in the spiritual world, those who have not been born into God's family are not under God's grace as His children. Being inside or outside of the family makes all the difference!

Are you a Christian, a member of Christ's church? If not, we plead with you to obey God so that His grace can save you. †

J.C. Choate was the founding editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

SALVATION



A Call for Help

David A. Sargent

David Urey was desperate. His wife lay critically injured from an automobile accident in West Virginia. Doctors said she needed immediate attention from a neurosurgeon if she were to survive. Urey tried to charter a helicopter to fly her to Washington, D.C., where the nearest adequate medical care was available. He was unsuccessful.

Finally he declared, "I'm going to call the White House!" It was a bold and desperate act, but somehow Urey got through. As a result, President Nixon's private helicopter was immediately dispatched to Urey's aid. *

Due to our sin, WE are in desperate need of salvation, "*for the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). Our own attempts to save ourselves are futile. Unless we receive outside help, we are doomed.

God invites us to "call" to Him for salvation. Although He is Lord of heaven and earth, it is not an imposition for us to call upon Him. We need not feel hesitant or unworthy to approach Him, for He WANTS to save us! He

SALVATION

“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Peter was preaching to a large audience that had assembled in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Pentecost (see Acts 2). He told them of the man called Jesus who had been crucified in that very city just fifty days earlier. He pointed out the ones who were responsible for His crucifixion: *“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, YOU have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death”* (Acts 2:23).

YOU and I share the blame for placing Jesus on the cross, for He died for the sins of the whole world: *“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”* (1 John 2:2).

But Peter had GOOD NEWS for his audience – and for US! He said that the things that had happened that day were in fulfillment of a prophecy made by the prophet Joel many years before (see Acts 2:16-21). The conclusion of the prophecy contains these hopeful words: *“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21; from Joel 2:32).

How do WE *“call on the name of the Lord”*? How can WE be saved?

In response to the question, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:36) asked by those who realized that the Man that they had crucified, *“God had made both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:37), Peter responded:

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will CALL” (Acts 2:38-39).

God was already “calling” them – and now US – through the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus (see 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

And we can “call upon Him” for salvation in the same way they did on that Day of Pentecost by: placing our **faith** and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turning from our sins in **repentance** (Acts 17:30-31), **confessing His name** before men (see Romans 10:9-10), and being **baptized** (immersed) in His name for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

God is waiting for your call. In fact, He’s already answered it through the GIFT of His Son!

Won’t YOU call upon Him for salvation through your trusting obedience? ☩

David A. Sargent serves as minister of the Church of Christ at Creekwood, in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

SALVATION

Time, Don't Run Out On Me!

Michael L. King

There is a sad and somewhat obscure statement tucked away in one of the lesser read prophets, the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. We know that Jesus and Paul read Jeremiah and quoted from it often in their teachings and writings. It was a lamentation over the condition of the people of his day and his city. He wrote, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved*" (Jeremiah 8:20).

The ending of summer for much of the world indicates the cessation of something that we desire not to end. For children who are back in school, their freedom to roam ends, and now they face a mountain of homework. Workers bemoan the vacation that was desired but never materialized. Those many chores that were put off until summer may still remain undone, and additional piling up has occurred. The context of Jeremiah's usage pertains to a farmer whose summer is over, with his harvest remaining in the field, leaving no sustenance for the winter.

The sentiments of which Jeremiah spoke are echoed in a modern song sung by Carole King and Anne Murray with the title: "*Time, Don't Run Out On Me!*" The song conveyed the sentiments of trying to conserve time for the purpose of patching a relationship that had gone bad. The concern for time and urgency can be heard in the lyrics of this song, as well as in the panicky words of Jeremiah's writings.

The reality of what is to follow the ending of summer is the matter of concern. Jeremiah feared that his job had not been completed and his people were not ready for summer's end, for they were "*not saved*"! How often do you hear someone speaking of the outcome of an athletic competition when a loss has occurred, and say, "We did not get beaten, we just ran out of time on the clock!" The team may have come so close, needing just one more play, shot, kick, or swing that could have impacted the outcome.

When dealing with the salvation of the soul, "almost" is not good enough

SALVATION

for those who are only close or have given mental assent without obedience, for they are still lost. After being taught the Gospel, Agrippa said to Paul, “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian*” (Acts 28:28). Paul let him know that “*almost*” was not adequate, but “*I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains*” (verse 29).

Harvest is everything. It will bring either bounty and sustenance or fear and starvation! Spiritually speaking, we do not have to end the summer with fear and feelings of despair. Human life experiences will come to naught, and efforts rendered vain, unless there is a capitalizing on those lifetime contributions. Judah was a nation that had fallen morally, had turned from God religiously, and had reached the point of continuous national apostasy. Its conduct and character were corrupt, and they refused to repent (Jeremiah 8:4-7). Judah refused to respect God’s law (8:8-12). It totally ignored and refused God’s warnings through Jeremiah, and God warned, “*I will surely snatch them away*” (8:13).

The wise men who were leading the souls of Judah had been put to shame (8:9). Instead of harvesting the salvation of their souls, they wrought shame, fear, a broken spirit, and terror as the fruits of their folly. They refused God’s warning about time running out (8:13-17). There were fortified cities for their refuge when the impending doom would come, which they refused and were made to cry, “*Why are we sitting still?*” (verse 14a). When their summer of “heyday” was over, they were consumed by Babylon’s powerful forces by sword, disease, famine, fire, and captivity (14:1; 15:2-4; 21:9; 24:10; 38:23). Judah simply refused to accept accountability for its untoward behavior. It was not that they had not been warned, but they basked in the summer’s comfort, ignoring the impending arrival of the onslaught of winter. We can see why Jeremiah was referred to as the “weeping prophet”. He grieved, saying, “*For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me*” (Jeremiah 8:21). There was adequate “balm in Gilead” and a physician on the premises, but the cure was resisted (8:22).

When our summer is ended, will there be freedom or flames, salvation or slaughter? Let us make sure that we do not permit the summer of our lives to come to an end without the harvesting of our souls, in addition to those with whom we have association. We must redeem the time, or it will run out on us! (Colossians 4:5). †

Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

SALVATION

BAPTISM, A FIGURE?

Owen D. Olbricht

The King James Version translates 1 Peter 3:21, “*The like figure whereunto baptism now saves us*”. Is baptism only a figure? The New King James Version correctly transliterates “figure” as “antitype”, which is the Greek word “antitupos”. “*There is an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism.*” Danker 2000 *Greek Lexicon*, p. 90, in defining antitupos, commented, “the salvation of Noah and family via water (udatos) which supported the ark, is the tupos [type] for the salutary function of the water of baptism.”

Comparison

In verse twenty-one, Peter was presenting Noah’s family being brought to safety “by” or “through” (Greek dia, agent of means) water in the ark as a type of our salvation by the water of baptism. If God had used fire to purge the earth from that evil generation, Noah’s family would have been cremated instead of saved in the ark. They needed water in order to be saved in the ark.

In like manner, our salvation is dependent on water, the water of baptism, which can benefit us because it is backed by Jesus’ blood shed on the cross, His burial, and resurrection (Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9,10; Ephesians 5:25,26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

Antitype

What is an “antitype”? It is a reality that has a corresponding representation as a type. Conversely speaking, a “type” is a figure of an “antitype”. Thomas desired to see the “print”, tupos, of the nails that had been driven into Jesus’ hands and feet (John 20:25). The print, the “type”, was left by the reality, the nails, the “antitype”. Moses was a type of Christ (Romans 5:14). The brass snake Moses lifted up in the wilderness for Israel to look at and be healed was a type of Jesus being lifted on the cross (John 3:15). Animal sacrifices were a shadow of Jesus’ true sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-4). In like manner, deliverance in the ark through water is a type that represents salvation through baptism, the antitype.

SALVATION

Normally, a reality exists before its shadow, like a tree exists before its shadow, but Old Testament types existed before the realities of the New Testament. Baptism is not a “figure”, a type of Noah’s family being brought to safety in the ark through water. Instead, Noah’s family being brought to safety in the ark through water is a type of baptism, the antitype that now saves us.

Various Comments

Spiros Zodhiates in the *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, p. 1652, correctly wrote, “An antitype is something represented by an earlier type or symbol”. However, immediately following this he contradicts his definition of an antitype by writing, “Thus baptism is called an antitype because it is a symbol of salvation”. If he had correctly applied his definition, he would have written, “Baptism, the antitype is represented by an earlier type or symbol — the water that brought Noah’s family to safety in the ark.” In further comments, Zodhiates continues his misrepresentation by calling baptism a symbol instead of an antitype.

Better scholars make the following comments:

“Baptism, which corresponds to this: translates what is literally ‘which baptism, as an antitype’. An ‘antitype’ is a thing or event which is considered to be referred to by a previous thing or event, which is known as a ‘type’. The water of the Flood was a ‘type’ of baptism, so various ways can be used to translate this. TEV ‘... which was a symbol pointing to baptism’; others: ‘That water represented the water of baptism’; ‘This water symbolized baptism’”.

“now saves you; this *now* answers to the formerly of verse 20. A translation should represent the meaning faithfully and say quite clearly, ‘Baptism now saves you.’ Of course salvation is always God’s action, but here baptism, as defined below, is what brings salvation.” Robert G. Bratcher, *A Translation’s Guide to the Letters From James, Peter, and Jude* (New York: United Bible Society, 1984), p. 109.

“Peter now moves from the past to the present — from the events which occurred during the days of Noah to their meaning and relevance to the present situation of the recipients of the letter. Accordingly, he takes a portion of the past events which he has just mentioned and interprets it as a symbol pointing to (literally ‘antitype’) a

SALVATION

part of the Christian experience. In doing this, he is simply following a practice prevalent among New Testament writers (and other biblical interpreters of that time) of taking things, events, and people in the Old Testament and interpreting them as types or symbols corresponding to things, events, and people in the present. The ‘type’ foreshadows the ‘antitype’, that is it, is an imperfect symbol of a reality which is now revealed fully in the Christian faith. Examples of this exegetical practice abound in the New Testament, for example, Adam-Christ (Romans 5:12 and following), Elijah-John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14; 17:12), Jonah-Christ (Luke 11:29-32), Israel in the wilderness-Christian sacraments (1 Cor. 10:1-11)”. Daniel C. Archea and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the first Letter From Peter* (New York: United Bible Society, 1980), p. 119, 120.

Conclusion

Noah’s family, being brought to safety in the ark by water, is used by Peter as an Old Testament type which represents baptism that now saves us. Baptism is not the type but the antitype. The *water of baptism* is **the reality**, of which the *water of the flood* was **a type**.

Salvation has been made possible by the blood Jesus shed on the cross and through His resurrection to a new life. “*For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Romans 5:10).

Water does not have the power to save, for only Jesus’ blood can do that, but His blood does not wash away our sins until we are baptized as penitent believers (Acts 22:16). In this sense, “baptism now saves us”. Jesus’ blood is the means of salvation, and water is the agent or instrument required in order to receive this salvation. This can be compared with the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5:10-14) and a blind man that Jesus healed (John 9:6,7). *Water* could not heal, for *God alone* can do that, but God did not act until these men believed in Him and washed in the water. So also, we are saved when we seek salvation through the blood of Jesus, by being buried and raised with Him in the water of baptism.

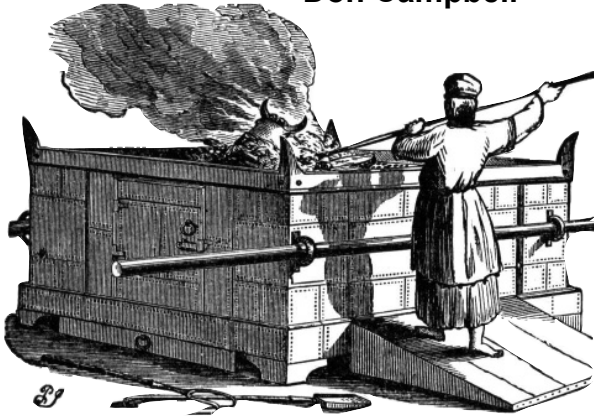
“*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:16). †

Owen Olbricht is a Gospel preacher residing in Sherwood, AR, USA.

SALVATION

The Sacrifices of God

Don Campbell



David wasn't thinking much about sin, righteousness, and judgment to come when he fixed his eyes on another man's wife. He allowed the situation to blot out his good judgment, his sense of responsibility, his loyalty to his faithful soldier, his obligation to the nation, and

his relationship to God.

He soon found that, while it is an easy thing to stifle the conscience in the heat of the night, it is an impossible task in the still of the night. *"I am weary with my groaning,"* David says, *"All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief; It grows old because of my enemies"* (Psalm 6:6). In light of God's statement that, except for this sin with Bathsheba, David did not turn aside from anything God commanded him (1 Kings 15:5), it is hard to image any other sin which David could have committed which would have produced such pangs of guilt.

