

VOLUME EIGHTY-FIVE

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



God's light shines in a dark world.



**Ardron A. Hinton: To that eternal world,
January 30, 2015**

A Viewpoint

*We need not weep for the tired form
That must be laid aside,
Nor fear cold Jordan's deathly storm
When crossing must be tried.*

*For we can plan for such an hour,
Have ev'ry need supplied,
By tapping in to heav'nly pow'r
And Jesus at our side.*

*A deathless body He'll provide
And bear us gently o'er,
Safely past death's chilling tide,
Secure forever more.*

*Dying is gain for faithful souls,
The victory is won!
Life thus reaches its greatest goals:
Its final race is run!*

— Ardron Hinton

The One Baptism of Ephesians 4

What is the "ONE BAPTISM"

1. Not Baptism of John - Acts 19:4
2. Not Holy Spirit Baptism - Acts 1:1-8
3. Not Baptism of fire - Matt. 3:10-12

WHO Should Be baptized?

1. Infants? NO
2. Saved People? NO
3. Penitent Believers? YES

Mark 16:15-16



What is the "MODE" of Baptism

REQUIRES



Immersion

1. Water (Acts 8:36) YES NO
2. Much Water (John 3:32) YES NO
3. Into - Out of (Acts 8:38) YES NO
4. Burial (Rom. 6:3-5) YES NO
5. New Birth (John 3:5) YES NO
6. A Planting (Rom. 6:5) YES NO

Sprinkling



Colossians 2:12 - "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

Baptism

INTO	CHRIST	REACH	BLESSINGS	BRINGS
INTO	NAME	REACH	REMISSION	BRINGS
INTO	BODY	REACH	CHURCH	BRINGS
INTO	DEATH	REACH	BLOOD	BRINGS
	Gal. 3:37		Eph. 1:3	1 Tim. 2:10
	Mt. 28:19-20		Acts 10:43	Acts 4:12
	1 Cor. 12:13		Eph. 1:22-23	Eph. 5:23
	Rom. 6:3-4		Rom. 5:8-11	Eph. 1:7

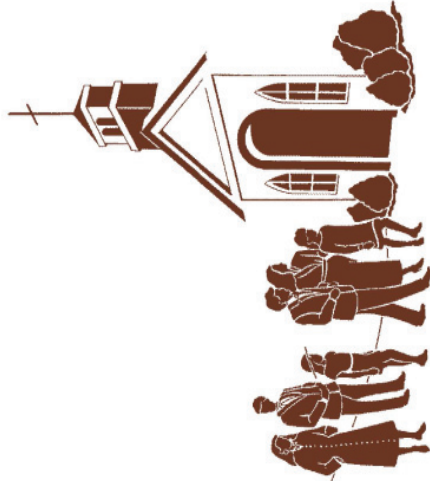
Salvation

ARE YOU CLEANSSED BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST?

Choosing a Church

What Factors Influence People in Choosing A Church?

- Nearness to One's Home
- Family Background
- Personal Preference
- Reputation
- Appearance of the Building
- Programs & Services
- Friendship Ties
- Convenience Factors
- Liking the Preacher



**The Major Factor Should Be
What The Bible Teaches About the Church**

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Please send articles for publication and changes of address to Byron Nichols in Springfield, with both old and new addresses, so that our records can be corrected.

Cost: \$4.00 for single issues; \$15.00 for four issues; \$25.00 for eight issues. Please make checks payable to World Evangelism Foundation, and mail to Byron Nichols, (Editor) P.O. Box 11218, Springfield, MO 65808; Telephone: 417-823-4918; Email: byron.nichols@att.net.

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



Planting Trees

Byron Nichols

Recently I was on the campus once again of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee. A striking new tower has been erected in a prominent spot on the grounds. It is very attractive to look at and the striking of the bell lends a pleasant sound to the activities of the campus.

On the base of the tower are some plaques and engravings which are mostly of historical significance regarding the university. However, on one corner of the base is an engraving that immediately caught my attention, one that is not directly related to the others. It read:

“The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” (Nelson Henderson)

I initially assumed that Nelson Henderson was associated historically with the city of Henderson, but my limited research found no connection at all. Rather, the statement was selected for its wisdom instead of because of who wrote or said it.


Mr. Henderson’s statement definitely is appropriate in relation to trees. Most trees that ultimately provide much shade require many years to reach the degree of maturity which enables them to do that. The one who plants such trees seldom has the pleasure of partaking of the shade that is later made available. The planting was still a deed of wisdom, of unselfishness, of thoughtfulness, and generosity. There wouldn’t be nearly as much shade to enjoy and benefit from if we all had to produce all of our own shade. It’s good to be self-sufficient, but we don’t have the capability to

be totally self-sufficient...we all benefit from the contributions of others, including those who have gone before us.