Many would say today, "He surely had suffered enough." But David soon found himself confronted with the finger of justice as the prophet Nathan read the divine verdict. While mercy was granted, assuring David of salvation, he would live and die with the consequences of his sin: the child would die; the sword would not depart from his house; his own son Absalom, would take David's concubines to bed in broad daylight before all Israel (2 Samuel 12:11-14). One wonders how many times the words, *"You are the man,"* woke David from fitful sleep or drowned out all the sounds of the world doing business as usual. For David, it could never be business as usual again. He had come face to face with the evil within him, but he had also come face to face with a God who does not give up quickly on His saints. He had come face to face with the grace of God.

SALVATION

Through all of this, David had learned something which the world —and far too often — the church, has not learned: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart”* (Psalm 51:17). On one side, there are those who believe that forgiveness is granted by God and should be granted by man the instant one utters, “Oops! I got caught,” or, “We never really meant to hurt anyone,” or, “I apologize, but it wasn’t really my fault.” Some rush to grant forgiveness even before any of these weak admissions are uttered, before there is any evidence of repentance. On the other side are those who believe that mercy must be earned in some way. Restitution is a favorite offering. Asceticism is a popular sacrifice.

The devil will take either side of the argument. He will argue that God is such a loving God that He would not dream of crushing the sinful, defiant spirit in order to bring it to repentance. A simple, trite, “Excuse me, I goofed” is sufficient. Or, he will take the other end of the proposition and argue that contrition and forgiveness are too easy. Somebody must pay. The sin must be fixed.

The first attitude insults God’s holiness. The second insults His grace. If Satan can sell us on the first, we end up with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace,” which is “preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession” (*The Cost of Discipleship*, p.47). If the deceiver can sell us on the second, we fall from the true grace of God, for he who seeks to be justified by merit falls from grace, as Paul writes in Romans 4:4-8:

“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’”

Verses 7 and 8 are a quotation from Psalm 32, another of the Psalms connected with David’s sin with Bathsheba. †

Don Campbell works with the Hardin County Church of Christ, Hardin County, Illinois, USA.

“And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

SALVATION



Is It Nothing To You?

Maxie B. Boren

In the shambles and desolation of ravished Jerusalem, Jeremiah, the great prophet, weeps from the depths of his heart. He had tried so hard to prevent the calamity he stretching out before him. He had faithfully proclaimed God's Word to the people. He had called to them to turn from their iniquities — he had pleaded with them to come back to God. But they heeded not his message.

With great lamentation, Jeremiah imploringly asks, *“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”* (Lamentations 1:12). This is the same as inquiring, “Doesn't anyone care?” How tragic and pathetic! There, in the midst of the devastation and ruins of the great city, Jeremiah alone seems broken hearted.

Really, there are two tragedies in the scene. The latter, the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people, was the result of the former — the failure of the people to care and to heed God's Word, while there was still time to avert the impending doom!

I see a parallel in this and what is happening today. Faithful Gospel preachers plead with and beg people to turn from the things of this world to zeal for the Lord's cause! And to such a great extent, the admonitions and warnings fall on deaf ears! In this, there is reason for weeping, because of what it is going to lead to! And with piercing and pungent tones the question resounds in my heart — “Doesn't anyone care? Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”

Just as surely as I write this, and you read it, there is coming a day of retribution! *“God hath appointed a day in which he will judge this world in righteousness...”* (Acts 17:31). *“Each one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:12).

The question is repeated, “Is it nothing to you?” I plead with each one, let your response be, “Yes, I care! The Lord will be first with me now so that there will be no regrets later on!” †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher living in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

***“...you will die in your sins;
for if you do not believe that I am He,
you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).***

We Believe

Bobby Key

Members of the churches of Christ do not wish to offend anyone, nor to suggest that we have some hidden truth, known only among ourselves. We believe that we do teach and practice truths which other churches do not. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and we believe it from one cover to the other. Our faith is in the Lord and in His truth, contained in the Scriptures. *“Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). Christ is the solid voice of authority; therefore, we do not need to wait for a decision from a council, conference, convention, president, or Pope.

The New Testament teaches that there is but one way for one to become a Christian, and that is by: (1) Faith in God, Christ, and the Bible. (2) Repentance from all sin. (3) Confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God, and (4) Baptism by burial in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This baptism must be for the remission of

sins. When one has obeyed from the heart these simple commandments, Christ’s blood washes away past sins, and the obedient believer is added by God to His church (Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:7; Acts 2:47).

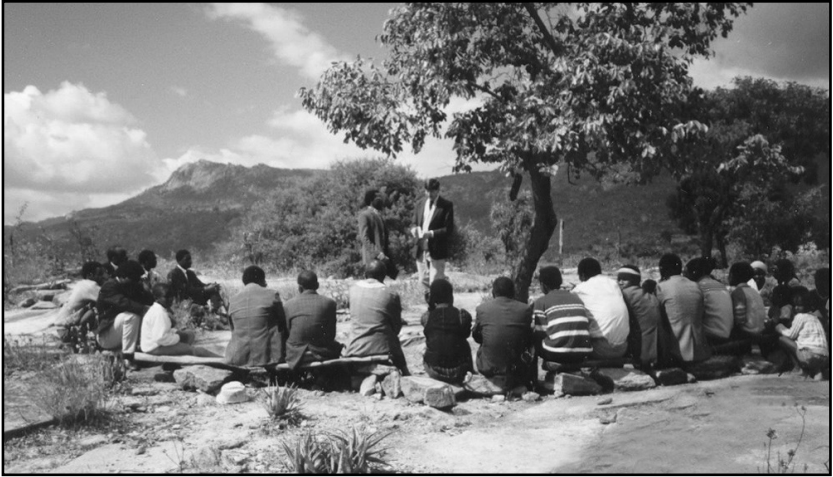
The worship of the Lord’s church is patterned after the New Testament (John 4:24); Singing (Colossians 3:16); Praying (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29); Study of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15); and Contributing, as prospered, for the work of the church (1 Corinthians 16:2). In order to do these things, the church assembles together on the first day of each week, the Lord’s Day (1 Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:10).

Our desire is not to be similar to, but identical with, the church described in the New Testament. We invite you to worship with us anytime. †

Bobby Key is retired from full-time preaching, having served for many years with the church in Miami, Oklahoma, USA.

THE CHURCH

You Are the



Temple of God

Kevin L. Moore

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NKJV).

Before we consider the implications of this passage, we should realize that the original message has the potential of being lost in translation. The problem is not due to any ambi-

guity in the text but to the limitations of the English language. These words were first penned in Greek, where the difficulty does not occur. But when the passage is rendered in English, the meaning can be obscured.

The second person pronoun “you” in English can either be singular or plural, depending on whether an individual or multiple persons are being addressed. If I want to speak to an entire group (“you, class”) or to just one person (“you, Tom”), there is only one pronoun from which to

THE CHURCH

choose. However, those of us from the southern United States have rectified the problem by regarding “you” as the singular form and “you all” or “y’all” as the plural (note: in the King James Version “ye” = the plural “you all”).

In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul uses the second person *plural* form of address, and if we read it in the language of the southern United States, the point is much clearer: “*Do y’all not know that y’all are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in [or ‘among?’] y’all?*” Paul is not speaking here about the individual Christian, but rather the collectivity of Christians, the body of Christ, the church. It is God’s church (the community of the saved) that serves as His spiritual temple and the dwelling place of His Spirit.

Next the apostle writes: “*If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him*” (verse 17a). Again, the description here is not that of the individual Christian (though cf. 6:18-20). Neither should we consider the church building (a physical structure of brick and mortar) as some kind of hallowed sanctuary, despite what we may have inferred as children from the song, “Tip toe, tip toe in God’s house”.

When as faithful Christians we assemble together, work together, and collectively represent God’s presence in our community, we are God’s spiri-

tual temple. Accordingly, may none of us ever be guilty of defiling this “temple” by such things as ungodly behavior (5:1,2; 6:1-11), spiritual apathy (11:30,31), false teaching (15:12,34), corrupt worship (11:17-22; 14:2,4), or unnecessary division (1:10,11; 3:3). Our primary aim should be that of building up the temple of God.

From the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, we are reminded of how very important the church is, the great privilege of being a part of it, and the solemn responsibility we all have to devote ourselves to godly living, active involvement, and faithful service. “*For the temple of God is holy, which temple y’all are*” (verse 17b).✠

Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible and missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee USA, but is working again in New Zealand for two years.

**My church...Matthew 16:18
Church of the Living God...**

1 Timothy 3:15

Churches of Christ... Romans 16:16

The church... Acts 2:47

Church of God... 1 Corinthians 1:2

Body of Christ... Ephesians 4:12

Bride of Christ... Ephesians ...

5:21-32; Revelation 22:17

Temple of God... 1 Corinthians 3:16

Kingdom of His dear Son...

Colossians 1:13

House of God... 1 Timothy 3:15

Instrumental Music, Biblical or Not?

Charles Box

God is the object of our worship and it is He who determines how we are to worship. Unless we follow His commands, our worship is vain. John wrote, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). The Word of God must always be our guide.

God gives specific and generic commands. A specific command tells you what to do and how to do it; you have no choice in the matter. A generic command tells you *what* to do but does not limit you as to *how*. God gave Noah “specific commands” to obey in building the ark (Genesis 6:1-14.) The only way Noah could honor God was to do exactly what He commanded. An example of a “generic command” is when God said, “Go into all the world.” We are free to go by whatever means seems most expedient.

Instrumental music, biblical or not? In New Testament worship, did God say “make music” (a generic command) or “sing” (a specific command)? If God said “make music”, then no type of music would be excluded from our worship. But God specified the kind of music to be used. He specified singing, thus excluding any other kind of music. *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19).

Where did God say **not** to use instrumental music? In the case of Noah, when God specified gopher wood, that excluded all other kinds of wood! He did not have to say, “Do not use hickory, cedar, or oak.” When God specified singing in the New Testament church, that excluded any other kind of music. He has specified *singing* in worship, and that is what we must do to please Him (Hebrews 13:15).

Worship is a matter of respect for God. Those who respect the Word of God will do only what He commands! Does the doctrine of Christ teach the use of instrumental music in New Testament worship? All know that the answer is, “No”. Therefore, we cannot use instrumental music in worship and abide in the doctrine of Christ. The use of instruments of music in worship is a sin against God!

You must obey God’s Word to become a Christian before *any* worship is acceptable. To become a Christian, **hear** the Gospel (Romans 10:17), **believe** (Hebrews 11:6), **repent** (Acts 17:30), **confess** (Matthew 10: 32) and be **baptized**. (Acts 2:38.) After baptism, worship God! †

Charles Box works with the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

True Religion

Bill Dillon

So many religions! Why are there so many religions and churches? How can we know which is right? These are questions weighing heavily on men's minds.

As long as man assumes that God will accept any worship, regardless of whether that particular kind of worship is what God Himself desires, there will continue to be a multiplicity of religions the Lord never intended. The modern religious world, with its denominationalism and "have it your way" mumbo-jumbo approach to Deity, is not what God ever purposed. Such a state of religious babble is not sensational — it is sinful.

The adapted versions of Christianity available today are humanistic in orientation and origination. They are religions of convenience, not conviction. And though multiplied millions sincerely believe a falsehood — it is a falsehood still.

Can all ways of worship lead to God? How can they when they all contradict each other? The Eternal God has not left us in doubt.

The question is, "How can we know which is true?" The answer is that true religion will be a revealed religion. True religion will not find its foundation in human desire, whim, or caprice, but in the fact that it comes directly from God. A revealed religion does not come from a charismatic or dynamic religious leader, but directly from God.

The genuine (revealed) religion is the one where God speaks to mankind. This is exactly what the Bible claims to be. The Bible is the oldest and only credible religious message in the world.

The message of genuine religion will not be to flatter us and tickle our religious fancies. True religion will not cater to human folly, nor elevate human will above the will of God. True religion will not be man-centered, but God-oriented.

In a world of religious darkness, the Bible shines as the clear light from above, banishing the blackness of religious confusion. The Bible is true. The Bible is right. May it ever shine unto eternal day. †

Bill Dillon is Editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the Lord's church in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.

Weaving Out and In, or Two Steps Forward and One Step Backward

Raymond Elliott

In September of 1995 I purchased a book written by Lynn Anderson entitled, *Navigating the Winds of Change*. It was and is a manual on “How to manage change in the church”. It is not to be understood that all changes would be acceptable to the author of the book, however, he does mention several changes that he felt could be made that would be considered unscriptural by the majority of Christians. It is evident, in the years since the book was written, that many brethren are in the process of implementing the author’s suggestions and methods in introducing unscriptural practices to the various assemblies in their congregations.

First of all, brother Anderson wrote:

Change things at an appropriate pace. William Bridges, who wrote *Managing Transitions*, says that “the real problem is not in bringing about change, but to keep too much change from happening too fast.” The attitude of many seems to be: “If next year would help, immediately will cure everything.” Sometimes the urgency of the convinced ignores the feelings of the unconvinced. This is both unloving and counterproductive.