While this is certainly not a biblical quotation, it reflects a principle that is prominent in the Scriptures and is very much in keeping with God's will for all of His people throughout our sojourn here. The Bible is full of admonitions for us to provide for ourselves and our families, but that isn't all. We are taught again and again to be mindful of the welfare of others in general, and to be ready to get beyond ourselves in doing good, as Paul teaches in Galatians 6:9,10, ***"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."***

Rather than "planting trees" only for our own personal benefit in our own lifetime, as God's people, we must grow to the point that we are more aware of what we can do that will benefit others, even in the years to come. God made it possible for Solomon to have the wisdom to recognize and point out to the rest of us that ***"There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches"*** (Proverbs 13:7). The point seems to be that giving of oneself for the benefit of others can be enriching to the giver in ways unexpected and unintended.

Being parents and grandparents is not always an easy assignment, but those who take their task seriously try diligently to subscribe to the advice of Proverbs 22:6 – ***"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."*** We understand that this is a "proverb," which means that it is generally true that a child who has received godly training and parenting will turn out to be an adult who honors and obeys his/her parents and the Heavenly Father. I would suggest that such training is a form of "planting trees" with the future in mind.

Just think what could happen in our congregations if the current members, and especially those in positions of leadership, would give serious study and attention to what could and should be done in an effort to result in the those congregations being spiritually strong and a force for good. Such spiritual "tree planting" would greatly enhance the body of Christ right now, but in addition to that, there could be positive carryover effects being evidenced even in the coming decades. 

There is a poem entitled The Bridge Builder. It tells of an old man building a bridge over a deep chasm, not for himself, but for a youngster who would be passing that way and would need the bridge to get across the chasm.

The Bridge Builder

Will Allen Dromgoole (1860-1934)

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray
To a chasm vast and deep and wide
Through which was flowing a swollen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The rapids held no fears for him.
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," cried a fellow pilgrim near,
"You're wasting your time in building here.
Your journey will end with the closing day;
You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide;
Why build you this bridge at even-tide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head.
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There follows after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This stream, which has been as naught to me,
To that fair youth may a pitfall be.
He too must cross in the twilight dim —
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."

What a difference could result if we would engage ourselves more in "planting" some spiritual "trees" for the future strength and stability of the Lord's church! What an impact could be made upon the church as a whole!





Christ Is the *Only* Way

Jerry Bates

The Bible plainly declares that Jesus is the only way to God. For example, in Acts 4:12, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* In today’s pluralistic society this sentiment is not politically correct. Men

would like to believe that all religions are okay; they are just different ways to reach heaven. To them, it seems very arrogant for anyone to claim absolute truth. In general, men think God is so kind and loving that He will save everyone who is a good person or tries to follow whatever way he thinks is best for him. Many think they do not need a Savior because they can save themselves when the time comes, if they will need saving. It seems foolish to believe that someone else can or should save us. Naturally, pride is the root cause of this attitude.

We also must realize that Christianity is not the only religion to declare exclusivity. We are all aware of Islam’s claim to be the only true religion and that Mohammad is the only true prophet of God. According to its proponents, the sole proof of that is the Koran, but one must read it in the original language to see it, and anyone who does not believe it should be punished.

Hindus claim to accept *all religions*, but only if you accept their claim that *true religion is a blending of all religions*. They are uncompromising on a few things, such as karma and reincarnation. They also often persecute those who do not practice their religion, such as is going on in India now.

On the other hand, Christianity is tolerant of other religions, even if we do not recognize their legitimacy, and we do not persecute those who believe differently.

Almost all cultures have believed there is something better after this life, and throughout the history of the world, there have been many teachers who said that they had found a way to that eternal bliss. Jesus is not the first to declare His ability to show the way to heaven. What makes His claim more credible than the claims of so many others?

Jesus proved His teachings to be true by the miracles that He performed. He said in John 5:36, ***“But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.”*** He further said in John 10:25, ***“The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.”*** These miracles were so convincing that even His enemies could not deny that great miracles had been performed. The greatest miracle of all, and the most persuasive proof of Jesus’ divinity is His resurrection. Of course, many still do not believe this, but the historical evidence for this miracle is very persuasive, if one will take the time to open mindedly consider it. If the resurrection is true, this prevents us from also accepting other religions as equally true, because Jesus would be the only Divine Being sent from God. On the other hand, if the resurrection is not true, then we cannot accept Christianity as equally good among all religions, because Christ would be the greatest liar and deceiver to ever walk the earth.

Jesus is the only way, because He shows us the Father. ***“He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me”*** (John 12:44,45). Only Jesus can show us the Father, because He is God. ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among men”*** (John 1:1,14). Others cannot show us God, because they have never seen Him. At best, they can only show us what they *think* God is.

Jesus is the only way because He opened the way to God. ***“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh”*** (Hebrews 10:19,20). Jesus opened or made the way to reach God. He not only *opened* the way, but He helps us *walk* the way to God. No one else claims to have *made* the way or to help us walk the way. They only claim to *show* us the way; however, since they never *walked* the way

before, how do we know they reached what they were intending? Their bodies are still in their graves!


Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He and His resurrection provide the only hope for the world. If that is true, why doesn't everyone accept Him? Why are so many devoted to other religions?

While there are probably several reasons, one major obstacle is the demand of Christ, that we come to Him in total submission! Other religions basically tell us to pull ourselves up and save ourselves. There is no Savior, as such, in Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam. Followers of those religions must depend on their own works to save them. This feeds into the pride of humans, as mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, Christ tells us that we *can't* pull ourselves up. He said in John 15:5, ***"Without Me, you can do nothing."*** Paul said that we were all once helpless in sin: ***"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"*** (Romans 5:6).

If we want to be saved, we must depend on Christ, and that dependence involves a total commitment to Him. Romans 12:1,2 defines the degree to which we must submit ourselves to God: ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."***

How do we come to God? ***"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. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."***

Any time one demands total commitment, there will be resistance. Do you resist the truth? Do you resist committing to Christ? Truly there is salvation in no other. Jesus said to him, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"*** (John 14:6). 



Ascension of Jesus Christ

Louis Rushmore

Comparatively speaking, the Bible treats the Ascension of Christ less often in its pages than several other Christian doctrines. Yet, many biblical passages are more or less dependent upon and imply the Ascension of Christ. Irrespective of the amount of space dedicated to the Ascension of our Lord in the

Bible, it is a crucial and cardinal doctrine of Christianity. For instance, the Ascension of Jesus Christ enabled Him to act as Intercessor (***“It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”*** Romans 8:34), Mediator (***“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”*** 1 Timothy 2:5) and Advocate (***“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*** 1 John 2:1) for Christians before Almighty God. In addition, note: “The spiritual value of the Ascension lies, not in Christ’s physical remoteness, but in His spiritual nearness. He is free from earthly limitations, and His life above is the promise and guarantee of ours” (ISBE).

The Ascension Defined

The Ascension of Jesus Christ is “...his visible passing from earth to heaven in the presence of his disciples, on the Mount of Olives, forty days after the resurrection...” (McClintock and Strong). Three accounts of the occurrence of the Ascension appear in the New Testament. ***“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”*** (Mark 16:19 NKJV). ***“And He led them***

out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50,51).

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:9-12).

The Incarnation through the Virgin Birth was the mechanism by which Jesus Christ came to earth. Conversely, the Ascension was the instrument by which Jesus Christ transferred from this terrestrial sphere to the celestial realm.

There is just not much information in the New Testament respecting the activity of the Ascension. While conversing with His apostles atop Mount Olivet, our Lord arose into the air and continued to rise until the clouds concealed Him. Two angels nearby on the mountain informed the disciples that one day Jesus Christ would return in similar manner as He departed (Acts 1:11). *“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7).*

Prior Ascensions

The Old Testament records two ascensions respectively of prophets of God, though unlike Jesus, they did not die and resurrect from the dead prior to their ascensions. The first of the two references lacks any elaboration. *“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24).* A New Testament passage corroborates Enoch’s ascension. *“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5-6).*

Then, 2 Kings 2:1-18 chronicles the ascension of the prophet Elijah. Unlike the information pertaining to the ascension of Enoch, an elaborate description — painting a vivid picture in the human mind — depicts

Elijah's ascension. The fanfare with which Elijah climbed into sky was more flamboyant than Jesus' ascent into the heavens. ***"Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"*** (2 Kings 2:11). The common factor in the three ascensions was the removal of the prophets and Jesus Christ from the earth to heaven.

Predictions of the Ascension of Christ

Predictions or prophecies of the Ascension of Christ appear in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. For instance, one learns from Acts 2 that Psalm 110 pertained to the Ascension of our Lord. Part of the first recorded Gospel sermon strings together the death of Christ (Acts 2:23), His resurrection (Acts 2:24-31) and Christ's Ascension (Acts 2:32-36).

"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 'For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:32-36; cf., Psalm 110:1-7)

Furthermore, Jesus Christ repeatedly advised His disciples that eventually He would ascend and not be with them personally anymore. ***"...because I go to My Father and you see Me no more"*** (John 16:10). Doubtless, since they had never observed an ascension before or anything comparable to it, they were as puzzled about the Ascension of Christ beforehand as they were about other matters, such as the nature of Christ's kingdom (Acts 1:6).