Personally, I would advise that an eldership would be wise in consulting with the local membership about even innocent changes that would affect the entire congregation. For example, it would be best if the elders would suggest a period of trial concerning the changing of the times of the Sunday morning assemblies before implementing the change suddenly within a week’s notice. I know personally of a case in which the elders arbitrarily changed the times, and did so immediately, and some of the members almost became contentious over the matter.

Concerning changes that would be considered unscriptural, according to the teaching of the New Testament, some of our brethren are being very careful not to be too aggressive but to implement the changes very gradually.

In the next paragraph brother Anderson presented this rule: “Do not introduce the most important changes at the point of greatest risk.” He then explained the meaning of this statement:

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The most important changes should not be introduced at the point of greatest risk — the Sunday morning assembly. Important changes must be introduced with care — perhaps at a retreat or on Wednesday or Sunday nights. In the minds of many, Sunday morning assemblies are the most ‘sacred’ time and the most sensitive place and thus should be least tampered with. Be wise and thoughtful in your introduction of change.

In the past several years we have seen how some brethren have followed this rule completely. Here are a few examples. A congregation in our capitol city of Alabama used instrumental music with the songs the children were singing during vacation Bible school. Another congregation formed an instrumental band to be used in their services on a week night when they came together for a ‘praise service’. A large congregation in a metropolitan area permitted their young people to add an instrumental band to their praise team. One of the reasons given by the elders for these decisions was because the congregation was losing many of its youth. Some brethren are also using icons, burning incense and candles in assemblies during the week nights.

Most of these brethren would say that, for the sake of unity, they would not use the instrument, etc. during the Sunday morning worship assembly; however, it will be only a matter of time before the instrument will be accepted in the worship during the Lord’s Day assemblies. Experience teaches that this observation is true. It has happened, and will happen again, because the young people will be accustomed to using the instrument in the worship assemblies on other days, and when it is introduced in the Sunday assemblies, their consciences will not be offended.

Now I want you to read very carefully this paragraph that is found on page 173 of Anderson’s book.

Strategy one. Weave! Alternate between safety and disequilibrium. Teach new ideas awhile, stretching your church out beyond comfort zones and into fresh thinking. At first you may hear, “Wow! I never noticed that in the Bible before!” This is only mild disequilibrium. But when you feel your church approaching the limits of tolerance, back off! Talk about familiar and safe things for a while. Then, move back out to the cutting edge again. Weave out and in — weave out with new ideas, then weave back in with talk of comfortable things. Then weave out again by implementing new practices; then weave back to some old practic-

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

es that feel safer. Weave! Two steps forward and one step back.

The word “disequilibrium” carries the idea of being in “a state of emotional or intellectual imbalance.” This comes about when a congregation makes too many changes too fast. So what this brother is suggesting is that a congregation should gradually introduce and implement changes. While this plan can be used in implementing changes in traditional matters that are mere opinion, it is not surprising, however disappointing, that brethren are using these tactics in bringing practices into the worship assemblies and advocating doctrines that are unscriptural.

These men are using the biblical ignorance of the congregation to introduce unscriptural practices. An eldership and preachers that will not teach/preach against the use of instrumental music in the worship assemblies are encouraging a lack of understanding as to what the New Testament teaches on the subject. Then, to allow the instrument to be used in assemblies during the week nights is to gradually desensitize the membership concerning its eventual use on the Lord’s Day.

I heard about one eldership that would send out letters to the local members, announcing some changes that were on the ‘cutting edge’, and depending on the reaction would either proceed with the practice or they would hesitate for awhile and try it again later. It is a diabolical scheme of brethren to use such methods to introduce practices that have divided the brotherhood in times past and are dividing the church today.

The exhortation of the apostle Paul as found in Colossians 2:6-8 is much needed now: *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principle of the world, and not according to Christ.”* †

Raymond Elliott works with the church in Prattville, Alabama, USA.

Note: It is vital that Christians be forewarned about these subversive brethren, and be equipped to defend the church against them. In addition to the New Testament, recommended books for defence against the “Change Movement” are **Piloting the Straits** by Dave Miller and **Waves of Change** by Kyle and Stan Butt.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Hebrews 6:4-6

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

There are those who teach the Calvinistic doctrine of “the impossibility of apostasy” — “once saved, always saved”, — that one cannot “fall from grace”. Is this doctrine supported by Scripture?

Not only does Hebrews 6:4-6 affirm that it is possible for a person who has been saved to fall from the grace of God, by his own choice, but the statement is clearly made that when one has known **the fulness of salvation** and of a **spiritual life in Christ**, and has **chosen to turn his back on that knowledge and that life**, the caring Christians around him have nothing with which to appeal to him to bring him back. Unless he, himself, chooses to repent, others cannot bring him to that point, because he has rejected his only means of salvation, the crucified Christ.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20).

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Here Am I, Send Me

Gary C. Hampton

Philip the evangelist had a *“Here am I, send me”* attitude. His preaching in the city of Samaria had been well received and a number of people had been added to the Lord’s church. Yet, when the angel of the Lord said, *“Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza,”* he went (Acts 8:26,27). His actions remind us of Isaiah’s response to the Lord’s call. *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me!’”* (Isaiah 6:8).

There would be no need to talk of a declining church growth rate if all were like Philip! Every believer needs to remember the words of Paul to the church at Rome. *“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”* (Romans 10:13,14). It should be noted that Peter quoted the same prophecy from Joel 2:28-32, as he explained the events of Pentecost. He urged those who were cut to the heart to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

There can be no doubt that Peter thought repenting and being baptized

in submission to the authority of Jesus for the remission of sins was the means of calling on the Lord. No wonder our Lord, in His marching orders for His disciples, clearly said to preach the Gospel to every person under heaven, since those who believe and are baptized will be saved, and those who do not believe will be lost (Mark 16:15,16).

Paul thought it was so important to tell others the truth one had learned that he equated such with being faithful. *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

There can be no doubt that the Lord wants His church to go forth with the saving message. The early church, scattered by persecution, still *“went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4). Phillip was just one example who recognized the Lord’s desire and effectively said, *“Here am I, send me.”* Because of his willing response, the Ethiopian nobleman learned the truth about Jesus, was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing. I trust we will likewise arise and go forth proclaiming the good news. †

Gary C. Hampton is the Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Burger King and Eleven Cents

Steve Higginbotham

Last week at our dinner table, we had a discussion on Christian ethics with our youngest son, who is in fourth grade. He had benefited on a homework grade because his teacher had overlooked a mistake he had made on one of his questions. My wife and I explained how he would want the teacher to correct the mistake if it wasn't in his favor, therefore, it was only fair that he inform the teacher of the mistake that was in his favor. It was not an easy task to give a young boy, to tell a teacher that he had made a mistake, and further, a mistake that would lower his grade...but to his credit, he saw the issue at stake, and he did the right thing the next day. It wasn't so much about a 94% or 92% on a homework assignment, but it was about discipleship, following Jesus, and doing the right thing, no matter what.

Now, for the rest of the story...You know, it's rather difficult to teach someone else to do right when you aren't doing right yourself. The discussion we had with our son, the logic we used, and the scriptural principle to "*provide all things honest in the sight of all men*" (Romans 12:17) convicted me. You see, just a day earlier, I discovered, after driving away from the drive-thru window at Burger King, that they had given me 11 cents too much in change. At the time, my mind went back to all the times they had messed up my order and didn't give me what I had asked for, so I drove on.

However, the courage and the code of ethics possessed by a little 10-year-old boy emboldened me to drive back to the Burger King drive-thru and return 11 cents to the cashier. Her response was not what I had imagined it would be. There was no "Thank you!" There was no "You didn't need to do that." In fact, she didn't say a word. If there was any reaction at all, it was, as best I could tell, a look of annoyance, and then she turned her back. I must admit that for a brief moment the thought flashed through my mind that if I had known she was going to act that way, I wouldn't have bothered with it. But reason quickly returned, and I acknowledged to myself that doing what you are supposed to do in the first place doesn't deserve special attention and praise...but that's another story for another time.

Friends, Jesus expects us to do the right thing whether it involves 11 cents or eleven hundred dollars or whether you are thanked or ignored. Give it some thought. "*And a little child shall lead them*" (Isaiah 11:6). †

Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.



Reach Out and Touch Someone

Dwight Fuqua

“Then the master said to the servant, *“Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled”* (Luke 14:23). You never know where a simple invitation may lead. It takes only a moment and a little courage to invite someone to worship. Yet, that simple invitation may result in that person attending the assembly, learning about the church, obeying the Gospel, becoming a great servant of God for life, and influencing others to do the same!

The thought of speaking to a group may frighten you. You may feel inadequate to conduct an in-depth Bible study, one-on-one. But, you can extend a warm “invitation” to a family member, friend, or acquaintance. Instead of focusing on the things we cannot do, let us focus on the things we CAN do. YOU can invite others to worship!

It is true that many of those we invite to worship will never accept our invitation. It is true that many of them will pass off the invitation with an “I’ll try”. If nothing else is accomplished, they will know that we are a “friendly bunch”. Also, they will not be able to say, “No one ever invited me to worship!”

Wait a minute! There are a lot of folks out there who would appreciate and accept your invitation! Oh, yes! Believe it! According to recent surveys, a lot of folks are looking for a church home. Your invitation may be just what they have been waiting for!

Want to see the church grow? Want to enhance our image and influence in the community? Want to be a part? Invite others to worship! Offer to pick them up! Sit with them when they come! Introduce them to others! Help them find their way around! Answer their questions! Reach out and touch someone! You just never know where a simple invitation may lead! This we can do! †

Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay congregation in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Why Share the Gospel?

Dan R. Owen



The title of our lesson may seem a bit ridiculous, but our cultural mind-set has made it necessary.

Our culture is focused on the sufferings of this world and our efforts at relieving that suffering. All people everywhere agree that it is good to relieve human suffering in this life, but Christians believe in life beyond this world. We believe that the sufferings of the present are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is coming for God's people (Romans 8:18).

So, why must we share the message of God's redemptive work with a world that is so secular in its thinking?

❖ **We must share the Gospel because people are lost, spiritually.** All have sinned, and do sin. Sin separates human beings from God. The justice of God demands that wrong-doing be punished. The wage of sin is eternal death. Being lost means being "*without hope and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2:12). Being lost means facing eternal punishment. People everywhere are lost because of sin. The Gospel is the only remedy.

❖ **We must share the Gospel because it is good news.** It is news of God's love for lost humanity. The Gospel is news of God's wonderful

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

work of redemption. The Gospel is news of grace, mercy, and forgiveness that are available in Christ. The Gospel is news about freedom from guilt. The Gospel tells people how to accept these wonderful things, offered to them by their Creator. The Gospel is the wonderful news about how man and God can walk through the world together. The Gospel brings hope of eternal life with God. We must share it because it is the best news ever! *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news”* (Isaiah 52:7).

❖ **We must share the Gospel because God’s Word is the kingdom seed.** God cannot rule any life apart from His Word. Only when the Word is accepted in a human heart can God begin to take over the thoughts and actions of an individual. We must plant the seed because the power to transform lives is in the seed, the power of regeneration and spiritual life. The seed is the doorway through which God gains access to human lives. That is why we must keep planting the seed in every possible way. Jesus explained, *“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God* (Luke 8:11); *“... he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”* (Matthew 13:23).

❖ **We must share the Gospel in order to realize our purpose in life.** The eternal purpose of God is the salvation of souls in Christ. The risen Christ gave the Great Commission to His church because it is God’s plan that the Gospel be spread to the ends of the earth. He entrusted to His disciples that responsibility: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15,16). When we have any part in sharing the saving message with others, we are participating in the eternal purpose of God. We are fulfilling our reason for being left in this world, to shine the light for those who otherwise would live and die in darkness! Only by having a part in this mission can we fulfill our real purpose on this earth.

❖ **We must share the Gospel because people are lost without it, because it is the greatest news in the history of the planet, because the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom, and because only in sharing the Gospel do we realize our purpose for living.** Don’t allow the secular world to distract you from our true mission: the sharing of the Gospel so that souls may be saved eternally! †

Dan R. Owen works with the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.



We Are at War!

Harvey M. Starling

The servants of the Almighty God are at war with Satan today and have been since the beginning of time. This war is real. The fight is for the souls of men made in the image of God.

There can be no compromise with the host of hell. The battle rages today, and some would say the battle cannot be won. They add that we lack the manpower, the finances, and the will to fight to the death. This may be true for some as they linger in indecision, put their trust in human wisdom and intellect, and seek to be friends with a world that hates the way of God.

It must be said that we cannot give up, nor will we give in. Millions of our fellow men want to hear the clear, simple message of the kingdom of God, while seemingly some in a great brotherhood have turned to popular programs of the moment,

a play on numbers, and the moving message of healing the body and not the soul. Jesus warned, *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matthew 10:28).

The goal must be to use the zeal and ability of a wonderful brotherhood to make great plans by local churches. Then, we must have the will, with patience, to stay the course in planting the seed of God’s kingdom, building great churches in every nation on earth.