Consider these utterances of Christ to His disciples about the impending Ascension. ***"What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"*** (John 6:62). ***"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself"*** (John 12:32). ***"You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father***

is greater than I” (John 14:28). “Then some of His disciples said among themselves, ‘What is this that He says to us, A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father?’” (John 16:17). “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father” (John 16:28). “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

Allusions to the Ascension of Christ

The New Testament freely refers to Jesus Christ being in heaven, which is the consequence of His Ascension. Some passages say in so many words that Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10; 1 Timothy 3:16). Other, indirect references imply that the Ascension has taken place since Jesus Christ is in heaven now. *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1). “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:10). See also Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 1:3; 9:24; 1 Peter 3:22.*

Summary

The Ascension of Christ is so much more than merely moving His habitation from the earth to heaven. First, the Ascension provided an explanation of the whereabouts of the resurrection Lord. Secondly, the Ascension was Christ’s grand entry back into heaven and the signal of the commencement of the next phase in the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ relative to the salvation of human souls. 

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The Providence of God

T. Pierce Brown

We have heard it said that the word “providence” is not in the Bible, and that it is simply a word that we use to describe a miracle. We believe that is an inaccurate statement for the following reasons. In Acts 24:2 we find, ***“Tertullus began his accusation, saying: ‘Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight...”***” The same Greek word is used in Romans 13:14 and is translated ***“provision”***. ***“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*** So when we find God or any person making *provision* for a person or an event, it is ***“providence”***.

In Genesis 22:8 we find, ***“And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together.”*** The word ***“provide”*** is from the Hebrew ***“raah”*** and indicates that God will see it, or see to it that it happens. It is used in various ways in the Old Testament, but one of the meanings, according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs’ Hebrew lexicon, is ***“to regard, to look after, to see after,”*** which is what we mean by ***“providential care”***.

In Psalm 78:20, we find, ***“Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?”*** The word ***“provide”*** is from the Hebrew ***“kuwn”*** and is translated various ways, including ***“to make provision for,”*** which is what we mean by ***“providence”***. Whether it was by a miracle, or in some other way, God promised to make provision for His people, and it was a general word that referred to provision, whether by man or by God.

In Genesis 50:20 we find Joseph saying, ***“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”*** When he said, ***“God meant,”*** the word ***“meant”*** is from the Hebrew ***“chashab”***, which involves planning ahead, and is translated ***“forecast”*** at least

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twice in the Old Testament. It is translated “*purpose*” in such passages as Jeremiah 36:3, “*It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.*”

So when God purposes, plans ahead for something to happen, in His “*providence*” He will provide for it to happen. That is why the word “*provide*” and “*providence*” are from the same root word, and there are various words in the Bible to show that God will provide for, or providentially care for, His people. He may do this in a miraculous way, as when He provided manna in the wilderness, or in a non-miraculous way, as when He provided for Joseph in the pit, or Moses in the ark in the river.

It is not correct to say that providence and miraculous works are the same, even though God may in His providence (purpose and care) use a miracle to accomplish His ultimate purpose. Perhaps an example would be in the plagues in Egypt. It was a *miracle* that God sent the locusts in the way He did, but it was a *natural event* that the locusts would eat the vegetation. In the providence of God, and within the laws of nature, He causes it to *rain* on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45), but *the flood* in Noah’s case was miraculous, for God went beyond *the natural course of events* to provide the flood. God providentially took care of Noah and his family, but God did not build the ark Himself, nor did He put those eight souls and all the animals into the ark miraculously, for they could just walk on board.

In Matthew 27:45 we find, “*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.*” God could have, in His providence, had the death of Christ to have been timed when darkness would naturally have occurred. If that had been the case, those standing around would not have known for sure whether or not God had anything special to do with it. However, since the Passover is celebrated at the full moon, when the moon is opposite the sun, the darkness that covered the land during those three hours of Christ’s suffering on the cross was doubtless a *miraculous* event, for it could not have been an eclipse of the sun.

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We have tried to distinguish between the miraculous and providential by showing that the *miracles* as they were performed in the Scripture were mostly done as evidence or signs of the power of God and could be recognized as such, because they were an obvious overruling of the laws of nature. On the other hand, a *providential act* would be one in which God is operating “behind the scenes”, so to speak, without anyone knowing that He had anything to do with the outcome.