The numbers were few in the first century, but God went before them to take the saving message to a lost world. Today, there is the same God and the same Gospel, and many are committed to fight the battle with the assurance that victory will come now and in eternity (Matthew 28:18-20). †

Harvey M. Starling has been involved in mission efforts for many years, the last several years being focused primarily in Romania.



How Do You Measure Up?

34. When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Who ever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

35 “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

36 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

37. “Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Mark 8:34-37

Worship

Shan Jackson

I suppose we all realize that spoken words draw mental pictures. If someone says “dog”, we visualize a dog in our mind. Or if other words are spoken, they all create resulting images. Even abstract words draw mental pictures. For instance, if I say the word “worship,” a visual enters our mind. And, depending on our religious upbringing or current understanding, we each will have a mental picture of what it means to worship.

I was raised in the church of Christ. When I visualize the word “worship”, I see a traditional setting with a preacher preaching his heart out to an audience with Bibles open in their laps. I imagine a somber tone as the Lord’s Supper is passed and partaken, and happier tones when the songs are sung.

We all have some kind of mental picture of what it means to worship. Depending on background, when you think of worship you may think of classical sacred music, ritualistic liturgy, robed clergy, etc. Maybe you were raised in a charismatic setting and you envision a scene with hands

raised, eyes closed, or even something more active (hands clapping, feet moving, shouts of “Hallelujah!” and “Amen!”). Perhaps for others, the word brings images of people sitting quietly in a church building with their heads bowed, praying or meditating, or even someone bowing down or kneeling.

Because people have so many different ideas of what worship looks like, feels like, and is like, I think it would serve our purpose to first define words. **What are we doing when we worship?** What are we doing when we sing and pray as an avenue of worship? What makes those, as well as the other actions of worship “worship”?

Worship is the act of attributing ultimate worth to something. Regardless of whether our worship is directed to an object, a person, a deity, or even an idea — worship is valuing one thing above everything else. Worship is literally “worth-ship”. When we worship, in this case — God — we are proclaiming that He has the greatest possible worth.

WORSHIP

Worshipping God is an acknowledgment that He is above our gold, silver, jewels, houses, land, and everything else. When we worship God we are saying His power exceeds that of every king, president, or dictator in history. When we worship God we show that the glory of His holiness outshines sun, moon, and stars. When we worship God we are saying that nothing compares to Him. He is above all, and He is greater than all. Everything in creation pales to insignificance next to the sovereign Lord of the universe.

Concerning worship, the Bible declares:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

“...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

God alone is supremely worthy of our praise, our love, our devotion, and our service. He alone is worthy, not only because of who He is, but also because of what He has done. But worship is not just making an objective judgment that one thing excels

all others — it is actively desiring and seeking after that thing. To worship something is to make the pursuit of it the overriding goal of our life. That is what Jesus was talking about when He said, *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”* (Mark 12:30). That is worship — valuing something so highly that we give everything we have for it. Worship is also treasuring the things of God so highly that we will give everything we have in exchange for them. Worship is an attitude that says, whatever it takes for me to know God, I will do.

Now, I pose this question: **Is it possible to worship someone or something other than God?** Even the most naïve realize that such a thing can be done. In fact, everyone worships something, because God created us to be worshippers. Even if we refuse to worship God, we will be driven to find something else to worship. It is not a matter of *whether* we will worship — but *what* we will worship (Romans 1:21-25).

Many of us live in a predominantly secular society, so we may not see people literally bowing down before idols. Instead, our culture tends to worship other things (i.e. money, success, physical beauty, health, recreation, etc.) Whatever we organize our lives around, whatever we put

WORSHIP

first, whatever we seek above all else, that is what we worship. Fundamentally, we are by nature worshippers of self, seeking after our own welfare and happiness as the greatest good in life. So the God-given drive to worship is perverted and is turned toward itself, thus becoming the urge to make oneself a god, to place oneself at the center of the universe (Humanism).

Therefore, we must ask: **How do we worship?** What kind of worship pleases God? First of all, true worship comes from the heart. God-pleasing worship is an overflow of the heart (John 4:19-24). What does this mean? It means that God does not care about where we are when we worship, or what kind of building we worship in. He is not fooled by outward circumstances. Rather, God is interested in our heart. If our religion is external only, if we find ourselves simply going through the motions, our actions might be good, but they are not worship.

If we are not worshipping God from our heart, it does not accomplish anything other than passing time. Worship that is not from the heart is empty and worthless. God is not interested in pseudo-worship — He wants only true worship. The real thing — that is what God demands and is entitled to.

The only kind of worshipers God has any use for are those who worship

Him from the heart, in spirit and in truth. If God does not have our heart, then nothing else we do matters. If we are singing, praying, etc., but our heart is cold or even lukewarm, then we are not worshipping God acceptably or correctly. What then do we do if we find ourselves in this position?

What then do we do if we realize that our body is where it is supposed to be, our mouth is, for instance, singing the words, our ears are listening, our face is smiling, but our heart is not engaged? What if the action is coming forth — but not from the heart?

Let me mention another thing which may be impeding our worship. If we realize that no matter what we do we cannot seem to find enrichment in our worship, then we may need to clear away some of the underbrush. There may be sin in our life which we have not confessed to God. There is nothing more certain to block our ability to worship from the heart than unconfessed and unrepented sin. It is useless to try to worship God when our heart is hardened against Him. Nothing will change — no matter how long we pray. Nothing will change until we repent. We cannot *worship* from the heart if we are not *obeying* from the heart.

But what if our heart is not hardened against God? What if there is something that needs to be addressed

WORSHIP

between you and someone else in the body of Christ? If that is the case, then we need to get it right before we can worship. If we come, having a conflict with another, then we are not going to be able to worship correctly. If we realize that there is an unresolved issue between us and another, we cannot afford to simply wait for it to go away. Reconciliation is a prerequisite for authentic worship. Listen to Jesus: *“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24).

We will be unable to worship God in spirit and truth if something else, or someone else, has first place in our heart. If that is the case, we won't be able to worship God as He wants because there is room in our heart for only one “first”. First place has to be occupied by Him.

Finally, why worship? There are several reasons: God commands and invites us to worship. Our worship is certainly primarily for God, but worship is also to encourage us and lift our spirits. True worship will also be a transforming urge. True worship — worship that comes from the heart, worship in spirit and truth — is transforming. It changes us and causes us to seek change. It is hu-

man nature that we become like that which we worship. We become like that which we value the most. Those who worship God will become like God through Christ's example. If we regularly turn our heart toward God in worship we will, over time, be conformed to His character, His values, His wisdom, and His power. The more we contemplate the divine nature of God, the more we lift Him up.

Worshipping God is our main ambition and obligation. Jesus reminds us that *“God is a spirit”*. As such, He must be worshipped *“in spirit and in truth”*. Our worship must be with the correct attitude (in spirit) and in accordance with God's Word (in truth). The Father *“seeketh such (true worshippers) to worship him”* (John 4:23,24). †

Shan Jackson preaches for the church of Christ in Port Lavaca, Texas, USA.

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23,24)

Importance of Public Worship

John Gipson

Years ago, one heard many sermons on the importance of public worship. Perhaps many of us felt that it was becoming redundant and longed to hear something else. Redundant or not, public worship is important. The Hebrews writer urges, *“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”* (Hebrews 10:25).

It seems clear to me that to assemble together is a Christian duty. One can hardly forget that Christ frequented the synagogues and Temple; that His disciples were assembled when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection; that they were assembled at the day of Pentecost; that Paul waited at Troas until the brethren came together, etc. The same pattern of *“not neglecting to meet together”* should prevail today.

Some who profess attachment to Christ’s cause neglect more assemblies than they attend. We do not wonder that unbelievers stay away, or that those who have fallen in love with the world do not have any relish for such gatherings, but many who are professed Christians are also guilty of this. Some have become once-a-day worshippers. Others come out when the weather is good. And some attend

when they take a notion. It is obvious that there is little spiritual relish. Their religion degenerates into a *“form of godliness”* with a noticeable lack of joy, desire, or “want to”.

God deserves our service. We meet together to honor His name, to read His Word, to declare His praise, to remember His Son. But to fail to meet *“as is the habit of some”* is to pour contempt on all these things.

A failure to attend the assembly weakens the church. By being together, we form a visible building, all the stones united together. To neglect this is to weaken the energies of the church and discourage the godly.

We ought to meet together for our own benefit. Our holiness, comfort, and usefulness, in great measure, depend upon such services. Our knowledge is yet imperfect, our faith feeble, our hope clouded, our love languid. In short, we need the assembly.

One has suggested we might forsake the assembling of ourselves together if we had “no mercies to acknowledge; no sins to confess, no blessings to crave; no enemies to overcome; no soul to sanctify; no hell to escape; no heaven to gain”. †

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

WORSHIP



Must We Sing?

Mike Hinton

If you were to ask me what part of the worship service I enjoy most, my immediate response would be the singing. With one notable exception, it has been a great joy for me to lift my voice, along with my brethren, in praise to God since I was a small child. That brief exception occurred during those awkward months of early adolescence when my voice was changing. Due to the unpredictable screeching that would on occasion come forth from my lips, I temporarily lost some of my enthusiasm for singing. But, that time aside, I have always loved to sing. I must confess, though, that for many of those years, I failed to fully appreciate the impact that singing had on my faith.

I sang because I was taught that we are commanded to sing as an act of worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16 et al.) It was many years before I really understood all of the purpose

in that command. Our Creator and Designer fully comprehends the intricacies of our minds, and He knows how to help us make better use of our faculties. For some reason, we seem to be able to remember facts and information much better when they are set to music.

Let me illustrate this tried and true principle by recalling a tragic event from thirty years ago. November 10, 2005, was the thirtieth anniversary of the sinking of a freighter on Lake Superior. The ship was named the Edmund Fitzgerald, and she sank near Whitefish Bay in a terrible storm with her entire crew of 29 men and a cargo of 26,000 tons of iron ore.

During the last thirty years, I've read newspaper accounts of probably hundreds of maritime disasters. I can recall few if any details of any of them, even though some of them resulted in

WORSHIP

much greater loss of life. But the details I related to you about the Edmund Fitzgerald, as well as several other bits of information about the sinking, were pulled straight from my memory, without even having to look them up.

Some of you who are reading this already know why I'm able to recall the facts surrounding the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald. It provided the inspiration for a very popular folk song by recording artist Gordon Lightfoot in 1976. I remember those details of the wreck because I hear the words of the song in my mind.

That same principle has helped me to memorize the books of the Bible, the names of the twelve apostles, and the basic facts surrounding numerous Bible stories. I can read about these events. I can listen to sermons and classes expounding on the Bible. But nothing makes the Word stick in my mind as well as setting the details to music and singing them over and over again.

I'm not sure if it's becoming more common for people to sit silently through the song service, or if I am just more aware of it. But it seems that all too many people in the worship assembly refuse to sing. Not only are they withholding the fruit of their lips from praising God, as we have been commanded to do (Hebrews 13:15), but they are also denying their own faith a very effective "booster shot". The songs that we sing are not just words that rhyme. They are soul-saving truth set

to music. "...I will sing with the spirit, I will also sing with the understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15). †

Mike Hinton is a worker for the Lord in Blanchard, Oklahoma, USA.

- ***"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."*** (Matthew 26:30)
- ***"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."*** (Acts 16:25)
- ***"...I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."*** (1 Corinthians 14:15)
- ***"...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."*** (Ephesians 5:19)
- ***"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*** (Colossians 3:16)
- ***"I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."*** (Hebrews 2:12)
- ***"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."*** (James 5:13)



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Eternal Life

Paula Bates

1. Jesus said: “*In my Father’s _____ are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to _____ a place for you.*” John 14:2
2. Jude said: “*Keep yourselves in the _____ of God, looking for the _____ of our Lord Jesus Christ unto _____.*” Jude verse 2
3. John said: “*That which was from the beginning, which we have _____, which we have _____ with our own eyes, which we have looked upon, and our _____ have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested and we have seen, and bear witness, and _____ to you that eternal life which was with the _____ and was manifested to us.*” 1 John 1:1,2
4. Paul said: “*For the wages of sin is _____, but the gift of _____ is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Romans 6:23
5. Paul said: “*Let them do _____, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to _____, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay _____ on eternal life.*” 1 Timothy 6:18,19
6. God said: “*He who _____ shall inherit all things, and I will be his _____ and he shall be my _____.*” Revelations 21:7

- Answers:**
- | | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 4. | Death, God |
| 5. | Good, share, hold |
| 6. | Overcomes, God, son |
| 1. | House, prepare |
| 2. | Love, mercy, eternal life |
| 3. | Hard, seen, hands, declare, Father |

How to Tell Right from Wrong

Neal Pollard

Whether it is a thought, an act, a recreation, a practice, a lifestyle, or a habit, how do you determine the rightness or wrongness of it? Carefully consider the following questions:

- ◆ Would you want to be engaged in this at the moment of Christ's return?
- ◆ Could you defend the thought or deed before Christ at the Judgment?
- ◆ Would you want your mate, parents, children, preacher, elders, or other Christians you respect to witness you engaged in this?
- ◆ Would you want it in your possession (in your thoughts, on your tongue, in your pockets, or in your cabinets) when the record of your life is opened before all?
- ◆ If you could see Christ next to you, watching, would you do or say the thing?
- ◆ Is there concern that engaging in the activity will cost you your soul?
- ◆ Does it cost you energy, money, and time that are ultimately wasted, the misuse of resources all of which you must give account before Christ?
- ◆ Does it prevent you from drawing closer to God?
- ◆ Would it harm your influence for Christ if a person, who knew you were a Christian, discovered it?
- ◆ Do you really think Christ would do it?

Please observe that not one specific passage is cited above, but the scriptural emphasis is clear. *"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23). *"To him that knoweth to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17). *"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). *"Be thou an example of the believers..."* (1 Timothy 4:12). *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). Are you still comfortable in that questionable activity or speech? †

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.



The Foot

Owen Cosgrove

In the aftermath of the evacuation of Kuwait, a woman ran after a captured Iraqi soldier holding up her sandal and shrieking loudly.

The news commentator explained that she was saying, “You are my shoe! You are my shoe!” He then explained that this is one of the worst insults one can speak in the Eastern world. In many Eastern cultures, the foot is the lowliest and most loathed part of the body. One Arab student that we know in this country could hardly imagine that Americans wash their socks in the same water with their shirts. Even in our culture, feet and socks and shoes sometimes get a rather bad rap, but in the East they are counted as even more abhorrent.

This attitude toward feet makes one think of the great contrition of the woman who kissed the Lord’s feet, washed them with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and then anointed them with precious ointment (Luke 7:36-49). It also reminds one of the worthlessness of sham religion which is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man (Matthew 5:13). It is reminiscent of God’s

utter contempt of those who reject the Gospel, shown by Christ’s admonition to His disciples to shake the dust off their feet against any city that refused to hear their message (Matthew 10:14).

We also are reminded of the beauty of humble service by the Lord as He washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1-17). It also expresses God’s high esteem toward those who preach the Gospel, “*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*” (Romans 10:15).

The lowliness of the foot reminds us of the utter preeminence of Christ, in that God has put all things in subjection under His feet (Hebrews 2:8; Ephesians 1:22). Even the great prophet, John the Baptizer, felt unworthy to loosen the latches on His shoes (John 1:27).

As lowly as the feet are, how handicapped we would be without them. So we learn one more lesson from them: Every member of the body, whatever its place or function, is very, very important (1 Corinthians 12:22-24). It is amazing what can be learned from something seemingly so despised and unimportant as the foot. †

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and lives in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

I Have Got It Made!

(Revelation 3:17,18)

Mike Sinapiades

“Man, I really have got it made!” Yes, you have got it made, but in what? “Oh, I have money, I have possessions, I have prestige and power, and I can name you many more.” Yes, friend, but all you have is for this life. Nothing you now possess can be taken with you, and neither can they benefit you when six feet of dirt will be piled upon you. After your departure from this life, what will happen to you then?

This kind of thinking reminds me of another individual identical in thought to yours. Listen. *“...I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take it easy, eat, drink and be merry”* (Luke 12:18,19).

How can it be that this man, so intelligent in his earthly business, could not see that such reasoning is appropriate for animals, but not for man who has within him an eternal destiny, which cannot be satisfied with the things of this world? Did the ancient Epicureans in their fanci-

ful philosophy of life, “eat, drink and be merry,” realize any eternal good? What could all the accumulated goods of this life benefit these foolish individuals?

It is a fact of life, that man may be loaded with all kinds of earthly treasures, yet his eternal spirit cannot be satisfied, even with the best that this world can offer. Unfortunately, this tragic mistake of man continues on throughout the ages. Somehow, in the beguiled whispers of the enemy of his spirit, man forgets that he *“cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (Matthew 15:18). These physical things exist for a little while, but then they disappear like a vapor *“that appears for a little while and then it vanishes away”* (James 4:14).

Man has always imagined that a bucket of shining gold can satisfy his heart; a handful of sparkling diamonds can quench the thirst of his parched lips; or that the possession of an immense amount of land can give life to his dying eyes. The feverish desire for more and more of this world’s goods cannot gratify a swiftly passing life.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

I suppose that it is natural to be proud of possessions and achievements, but allowing such to overwhelm and blind a person to the real issues of life cannot but prove eternally devastating.

What is the message which Jesus gives to those people whose satisfaction comes from the "I Have Got It Made" philosophy of life, while at the same time forget the eternal part of their life? To such persons God states, "*You fool, this night your soul shall be required...So is he that lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God*" (Luke 13:20,21).

Very few are the people who are consciously aware that life may be taken away at any moment. "Little as we realize it, it is a stern fact of life, that it is quite possible that any man enjoying the most robust health and in the midst of the most lavish living, may be dead within the day." No one knows when the "bells will toll" for him or her. Therefore, as we aspire to abound in physical riches, we must equally, and even more so, concentrate and focus ourselves to be enriched spiritually. On the subject, Jesus instructed us, "*Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (Matthew 6:19,20).

No abundance of earthly possessions can ever satisfy man's cravings. The more he possesses, the more he wants to have. Only Jesus can give rest (Matthew 11:28). Only the Master can quench our spiritual thirst (John 6:4). To spend an entire life in amassing physical blessings, but fail to enrich himself before God, for that person it would have been better never to have been born.

In the region of Asia Minor, during the first century, there was an entire congregation which was living in the lap of luxury. They in fact bragged that they were rich and had need of nothing. In other words, they felt that they had it made. But listen to the words of Jesus: "*You are saying, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and do not know that you are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*" (Revelation 3:17,18).

Friend, if you say that you have got it made, in what way have you got it made? †

Mike Sinapiades preaches for the Lord's church in Jacksonville, Arkansas, USA.



Bill Nicks

In the Old Testament the word “hesed” means “steadfast love, loving kindness, grace, mercy, faithfulness, goodness or devotion” (Vine, p. 142).

In the New Testament, the word: 1. “Agape” and the verb “agapao” are used to describe (a) the attitude of God toward His Son (John 17:26), toward the human race generally (John 3:16; Romans 5:8) and particularly toward those who believe in Jesus Christ (John 14:21). (b) to convey to His children His will concerning their attitude, one toward another (John 13:34), and toward all men (1 Thessalonians 3:12), and (c) to express the central nature of God (1 John 4:8) (Vine 381).

2. “Phileo” more nearly represents ‘tender affection’ and is used for love of the Father toward the Son (John 3:35; 5:20); for the believer (John 14:21; 16:27), and of Christ’s love for a certain disciple (John 13:23; 20:2). The distinction between “agape” and “phileo” are seen

in John 21 in the esteem and value of love (Revelation 12:11), whereas Peter’s reply shows the use of “phileo”. The Lord’s third question shows the value of the constancy of love, conveying the thought of cherishing the object above all else. “Phileo” may be thought of as friendship as one would have toward his tennis partner, or baseball partner.

3. “Philostorgoi” is a family love which we are to have in tender affection toward all members of the church, and toward our own family. Neither of the above words describes sexual relations, which, unfortunately, the world regards as the meaning of love (Romans 12:10).

In Romans 13:13, the word “koite” (bed) is translated “chambering” in the KJV, and “lewdness” in the NKJV, referring to illicit sexual relations. On the other hand, we are impressed with the expression used by the Holy Spirit to describe sex relations between a husband and his wife. The words are found in Hebrews 13:4 as the “*marriage bed*”, and it is to be held in honor by all. How wonderful are the ways of the Holy Spirit to describe a relationship which the world has defined as ugly and sensual, rather than beautiful and holy! †

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and the island of Trinidad in the West Indies, and he now lives in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

Walk with Jesus

Author Unknown

Along the shore of Galilee,
the Master walked one day,
And invited those who washed their nets
to follow him, or stay.
But if they chose to follow Him,
they understood that then,
No longer would they cast for fish,
but rather fish for men.

They left their nets and turned their backs
on all that they had known,
As they sought a better kingdom,
and the king upon His throne.
They walked with Him in danger,
and through glories multiplied,
As they grew to strength and honor
with the Master at their side.

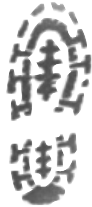
And so they walked with Him one day,
to the brow of Olive's hill,
And watched as He ascended,
having done His Father's will.

Then they walked along the highway
of the world's great golden store,
With a constant, unseen Presence,
By their side forevermore.





And they preached a saving Gospel
to the lost of every race,
As Jesus walked among them,
Giving freely of God's grace.



When James bowed to the axe man,
and his spirit fled away,
He just walked beside his Jesus,
to a better place and day.



And 'twas on the isle of Patmos,
on the Lord's Day, we are told,
John turned to see the Master,
clothed in robes of shining gold.
And when his work was finished,
and his tasks on earth were done,
He just took the hand of Jesus
and kept on walking with the Son.



Oh, if I could walk with Jesus,
if I could only hold His hand,
What a difference it would make,
in this toilsome, troubled land.
As I walked on to the sunset,
and the gold-hued western sea,
Just to take the hand of Jesus,
and to have Him walk with me.



No temptation could o'erwhelm me,
nor could sorrow rack my soul.
For the presence of the Master
would keep bright the shining goal.
And when my walk was finished,
and I rested on the shore,
I would take the hand of Jesus
and walk with Him forevermore.





What I Want for My Children

Jimmy Ferguson

Fathers have a special responsibility as leaders of the home. This responsibility is God-given and every father would do well to consider God's instructions to and for them. I am amazed and saddened when I see so many fathers in the church display a lack of concern for the spiritual well-being of their children. This becomes evident when some young people are not brought to Bible classes and worship. Many are alarmed that young people have a lack of interest in the church as they grow older. Could it be that part or even most of the responsibility goes back to the leadership of the father?

Having four sons and a daughter, I am made keenly aware of the responsibility God has placed upon me. The Psalmist declared, "*Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*" (Psalm 127:3). My children asked me, "Daddy, what do you want for Father's Day?" This article deals with a number of things I want *for my children* on Father's Day, and every day, as opposed to what I want *from them*.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

I want my children to have a father who puts the kingdom of God first in his life and who will teach them the same. Jesus said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom, and his righteousness...”* (Matthew 6:33). God forbid that my children should ever think that the Lord is not the most important part of my life. Each father should so conduct himself that his children can see Christ in his life. Fathers, we cannot bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), unless they see that we have our priorities in order. They will remember our example long after they have forgotten our words.

I want my children to have a father who will teach them to love, respect, and obey their parents. One of the most beautiful scenes in a home is children who openly show this love for their parents. Children are commanded to honor their parents and to be obedient to them (Ephesians 6:1-2). Many young people today are not respectful because they have not been taught.

I want my children to have a father who sets aside the first day of the week for his family to worship (Hebrews 10:25). There should never be a question in the minds of children as to what their family will do on Sunday. Fathers, do your children ever ask, “Are we going to church today?” They should know that the worship of God is a family priority. Can you truly say that you love your children if you teach them by example that worship is not important?!? Fathers, think! **Your example may cause them to be lost.**

I want my children to have a father who is loving and considerate to his wife and children. It is said that one of the greatest things we can do for our children is to love their mother. I have a wonderful wife who is an encouragement and an inspiration to me. I am proud that she is the mother of my children and I want my children to know that. **I want my children to know that I love them and that I want only the best for them;** but fathers must communicate this by word and example.

I want my children to have a father who will never speak or act in a manner that is unbecoming of a Christian (I Tim. 4:12). I long for my children to be able to say, “I want to be like daddy, because he’s trying to be like Jesus.” Oh, how those words would bring tears of joy to the eyes!

“...the father to the children shall make known thy truth” (Isaiah 38:19);... *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”* (Deuteronomy 6:7). †

Jimmy Ferguson preaches the Gospel in Nettleton, Mississippi, USA.

Mother's Load

Dan Gulley



A man came home from work to find his house in chaos. His children were outside, still in their pajamas, playing in the mud. Inside the house, a lamp had been knocked over, the throw rug was wadded against a wall, and the living room was littered with toys and clothing. Dishes filled the kitchen sink, cereal was spilled on the counter, and a broken glass lay under the table.

The man went up the stairs, stepping over toys and piles of clothes, looking for his wife. She was still in bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went.

“Never mind my day,” he said. “What happened here today?”

She answered, “You know, every day when you come home from work and ask me what in the world I did today? Well, today I didn’t do it.”

What’s up with the term “working moms”? Whether gainfully employed outside the home or what our culture calls a “stay-at-home moms”, every woman who can truly be called “mother” is a hard working human being.