Today, anything out of the ordinary or unexpected is proclaimed by many to be “a miracle”, but the age of God proving a new messenger or a new message by the use of miracles is over. This is, in reality, the age of “providential care”. So, although we should not speak of providence and miracles as if they were the same, it is true that God can make things happen without humans being aware that He had anything to do with it. †

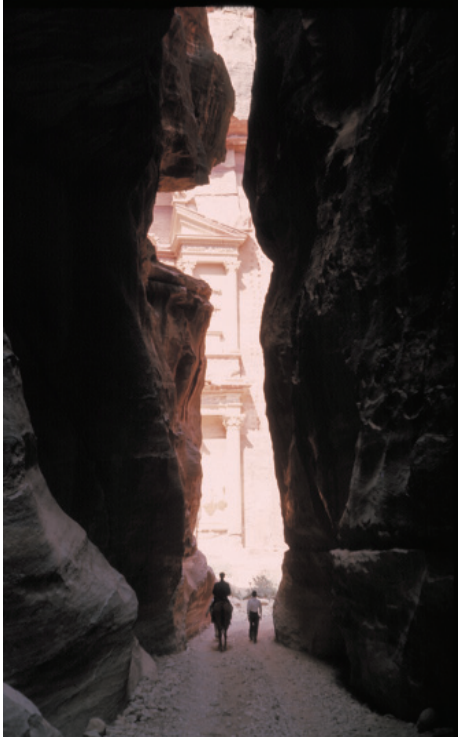
T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

PROVIDENCE OR MIRACLES?

The age of revealing a new doctrinal message from God through an inspired prophet, and of confirming both through *miracles*, ended with the completion of the New Testament. God’s work today is no less powerful, but it is through His *providential* use of the countless tools available to Him.

For instance:

- ◆ **American** Christians supported a missionary in **Malaysia**.
 - ◆ An **Indian** air controller was in **Yangon** and met an air controller there.
 - ◆ A **Bible course** from the missionary in Malaysia was discussed.
 - ◆ The **Burmese man** took the course. The **missionary** came to Burma and taught him and his **family** further, baptizing them, the beginning of the church in **Yangon**.
 - ◆ A man from **west Burma** brought his son to Yangon for **medical treatment**. **Literature** from **east India** had resulted in **congregations** being started in west Burma. Through a west Burma Christian who had attended a **Bible school** in **Madras, India**, knowledge of the Yangon church was shared, so contact was made. Ultimately, **working together** among themselves and with numerous **American Christians**, a **Bible school** was started in Yangon. **Churches now exist in many parts of that Buddhist/communist nation.**
- Count up the tools/people/miles involved in this great providential work of God — and He did it without a *single* miracle!**



The Cleft of the Rock

Michael L. King

Each year more than one-half million visitors pass through the “cleft of the rock” on foot, riding camels, or Arabian horses to enter the ancient capital city of the Nabataeans. Dating back to more than 300 years B.C. is the rock city of “Petra”, sometimes referred to as “Rose City” because of the rose coloration of the rock formations. Petra was located

on the trade route from Palestine, and all parts northward, to Egypt. It was known for its secure surroundings, located in the midst of arid and remote acreage of stone formations.

The city was used for securing possessions of wealthy people and companies. Due to its location, being at the bottom of a chasm opened by an earthquake many years ago, having limbs reaching in different directions, it was virtually impenetrable. There was only one entrance, that being through the “siq” or “the shaft,” a deep cut in red sandstone, creating virtually a box canyon. The city had chiseled in the stone walls, buildings with fascia carvings, used for storage of treasury, with tombs located in the upper regions of the chasm. It had an altar (the high place) atop the stone walls for offering sacrifices. The Nabataeans

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transported and stored wealth for a fee. They used their rock house as security for those valuables, being guarded by soldiers at the entrance and stationed atop the rim of the gorge.

A far greater “place” of security is provided by God for those who belong to Him. Moses requested of God, ***“Please, show me Your glory.”*** God said, ***“Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.”*** (Exodus 33:21,22). There are numerous passages in the Bible where people fled to the ***“cleft of the rock”*** for safety and protection (e.g., Judges 15:8; Song of Solomon 2:14; Isaiah 2:21; 7:19).

Though God kept His hand over Moses’ face as He passed by, Moses declared His greatness from the cleft of the rock. Neither he, nor we, could actually look upon God and live (Exodus 33:20), so the nearest we can come to God’s awesome works and presence is to be in the cleft of the rock. God, like the Nabataeans, has hidden His beloved people in a secure and safe place, near to His comings and goings so we, His servants, can enjoy His presence.

Could there be an application to our being in the church of our Lord? The church was described in prophecy as being a stone that fell out of the mountain not cut out by men’s hands (Daniel 2:34). We are further told that ***“All spiritual blessing are in Christ”*** (Ephesians 1:3). The way into Christ is by baptism (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Those who were baptized in Acts 2 were ***“added to the church”*** (verse 47). We conclude that those who were baptized were inducted into the Lord’s church and became a part of that ***“rock”*** spoken of by Daniel where the glory of God is realized.


Symbolically speaking, reference is made to a “rock” where we find protection, stability, and foundation. It was from a rock that God provided water for His thirsting children in the wilderness (Exodus 17:6). Jesus was referred to as a ***“spiritual Rock”*** that followed the Israelites in the wilderness, from which they drank (1 Corinthians 10:4). Peter was referred to as “Petros” with a masculine gender use in

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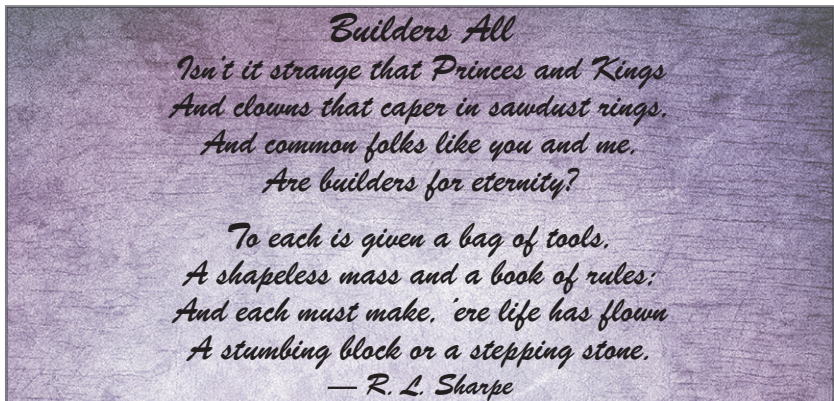
Matthew 16:18. The Lord addressed the man Peter and then declared that upon the confession of the truth of His Sonship with God, Christ would build His church.

A feminine use of “Petra” referenced the truth that Peter declared: the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, which was the foundational rock sturdy enough to uphold the church. Jesus promised, **“Upon this ‘rock’ I will build My church.”** Just an interesting notation: most of the translations do not capitalize “rock” in that it refers to Peter’s rock solid confession about Jesus’ identity.

Truth is viewed as “rock” in the story of the wise and foolish builders. It was the wise man who built his house upon a “rock” that can withstand the eroding influences of sin, error, and worldliness (Luke 6:48). Yet another rock is introduced to the Gentiles and unbelievers, by referring to Jesus as a “stumbling stone” and “rock of offence” (Romans 9:33). Hope was given by saying that **“...whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”** The offensive Rock in the passage is Jesus.

The conclusion leads us to believe that that which pertains to God and provides spiritual, foundational, eternal, and unmovable benefits is that cleft rock in which we can abide that is so much “higher than I”, from which we can see the glory of God! 

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OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Samuel Matthews

Read Text: Ephesians 3:14-19:

“For this reason I bow my knees

to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

“‘Spirit, come into the body of this young man!’ demanded the preacher as he laid his hands on my head. He had been speaking in an unknown tongue for at least thirty minutes. Several other people in the room were praying and shouting to the Lord. All at once, my eyelids began to flutter and my lips started to tremble. I became aware of the presence of the Lord upon my face. Then I saw a dry riverbed. I walked to the middle of the riverbed and looked upstream. I noticed a small pool of fresh water. Then the water began to foam and bubble. All of a sudden, it gushed down the path of the riverbed straight toward me. As the rushing water reached me I heard myself uttering some sounds I had never uttered before. I knew that these sounds did not originate in me, though they were coming out of me. Great joy overwhelmed me and I began jumping up and down and hugging everyone in the room. I had received the Holy Spirit!”

Do not be alarmed; this story is not about me and is not true. But there are many people in the world who believe that this is the way to receive the Holy Spirit. Many people seek such an experience. And then there are those who do not even have a clue as to what the Holy Spirit is, much less how to receive Him. When I was a new Christian I could not even come close to a proper description of the Holy Spirit, but it is very important that we understand our

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relationship with Him. With this in mind, let us first take a look at what the Holy Spirit is not.

What the Holy Spirit Is Not

Many people regard the Holy Spirit as a ghost. This is understandable when one realizes that the phrase “Holy Ghost” appears twenty-one times in the King James Version. But one must also realize that the fifty-four translators of this version lived in seventeenth-century England. And the meanings of words do change over time! The King James translators did not have the same idea of a ghost as we do today. They thought of a spiritual being. We think of Casper!

Let it be clear in your mind that the Holy Spirit is NOT a ghost! A ghost is defined as the soul or spirit of a dead person that appears in bodily form to living people or inhabits the unseen world after death. That is certainly far from the description that the Bible gives us of the Holy Spirit.

Despite what some people teach, there are no miraculous powers associated with the Holy Spirit today. The Holy Spirit does NOT cause YOU or ME, or some TV evangelist to speak in an “unknown” tongue or to raise a dead person back to life.

There was a time when miraculous gifts of the Spirit did take place, but they ceased to be available to men around the close of the first century A.D. At that time the Gospel had been completely recorded and confirmed by miracles, so miraculous events were NOT needed anymore. Let’s make this point plain!