About 3,000 years ago, the writer of Proverbs 31:10-31 described her work load. She was on call 24/7/365 in her various roles as wife and mother and household engineer and manager. “*She rises while it is yet night. ... And her lamp does not go out by night*” (verses 15a, 18b). Proverbs 31:27 sums up her task and reminds us that being a wife and mother is not a job for wimps;

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

“She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.” We tip our hats to the tireless women among us who bear the mother’s load.

A mother’s job is not easy to completely describe. Her work is not “9 to 5”. She is a master multitasker and performs invaluable work inside the home that no machine could ever do and that no substitute could ever replace. Her unique job assignment, indispensable role, and powerful position is summed up in two New Testament passages: 1 Timothy 5:14 and Titus 2:4-5.

“Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”

“... to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

According to these verses, a mother’s load after marriage is to “bear children, manage the house, love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” These are not **cultural statements** that change from one generation to the next. They are **biblical verses** that describe the mother’s load in the home.

It is true that some homes manage without a mother, but almost never as well as with one. It has been observed that if motherhood was going to be easy, it never would have started with something called “labor”. What a mess things would be in if mothers all got together and decided to go on strike! Let us thank God for the women among us who are willing to bear the mother’s load.

Dan Gulley works with the Smithville, Tennessee church of Christ, USA. contact: <http://www.smithvillechurch.org>

*A mother can look through a child's eyes
and see tomorrow.*

*It is not children that parents are raising;
it is the adults they will become.*

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

WILD Undisciplined Children

Don Deffenbaugh

I am becoming more and more concerned about this generation of young people whose parents refuse to discipline as they run wild and unattended at home and in public. Without regard for anyone else, they do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and unconcerned and indulgent parents do not interfere. What does the Bible say?

“In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them” (I Samuel 3:12-13 NASB). Eli was held responsible for the actions of his sons, and God said that Eli’s problem was that his sons *“brought a curse on themselves”* but he *“did not rebuke them.”*

You will remember that David was held responsible for the actions of his son, Adonijah. I Kings 1:6 says, *“And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, ‘Why have you done so?’”*

In the Bible, fathers and mothers are held responsible for the actions of their children. Paul writes, *“And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

The Hebrews writer says *“... and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons: for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”* (Hebrews 12:5-7 NASB). Please look at the question in verse seven, *“...for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”*

What will happen to our nation, our homes, and the church, when this generation of undisciplined folks become civil leaders, fathers and mothers, and citizens of the Kingdom? †

Don Deffenbaugh works with the Eastside Church of Christ in Monett, Missouri, USA



Ecclesiastes for Young People

Paul Holland

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon emphasized that a life lived without God is “*vanity of vanities! All is vanity*” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). As you read through the book, I would encourage you to underline the number of times Solomon used the word “vanity” and the phrase “striving after wind”. That is the essence of a life used in selfish pursuits.

But at the end of the book, Solomon wrote: “*Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’.*” (12:1). Ecclesiastes was written to warn young people that if they want to live a life that is worthwhile, long-lasting and significant, it needs to be lived in service to God.

Young people need to remember their Creator because they were created *by* Him and *for* Him. That gives life a purpose and a direction. They need to think about His character and especially His goodness. They need to read and meditate on His word and keep His commandments.

God is not only for **old people**. He is for **teenagers** who are going through important physical and mental changes. He is for **young parents** who need His guidance in rearing children and adjusting to marriage. **Middle-age parents** need God as they move into guiding teenagers. **Older parents** need God as they begin dealing with their own elderly parents who have new health challenges. **The elderly** need God as they deal with their aches and pains and think more often and seriously about seeing God.

The book of Ecclesiastes is for everyone. We all need to read it. †

Paul Holland works with the church of Christ in Paris, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Father, Lead Me!

Clyde M. Hartley

They were walking through a
woodland,
A father and his son,
When the shades of night were
falling,
After setting of the sun.
And the boy so shyly listened
To the sounds the insects
made,
Then he crept up close and
whispered:

“Father, lead me, I’m afraid!”

Did the Father not in kindness
Lead the little fellow through?
Did he not speak words of comfort,
Pat his arm, and cheer him, too?
Would he not his life have given
To protect his darling lad?
For they were the best of comrades
This small laddie and his dad.

We are walking through the shadows,
Storms of life on every side;
Our frail backs are often beaten



By a bleak and chilly tide.
When we face a world of trouble,
Clouds of gloom are o’er us laid,
Then we come to God, confessing,
“Father, guide me, I’m afraid!”

Will the Father not in mercy
Surely lend a helping hand?
Will He not relieve our sorrows,
Give us ground on which to stand?
Will He not with all temptation
Make a way for our escape?
He’s a friend, if we will serve Him,
One who never will forsake!

As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 102:113,114) .

PROVERBS 17:22



James and Marilyn have been married for several years, but it has been a troubled marriage almost from the beginning. He's a dentist and she's a manicurist, and they constantly are fighting tooth and nail!



The Lone Ranger and Tonto went camping in the desert. After they got their tent all set up, both men fell sound asleep.

A few hours later Tonto woke up the Lone Ranger and said, "Kemo Sabe, look towards sky; what you see?"

The Lone Ranger replied, "I see millions of stars."

Tonto then asked, "What that tell you?"

The Lone Ranger thought for a moment and said, "Astronomically speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies. Time wise, it appears to

be approximately a quarter past three in the morning. Theologically, the Lord is all powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What's it tell you, Tonto?"

"You dumber than buffalo. Someone stole tent!"



Sally is really an insightful person. Why, just the other day she happened to see a chicken crossing the road. She immediately commented, "Now there is a beautiful example of poultry in motion."



"Did you hear about that terrible accident that Marvin was in at the sawmill a few weeks ago?"

"No...was he hurt bad?"

"He sure was. It was just awful. I've never seen anything like it. The whole left side of his body was cut off. But he's all right now."



A neighbor lady told this story about her sharp young son's distaste for turnips. She put one on his plate, along with some other food, and told

PROVERBS 17:22

him to eat everything on his plate. He cleaned his plate, all except for the turnip.

She pointed out to him that if he had eaten the turnip earlier, he wouldn't have been left with its taste in his mouth at the end of the meal.

He gave that idea a little bit of thought and replied, "I guess I was just trying to delay the inedible."



Life certainly is full of perplexing realities, like how is it that one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?



I have a good friend who is a farmer, and among the animals on his farm is a pig. One day I hear him calling his pig "Ball Point." I asked my friend why he picked that name for his pig. He answered, "Oh, that isn't his real name — that's just his pen name."



An artist asked the gallery owner if anyone had shown interest in his paintings.

"I've got good news and bad news," she said. "The good news is that some guy inquired if it would

appreciate in value after you died. When I told him it would, he bought all 15 of your paintings."

"And the bad news?"

"The guy was your doctor."

(Bulletin Digest)



A man came home from the office and found his new bride sobbing convulsively. "I feel terrible," she told him. "I was pressing your suit and I burned a big hole in the seat of your trousers."

"Oh, just forget it," consoled her husband. "Remember that I've got an extra pair of pants for that suit."

"Yes, I know. And it's lucky you have!" said the woman, drying her eyes. "I was able to use a piece from them to patch the hole!"



Old Hank wonders why lying in a hammock shouldn't count as energy saving.



Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

The Use of Time

SPC Alex Gibson

Do any of you know how poison works? It seldom happens like they show in the movies, where someone just falls over dead after being poisoned. Often times they begin to look like they're sick, and they may look that way for a long time before they finally die.

That's what I want to talk about in this article — not physical poison and its effects, but the spiritual poison we put in our souls by the choices we make in life, and the things that are important to us.

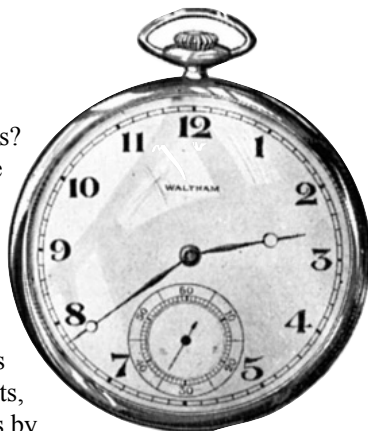
Think back on your history lessons to the earliest civilizations. Often there are two features we see of their remains: their tombs and their temples. In Egypt, the pyramids and obelisks; in Greece, some of the temples are still there, and you have numerous statues of their gods and goddesses; in Europe you have churches and cathedrals and catacombs.

You can see in the ancient world how important their gods were to them. My question becomes, how important is our God to us? Is He worth dying for? Is He worth living for? I should hope so. Sadly, though, in today's world, people are being more and more lured away from meaningful things to entertaining things.

Now I'm not one to bash a good time. But what if all I did was just relax, all day, every day, and never worked? It wouldn't be too long before I'd be fat and lazy, and up to my eyeballs in bills.

Yeah, well, what if I keep a healthy balance between work and play, but never give time to God? I become more drawn into my world and all the "things" in it, while the time spent with God becomes less and less. When we do this, we are taking spiritual poison. We slowly lose standards and integrity, and we may become angry more easily, or maybe let some bad language slip, or give in to that temptation. We are slowly drifting and becoming spiritually sick. The worldly poison eventually results in spiritual death.

And that is what is happening today in the world. Need proof? The new



HEY YOU KIDS!

“Call of Duty” game came out not too long ago, and I know over a dozen who were at the store at midnight to buy it. The “Twilight” or “Harry Potter” books and movies have a similar effect. I can find videos on U-Tube that have had over 9 million hits. Then there are TV shows to consider. Yes, some of these things are not bad, themselves; it’s just that they can take over our lives and control us.

So let me ask you, how much time did you spend today with God, in comparison to your entertainment? I’m guilty sometimes of letting the entertainment win by a huge margin. One day I spent about three hours listening to music and then about one hour thinking and studying about God. And that’s just music. I haven’t counted in the time I’ve spent on the internet after work, or riding my bike. So, you see the problem.

Now what does that imbalance do? It creates distance between ourselves and God. The good Lord often speaks through a “still small voice” (the conscience), and it’s sometimes hard to hear that over an I-Pod. The thrust here is that people today are killing their spiritual walks by poisoning themselves with entertainment. They become consumed by the here and now of things and don’t stop to give back to God.

Often times the phrase, “give back to God”, is used in reference to money, but here I mean it with time. *“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27). Pure religion is showing love to others, and that often has a price tag of *time*. Simply throwing money at people will not usually meet their needs, nor will it bring you closer to the antidote to spiritual distraction. That comes from sitting down and spending time with God, and then going out and doing something about it with those around you.

I promise, you live near someone who has real spiritual or physical needs. If you take the time to get to know them, you’ll find some way to show them God’s love, and in the process of helping someone else, you will have a closer walk with God, yourself. Try it, and don’t be shy. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). Weakness and timidity are not characteristics of Christians, but God gives us a spirit of love, strength, and self control. These are antidotes to the spiritual poisons that threaten us.

Please feel free to share any feed back or ideas. God bless.



For feedback email Alex Gibson at zex1@hotmail.com or PO box 1111, Oak grove KY 42262, USA.

BIBLE FIND

Qualifications of Elders

Bonnie Rushmore

Each clue is a qualification for elders (1 Timothy 3:1-8 NKJV).

7. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. not _____

12. not a lover of _____

Across

1. not _____

4. _____

6. have faithful

7. able to _____

8. _____

13. not _____

14. good _____
among those who are
outside

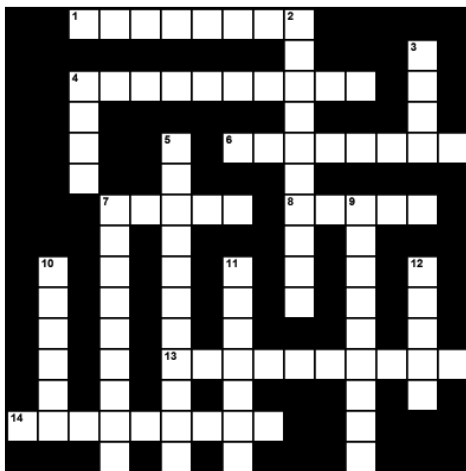
Down

2. Children in

3. one _____

4. _____

5. not _____



He Departed for a Season

Bonnie Rushmore

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. Luke 4:1-13

Most of us remember the biblical account of the temptation of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. While Matthew and Luke gave the details of the temptation of our Lord, Mark chose to simply state, “Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him” (Mark 1:12-13).

Wise old Satan waited for just the right time to tempt Jesus. Following the baptism of Christ, God announced to all gathered there along the banks of the Jordan River, “And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:17). The official proclamation was made as to the true identity of Jesus Christ our Lord and

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Savior. Albert Barnes made the following observation:

Satan's temptations are often the strongest immediately after we have been remarkably favored. Jesus had just been called the Son of God, and Satan took this opportunity to try him. He often attempts to fill us with pride and vain self-conceit when we have been favored with any peace of mind, or any new view of God, and endeavors to urge us to do something which may bring us low and lead us to sin. (*Barnes' Notes*. BibleSoft, 2006)

Satan hoped that with the public acknowledgement that Jesus was the Son of God, His heart would be swelled with pride making Him susceptible to the devil's temptations, for this is the scenario of mortal man (Proverbs 16:18).



In addition, pouncing upon Jesus, as though He had been a mortal man puffed with pride, Satan waited until Jesus was hungry before approaching Him. Christ had not eaten for 40 days, making Him physically weak. It is reasonable to expect one who is hungry to react favorably with the offer of food. Also, Satan's request seemed reasonable to the human nature of man.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

However, Satan failed to remember that Jesus Christ was not merely a human, but He is the Son of God.

Jesus answered each of the three avenues of temptation with “it is written” (Matthew 4:4,7,10). Christ used God’s written Word to rebuke Satan for attempting to make Him a follower of the Devil.

Luke 4:13 states, “And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” Satan decided that he would leave Jesus alone for a period of time. He did not give up, but he planned to attack at another opportunity, when he hoped Christ would be more susceptible to his wily ways. The Scriptures do not reveal any other attempts of Satan tempting Christ, yet the Bible clearly teaches that Satan planned to return.

Just as Satan tried to lure Christ away from God, he is diligently seeking Christians he can pull away from God. People of the world are Satan’s servants, so he does not need to tempt them to sin. They already live a life of sin. The devil places his emphasis on drawing Christians away from God to lead them into a life of sin rather than a life of service to God.

We must know the Scriptures in order to resist the temptations of Satan. Today’s Christian must have the attitude of the Bereans as recorded in Acts 17:10,11. They searched the Scriptures daily, verifying the teaching of Paul and Silas. This was not an easy task since they did not have a completed Bible as we have today. The Bereans had to go to the synagogue, request a scroll, study it, and then return it. They did this every day. We need to study our Bibles every day.

Satan may leave us alone for short periods of time, but he is always lurking about, waiting for opportunities to lure us away from God (1 Peter 5:8). Satan looks for times when we are weak, lonely, or fearful. Satan also looks for times when we may be feeling invincible. Sometimes when we feel we have conquered one sinful trait, we fail to protect ourselves from the devil’s attacks in other areas of our lives. Satan is always looking for our weaknesses to use to tempt us to sin.

Satan left Jesus for a season, and he will leave us temporarily, but know this – he is always looking for our weaknesses to tempt us and make us his servants. †

Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and *Global Harvest* magazines as well as a layout person for the former. She and her husband live in Winona, Mississippi, USA where they and others cooperate to help perpetuate the long-standing missionary work and publishing of the late J.C. Choate.

"He Endured"

Hebrews 11:27

Jimmy Clark



“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). This passage is just one of several about Moses and his walk with God. His endurance is addressed in verse twenty-seven as a necessary quality for his faithfulness. Endurance will be addressed again, as the writer exhorts, *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and*

the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). There is something about the endurance of Moses when facing the trials of Egypt that can help all of us to endure today. Consider three thoughts.

1. **The Nature of Faith.** The faithful child of God is addressed in a simple picture in the book of Luke. *“But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep*

TEXTUAL STUDIES

it and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Biblical faith is that which arises from the right kind of heart keeping the inspired Word of God, and from that, bearing fruit with patience. Moses fits that profile. The word translated “patience” in Luke 8:15 literally means “to remain under”. In spite of the pressure to give in, Moses allowed God to direct his course in life. Endurance involves “keep on keeping on”. John wrote of such faithfulness, “*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God*” (1 John 3:9). The incorruptible seed that makes one a child of God (cf 1 Peter 1:23) is the same seed that keeps one a *faithful* child of God, where its power and effects are appreciated and practiced.

2. **The Need to Forsake.** There is no endurance where the heart is divided. While Moses lived for a while in the house of Pharaoh, the real king of Moses was Jehovah. His faith was tied to the Lord of heaven, not the lord of Egypt. He feared God, not men. Forsaking Egypt was necessary that he might endure. There are things of this life that the child of God must forsake, if he is to endure. “*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26,27,33). The point Jesus was making is that nothing is to come between the individual and the Lord, as far as values, affections, and the like. God either takes top priority, or failure is assured. Love neither the world nor the things of it (cf. 1 John 2:15). Moses lived that quality.
3. **The Noteworthy Focus.** Moses endured, seeing the One who is invisible to the fleshly eye. Every day must be lived with the focus that God is present and aware of one’s comings and goings. Earlier in the book of Hebrews it is stated, “*And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account*” (Hebrews 4:13). To the faithful, that is not a curse, but a blessing. Peter wrote, “*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers*” (1 Peter 3:12). Endurance focuses on the One who is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (cf. Hebrews 11:6). †

Jimmy Clark preaches for the Bethel Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama, USA.

Speaking in Tongues

Royce Frederick

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Were these actual languages conveying a message or merely streams of vocal sounds which could not be understood?

Acts 2:5,6 reveals they were actual languages: *“And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.”*

From the viewpoint of the apostles, these were “other tongues” – foreign languages, unknown to the apostles. Hebrew was their ancestral language, but Aramaic and Greek were the languages widely spoken in Israel. How could these apostles from lowly Galilee suddenly speak fluently in other languages they had never learned?

From the viewpoint of the hearers, these tongues were their own native languages. *“Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God!’”* (Acts 2:7-11). All of the people heard a clear message in their own language!

The miracle of speaking in other languages:

- **Enabled** the Gospel to spread quickly and accurately to all nations and ethnic groups.
- **Confirmed** the Gospel message (Mark 16:17) during the infancy of the church, while the New Testament was being written.
- **Ceased** (ended) after the New Testament was completely written (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; James 1:25; John 16:12,13; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). †

Royce Frederick is the Editor of *International Gospel Teacher* and lives in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

Archaeological Evidence of Joseph in Egypt?



The story of Joseph's rise to power in Egypt after having been sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37-50) is one of the most memorable in Scripture, and David Rohl is convinced that Bietak's work at Avaris has uncovered evidence of Joseph's presence there.

Briefly, the facts are these: in 1987 Bietak discovered the largest sepulchre so far found at Avaris, and this funerary monument appears to be one of the earliest at the site. The tomb was empty and "all the signs pointed to a careful clearance of the vault rather than the usual ransacking." The remains of a twice-life-size statue reveal that the owner of the tomb held high office but was a foreigner; the head of

in Egypt?

Rex Banks

the statue was badly damaged, the nose having been smashed off, the eyes having been gouged out, and an attempt having been made to cleave it in two. Rohl is convinced that Bietak has uncovered the tomb of Joseph.

At present there is just not enough information available to decide the matter, but Rohl's suggestion is intriguing. It does seem evident that Joseph had a residence in the land of Goshen (Genesis 45:10; 50:22), and of course, if this is the case he would have been among the earliest Semites living at the site. Too, Joseph held high office among the Egyptians, and he was a foreigner. His body was removed from his tomb at the time of the Exodus. Furthermore, the plagues upon Egypt would have brought great suffering upon the land, and it would be quite understandable if the statue of a venerated Israelite became the object of vandalism by those left in the land. Perhaps future work at the site will decide this question. †

Rex Banks preaches the Gospel in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Some Things We Can Know

J.A. Thornton

Introduction:

- A. We can know by sight, deduction from evidence (faith). *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).
- B. We will be responsible for what we can and do know.

I. We Can Know the Truth

- A. *“And you shall know **the truth**, and the truth shall make you*
- B. *free”* (John 8:31,32).
- C. All can know if we desire (John 7:17).
- D. Knowing the truth calls for us to obey it *“... you have purified your souls in **obeying the truth...**”* (1 Peter 1:22,23).

II. We Can Know the Plan of Salvation

- A. It is as simple as $2+2=4$ (Mark 16:16).
- B. We can know that baptism saves *“... The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us...**”* (1 Peter 3:21).
- C. We can know that we know Him *“And hereby we do **know** that we know him, **if we keep his commandments**. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby **know** we that we are in him”* (1 John 2:3-5).

III. We Know that God Hears Not Sinners (John 9:24,31)

- A. How could the former blind man have known this (Proverbs 28:9; 15:8; 1:26-28; Psalm, 66:19)?
- B. We can know He hears *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, **He hears us**”* (1 John 5:14,15).
- C. Other New Testament passages *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight”* (1 John 3:22; 1 Peter 3:12).

IV. We Can Know There Is One Church

- A. Christ built one *““And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this*

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18,19).

- B. He purchased one church: “... *shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).*
- C. There is but one church: “... *and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body...*” (Ephesians 1:22,23) “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:20).*
- D. He adds to one church: “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).*
- E. He saves one church: “*Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23).*

V. We Can Know How to Live

- A. Walk in newness of life “*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).*
- B. Live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11-14).
- C. Set your affections on things above (Colossians 3:1-3).

VI. We Can Know We Must Die

- A. It is so appointed “*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).*
- B. The living know this (Ephesians 9:5).
- C. It is the way of all the earth (1 Kings 2:1-4).

VII. We Can Know We Shall Face the Judgment (Hebrews 9:27)

- A. God has appointed a day “*He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness...*” (Acts 17:30,31).
- B. All will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10).
- C. Secrets will be judged (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).
- D. We will be judged by the Word (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12-15). †

J. A. Thornton, now deceased, was a longtime preacher in the state of Mississippi, USA.

Some Things a Sinner Learned Too Late

Luke 16:19-31

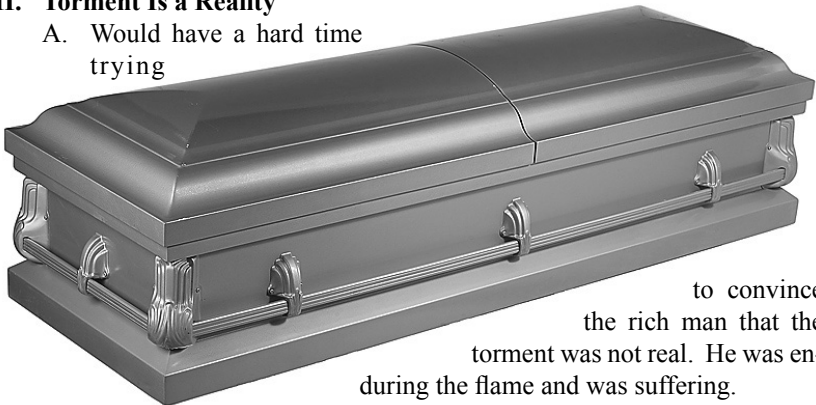
Curtis Camp

I. Torment Begins at Death

- A. No such thing as unconsciousness after death
 - 1. Man is in God's image (Genesis 1:26); therefore, spirit. Man is immortal – eternal – personality – never dies.
 - 2. Read of mortal and immortal bodies (Romans 8:11); 1 Corinthians 15:53), but not of mortal and immortal soul.
 - 3. He was conscious, recognized, remembered. He was in “*torments*”. “*I am tormented in this flame*”. It was “*a place of torment*”.
 - 4. Death is not a “dreamless sleep”.

II. Torment Is a Reality

- A. Would have a hard time trying



to convince the rich man that the torment was not real. He was enduring the flame and was suffering.

- B. Why argue about what hell is? Why try to take the fires out of hell? New Testament still talks about this place.
 - 1. Matthew 25:41
 - 2. Matthew 25:30

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

3. Revelation 14:11
 4. Mark 9:43-48
 5. I don't intend to go there anyway. Don't want to go.
- C. The torment he endured then he still endures tonight.

III. It Was Too Late to Pray

- A. Prayer is so often abused – a waste of time, actually.
- B. *“Father Abraham, have mercy on me.” “Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” “I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house...”*
 1. Not a single desire was granted.
 2. Hosea 13:14
 3. Isaiah 55:6,7
- C. Every request would have been granted in life.

IV. Too Late to Be Mission-Minded

- A. *“For I have five brothers...”* Luke 16:27,28.
- B. He knew what they needed, Luke 16:30.
- C. We know the same but do not believe we'll be lost if we do not do them.

V. There Is No Second Chance

- A. *“...there is a great gulf fixed; so that they...”*

VI. Warnings Come from God's Word

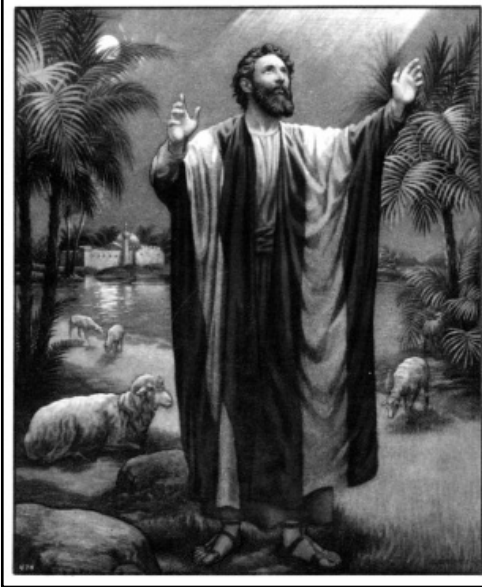
- A. *“If they will not hear Moses and the prophets...they have Moses and the prophets...they would not hear though one...”*
- B. Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10,12; John 12:48

VII. Even a Child of God Can Be Lost

- A. This man a Jew – “Father Abraham” – “Son, remember...?”
- B. Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 10:22; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19; 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:13-24 †

Curtis Camp preached the Word of God for many years, primarily in Texas, USA.