Prior to being sent on the “Limited Commission”, the gift of apostleship was given to the twelve before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Matthew 10). On that occasion Christ strictly forbade them to preach to the Gentiles. They were told, *“but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (vs. 5,6). Thus, this mission was “limited” to the nation of Israel. With this commission, Christ told them to preach *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (v. 7), and gave them miraculous power to effectuate their mission. With this power He told them, *“heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils”* (v. 8). The power to work these miracles would convince people that they and their message were from God.

Later, after His resurrection, the apostles were given a new commission, the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20). On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), after being baptized with the Holy Spirit, the apostles began to fulfill this new commission. Their work now was to go to all nations, rather than just the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 28:19). The message they were to preach would also be different. Earlier they had been told to preach

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the “nearness” of the kingdom (that it was at hand), but now, in the post-resurrection era, they were to preach the good news or the message of the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). This good news would include that the promised kingdom of the Old Testament age had come (the church), and that men could be translated into it and receive the forgiveness of their sins (Colossians 1:13). Christ would also empower the apostles to be witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, Judea, and eventually the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Christians today are continuing to fulfill the Great Commission, but NOT by using miraculous powers. Though the apostles had received miraculous power on the “limited commission”, that power would last only as long as the mission. Since Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem *for power*, it follows that they did not at that time have miraculous power! But since Jesus had given them power earlier, the necessary conclusion is that this power had been withdrawn once the mission on which they were sent was accomplished. Here we see a link between the duration of miraculous manifestations of God in men, and the purpose for which such power was granted.

The miraculous age ended when the complete revelation of God’s will was made in the pages of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) and had been confirmed by the God-given power of the writers to do miracles (Mark 16:20). Miracles are no longer needed today because no new revelations are being made, and because the Scriptures have already been confirmed by the signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit that we read about in the Bible (Hebrews 2:1-4).

So, if the Holy Spirit is not a ghost, and if the Holy Spirit does not give us miraculous power in this current age, then what is His purpose?

What the Holy Spirit Is!

It is really very simple. God loves us and wants to be close to us. He wants to be present with us. Just as Jesus reached out and touched a leper because He loved him (Mark 1:40,41), the Lord wants to reach out and touch us and help us live a strong spiritual life. So He gives us **the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and give us strength**. Paul prayed for the Christians at Ephesus that they might “*be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*” (Ephesians 3:16). The “might” in this verse is not referring to supernatural powers, but to growth and strength to overcome evil.

Let us now take a look at some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. If I were describing the characteristics of many brothers and sisters in Christ, I would say that they are loving, tenderhearted, intelligent, gentle, humble,

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etc. Notice that these are not physical characteristics. The Holy Spirit is not a physical being, but a spiritual being. The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead.

The apostle Paul wrote, *“The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the communion of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all”* (2 Corinthians 13:14). He was identifying the three Persons of the Godhead. We read in Genesis 1:1 concerning creation: *“...the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters.* In Genesis 1:26 He said: *“Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness...”* Therefore, the Holy Spirit was present at the creation of the world and is still present today. I read through the New Testament and noticed the following:

Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

He gives eternal life (John 6:63; Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Peter 3:18)

He abides forever (John 14:16)

He dwells in the Christian (John 14:17; Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 1 John 2:27; 4:13)

He is the Helper (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7)

He testifies of Jesus (John 15:26)

He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11)

He is given as a gift from God (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Romans 5:5)

He is a witness to the proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 5:32)

He is a witness of our sonship (Romans 8:16)

He is a witness to Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 10:15; 1 John 5:6)

He puts the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5)

He helps in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26)

He makes intercession for us in prayer (Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20)

He is a Teacher (1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 John 2:27)

He transforms us into the Lord's image (2 Corinthians 3:18)

He is a guarantee of eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:14)

He is the seal of salvation (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)

He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30)

He gives joy (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

He can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19)

He speaks expressly (1 Timothy 4:1)

He renews (Titus 3:5)

He is truth (1 John 5:6)

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It is evident that the Holy Spirit is on our side. He is a gift from God that renews us and transforms us into the Lord's image. He strengthens the love of God in our hearts and helps us in our weaknesses. That is certainly a wonderful gift to receive! The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus. He makes use of a very powerful weapon and speaks expressly through the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Paul said, *"Take the... sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17).

When a man and woman are engaged to be married, an engagement ring is given to the lady. This ring is a promise that the couple will soon be married and share a lifetime together. In the same way, God's gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit is His sure promise to us that we will share an eternity in heaven with Him. That is exactly what God says through Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:5: *"Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a GUARANTEE."*

Think of the Holy Spirit as a seal or a mark. I once coached a little league baseball team. Each summer I had to certify each player by reviewing their birth certificate which contained the state seal at the bottom. The seal identified the birth certificate as legitimate and allowed the player to participate.