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27 NKJV).



Abraham: A Man Known Of God

(Genesis 18:18,19)

Jimmy Young

To say that Abraham was a well-known man of God is without question. Many Bible scholars through the years have taught how God chose Abraham. He made

a covenant with him, and blessed him with the (1) land promise, (2) nation promise, and (3) Messiah promise (Genesis 12:1-3).

But why did God choose Abraham? Out of all the men alive at that time, why Abraham? Well, we all know it was because of his faith. In Genesis 15:6 we read: *“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”* It was because of Abraham’s **obedient** faith (Genesis 22:15-18. God chose Abraham because He knew what kind of man he was (Genesis 18:18,19).

A close study of Abraham is important because it could make a difference in whether we or our children make it to heaven or not.

It is so important to remember, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him”* (Genesis 18:19). God knew him because He is omniscient (Psalm 139:1-6). Don’t think for a moment that God doesn’t know us too (Matthew 10:30; 1 Timothy 5:24,25)!

God knew that Abraham would command his children (Genesis 18:19). There were no “options” for Abraham’s household. Today, many are too lax in commanding their children to keep the way of the Lord. Answer the following questions:

BIBLE CHARACTERS

1. Would we be lax if our son/daughter wanted to play with poison?
2. Would we allow our children to play in a busy street?
3. Would we allow our children to decide for themselves in regard to attending school?

The Bible tells us that Abraham commanded his household. Would there be anything wrong with that today? The answer is obvious, “NO!” As a matter of fact, Abraham is to be a standing example even today. Solomon said, “*A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies*” (Proverbs 14:25). Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 7:13,14 regarding the importance of making the correct choice.

Because of Abraham’s proper choice, God blessed him (Genesis 18:18, 19b), but those blessings were dependent upon Abraham’s faithfulness. The result of his life, of his commanding his children, was a faithful legacy. The names of his children, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, ring out loudly in the history of mankind.

What are we building for the Lord? Will we have a faithful dynasty? We, too, must command our children and our households so that we, and they, will be blessed by God. May God raise up men and women like unto Abraham who will command their households to walk in the way of God and to do justice and judgment! †

Jimmy Young works with the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

“So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant...” (Deuteronomy 6:6-11 NKJV).

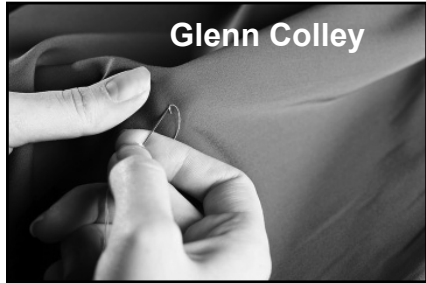
BIBLE CHARACTERS

Dorcas

Dorcas lived in Joppa, 45 miles northwest of Jerusalem. A seaport on the Mediterranean, Joppa was the place Solomon used to gather timber for the Temple, and the place to which Jonah fled when he boarded a ship to Tarshish. For whatever reason, Joppa had many poor. As the old saying goes, “The sea leaves many widows.”

Dorcas couldn’t do every conceivable good work available to Christians — no one can — but the beauty in her Christianity is that she found something she was good at and put herself to doing it for Christ. Verse 36 says, “...*this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did.*” Alms deeds are acts of kindness to the poor. Like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, Dorcas worked willingly with her hands. 2 Timothy 2:10 teaches that women should “*clothe themselves with good works*”. Dorcas did that.

It’s no surprise, then, that people found it easy to care for Dorcas. When she died, there were fellow-Christians eager to care for her body and tend to things. People like Dorcas who die without families may be hurriedly buried in a potter’s field for unknowns, but not her. “*And it*



came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber...and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:37-39). Isn’t this a sweeter memorial than a fine marble stone?

The Lord saw a need to let Dorcas live on. Remember that this is in the first century when miraculous abilities were possessed by God’s people, and that we don’t have such powers today. Peter interrupted Dorcas’ own funeral! There were at least two reasons God did this. First, as with all the other miracles, He did it to confirm the Word that was being preached by Peter and the others; and second, because Dorcas filled a need no one else could readily fill. She was mightily important because she found her place in the body of Christ and filled it. †

Glenn Colley is the preacher for the West Huntsville Church of Christ in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I was a priest.
2. My wife was a descendant of Aaron.
3. The Scriptures say I was blameless before the Lord.
4. My wife was barren and we were both old.
5. An angel appeared to me while I was performing my duties of burning incense in the temple.
6. The angel told me my wife would have a son.
7. Because I did not believe the angel, I was struck dumb until my son was born.
8. The angel told me my son would prepare the way for the Lord.
9. My wife's name was Elisabeth.
10. My son's name was John.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I am in the northeastern portion of the Nile Delta.
2. My land area is about 900 square miles.
3. My land was good for grazing animals but not as good for raising crops.
4. The Egyptians did not think much of my land.
5. The pharaoh granted permission for a foreign family to settle my land.
6. When God punished the Egyptians with the plagues, my land did not receive the plague of flies or hail.
7. Joseph was a ruler in Egypt when the foreign family settled in my land.
8. The foreign family to settle my land was Joseph's father, brothers, and their families.
9. Joseph's family raised herds and flocks in my land.
10. Joseph's family was given the job of tending Pharaoh's herds in my land.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Do Men Have the Right to Be Wrong?

Ken Tyler

Many people in the religious world believe that as long as your religion meets your needs and you are satisfied, then it doesn't matter what you believe and practice. After all, we are all headed to the same place. As a result of this attitude, individuals can believe what they want to, and teach what they want to, and still be acceptable to God. But is this attitude biblical? Did the New Testament church teach different doctrines that contradicted one another? Did men have the right to be wrong in the first century? Do men have the right to be wrong today?

The biblical answer is clear — men do not have the right to be wrong. Jesus plainly taught that one's salvation is dependent upon following the truths of the Scriptures. Listen to Matthew 7:21-23: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out demons and in thy name done*

many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Jesus plainly describes religious people that are lost. The reason — they were not doing the will of the Father in heaven. They did not have the right to be teaching and practicing that which was contrary to God's will. This passage is very important, and each one of us should pay close attention to the seriousness of it. Get the idea out of your mind that it doesn't matter what you believe. Jesus has plainly told us that it does. God's will — the truth — will take you to heaven, and nothing else.

The devil has done an unbelievable job in deceiving people to think that it doesn't matter what they do in religion. It's amazing how many different doctrines we have today, and the majority think that it doesn't matter. We had better get back to the Bible and listen to God if we want to go to heaven.

No! Men do not have the right to be wrong. †

Ken Tyler is a Gospel preacher working with the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Born a Sinner?



Question: “Is a child born a sinner, or is he pure and clean until he comes to know right from wrong?”

Answer: I appreciate this question. Many today believe babies are born in sin. Carefully study the following:

1. Sin is a violation of God’s will. *“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness”* (1 John 3:4). *“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death”* (James 1:14). *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23; cf. Psalm 14:3; 1 John 5:17; Romans 14:23).

2. Sin cannot be inherited from one’s parents. *“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” (Ezekiel 18:20).

If a husband runs a red light **he** has transgressed the law, but **neither his wife nor his children will be held accountable** for his violation of the law. Sin is an act of *an individual*, and the individual is held accountable (2 Corinthians 5:10).

3. A child is sinless and therefore “safe”. He is safe because he has no sins from which to be saved. If children were born *in sin*, Jesus would have never held them up as examples of purity and humility. *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 18:3).

Was Jesus telling us to become like sinners? †

Mike Benson is a Gospel preacher living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA.

Where Did Satan Come From?

Bobby Dockery

Our post-modern world scoffs at the notion there is a real Devil. Even many religious leaders are reluctant to accept the reality of Satan. According to a survey of ministers taken several years ago, 62% of Methodist pastors, 37% of Episcopal priests, and 47% of Presbyterian preachers denied the existence of Satan. (Jeffrey Haddon, *Christianity Today*, October 13, 1967.)



The Bible makes no attempt to prove Satan's reality — it accepts it as a fact, just as it accepts the existence of God as a fact. Satan is just

as real as the impact he has on the world. He is just as real as murder — because he was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He is just as real as lying — because he is the father of it...just as real as war and depravity, because he is the originator of them.

But where did he come from...?

(1) Satan was originally created by God. The Bible makes it plain that

God is the Creator of all things. Colossians 1:16 specifically states that God was the moving force behind the creation of things in heaven and

in earth, visible and invisible, principalities and powers. In Revelation 4:11, the twenty-four elders are pictured as throwing their crowns before

BIBLE QUESTIONS

the throne of God while praising Him with these words: *“Thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they existed and were created”* (NAS). If God created all things, then no creature exists which He did not create! Satan was not co-eternal with God. This is unthinkable because it would put the Devil on an equal footing with God! Satan is not God’s equal! Rather, Satan is a creature who exists at the will of God.

(2) Satan was not created in his present corrupt condition. A Holy God would not make an unholy thing! How could God demand holiness from man if He Himself created evil? God would not have made His own enemy. Though God made Satan, He did not make him as he now is!

(3) At some point after his creation, Satan became totally corrupt. Jude 6 speaks of angels *“which kept not their first estate but left their own habitation.”* The *“first estate”* is where God originally put them, but they left their place and ceased to be what they had once been. John 8:44 plainly says that Satan *“abode not”* or *“remained not”* in the truth. To leave something, you must first have it. Satan was once in the truth, but he refused to stay there. Instead, he rebelled against God and left the light.

(4) Satan was responsible for his own corruption. He was not corrupted by God, *“for God cannot be*

tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:14). Pride seems to have been at the root of Satan’s corruption (Jude 6). In corrupting himself, he became the father of sin, and his destructive influence was unleashed upon the world (John 8:44).

The Bible warns that Satan is a malignant, destructive enemy who *“prowls around...looking for someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). The Bible insists that Satan is real and his power is great, but he can be overcome by *“the blood of the Lamb and the word of His testimony”* (Revelation 12:11). †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”
(2 Peter 2:4,5)

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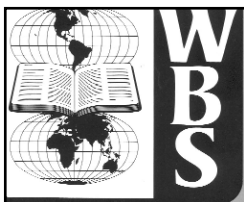
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- Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 32)

1. Because they had faith.
2. Because they did not believe.
3. Jesus Christ.
4. Isaiah.
5. Because it was not according to knowledge.
6. Their own.
7. Israel was sincere, yet still lost because they did not follow God's will. The same is true today if we do not believe and obey Christ's commandments.
8. Christ, righteousnes.
9. Christ fulfilled the law, and also brought the law to an end.
10. By perfectly keeping the law, but no one can do that.
11. It was very near, in their mouths and hearts.
12. Belief and confession of faith.
13. Both faith and confession only brings "unto" or close to salvation.
14. No.
15. By the act of baptism we are calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21 & 2:28; 22:16).

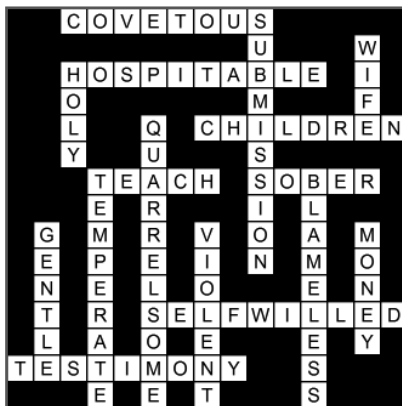
Who Am I? (page 103)

Answer: Zacharias

Where Am I? (page 104)

Answer: Goshen

Bible Find (page 88)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**IN LIFE OR IN DEATH,
THE QUESTION MUST BE ANSWERED BY EVERY SOUL:**

Have you ever wondered why, of all the puzzles that confront the human mind, every one of us has had to deal with the question of the existence of God? People who believe in God are often characterized as superstitious and uneducated. So, why, in this age of knowledge and of open ridicule of spirituality by many in the scientific and academic world, has the idea of God not been completely abandoned?

Look back to the earliest historical and archaeological records, and you will find God at the core of man's existence: worship of God, efforts to obey God, expectation of death and meeting God in judgment; you will even find defiance of God. And today? Humanity is divided into two major camps: those who spend their lives in some form of acceptance of God, and those who spend their lives denying His existence and trying to prove that He is only a fabrication of the human mind! But God — in acceptance or rejection — has been the centerpiece of every culture, in every age, throughout the world!

Isn't it ironic — and revealing — that there are people who have actually made it their life's work to deny, refute, and disprove the existence of God, declaring Him to be no more than a myth? Have you ever heard of anyone spending his entire life trying to disprove the existence of any other "myth"?

Shouldn't that tell us something?

from **Can Man Find the Way to God?**
Betty Burton Choate