In a similar way, God has put a seal of identification on every Christian. The Bible says, *"You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"* (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). Christians are special people with special promises. The Holy Spirit, God's seal, identifies us as recipients of these special promises.

Now some of you may be asking, "How do I get this wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit?" I am glad you asked! Let us find out.

How Do I Receive the Holy Spirit?

Are we supposed to lay hands on one another and utter guttural sounds from our throats to receive the Holy Spirit? Not according to the Bible! Acts 2:38 says, *"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."*

Notice that the gift of the Holy Spirit occurs in connection with one's obedience to Christ in baptism (John 3:5 and Acts 5:32). A person does not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ***in order to make him a Christian***, but ***because he has become a Christian*** through the new birth of water and the Spirit. The Bible says, *"And BECAUSE YOU ARE SONS, God has SENT FORTH THE SPIRIT of His Son into your hearts"* (Galatians 4:6).

Isn't it good to know that we do not have to be involved in a "miraculous experience" to receive the Holy Spirit? There are probably many worried souls

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among our denominational friends that are waiting for some “experience” to happen, and when it never happens they must lose faith in what the preacher has been teaching them.

Friend, God gives us this gift when we obey His Word and we accept the fact of His indwelling by faith. I cannot explain the nature of such an indwelling, nor can you. We just simply take God at His Word and thank Him for such a wonderful gift that is ours to sustain us in the Christian walk.

Conclusion:


Satan is tough! He is mean! He is roaming about like a roaring lion looking for lunch and YOU and I are the MAIN COURSE! This is tragic because we are so weak and spiritually helpless that we could never defeat Satan. But never fear, the Holy Spirit is here! *“HE WHO IS IN YOU IS GREATER THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD”* (1 John 4:4). What comfort this verse is to the Christian!

Friends, I challenge you to read Ephesians 6:10-18. We can be STRONG in the Lord! We can STAND against the devil! The battle plan for God’s children is right here, and it includes the Holy Spirit. What a comforting passage of Scripture this is.

But if you are not a Christian, you have every reason to tremble in your shoes. If you were once a strong child of God but you have turned away, you are “*quenching*” the power of the Holy Spirit in your life (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Spirit “*grieves*” over your condition (Ephesians 4:30). You, too, have every reason to tremble.

Loved ones, you and I are in one of three conditions: (1) Faithful Christian — the Holy Spirit providing strength to defeat the devil, (2) Fallen-Away Christian — the Holy Spirit grieves and His powers are quenched, or (3) Non-Christian — the Spirit of God is not in this person and provides no strength for overcoming evil.

In which category do you fit?

In all honesty, are you where you want to be? If not, what are you going to do about it? One must HEAR the Gospel (Romans 10:17), BELIEVE in Christ as the Son of God (John 8:24), REPENT of sin (Luke 13:3), CONFESS his faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32), and be BAPTIZED in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), to be born into Christ and His church. Have you experienced that new birth yet? 

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If These Things Are True, How Do We Explain the Facts?

Neal Pollard

If the theory of evolution is true, why haven't they found any transitional fossils? Charles Darwin, on page 413 of his tome, **Origin of Species**, said, "Why is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely-graduated organic chain; and this is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory." Almost 150 years of archaeological digging and an incredible volume of fossil-findings later, the objection should be even stronger!

If the documentary hypothesis concerning the author of the books attributed to Moses is true, why can't they find even one copy or fragment? The idea that later scribes and penmen wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, some almost 1000 years after the time Moses lived, is widely believed among liberal religious scholars. That there are no copies or fragments of these post-Moses writers has not done much to defuse the zeal of those who teach it. Neither is any attempt given to explain or rebut the many statements in the Pentateuch claiming that Moses wrote the books (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-7; Numbers 33:1,2)

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.' So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant." (Exodus 34:27) "... So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: 'At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and

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the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law....” (Deuteronomy 31:9-11).

If the idea of being genetically predisposed to homosexuality is true, where is the genetic evidence of it? The study most supportive of “the gay gene,” conducted in 1991 by Bailey and Pillard, said that 52% of the pairs of identical twin brothers studied were homosexual. A much larger sample size, in an Australian study released in 2000 by Bailey, Dunne, and Martin, found only 20% concordance in identical twin males and 24% among identical twin females. Bearman and Brucker, in 2002, found less than 10% concordance (via *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(3): 524-36; *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 48 (12): 1089-96; and the *American Journal of Sociology*, 107: 1179-1205).

If the idea that a “fetus” is part of the mother is true, why does that unborn one have its own unique genetic code? Not only that, but the unborn can be a different blood type, gender, race, hair color, eye color, and more.

If the big bang theory is true, what took place and why? Whether it is thought to have been highly concentrated matter, energy, or combination, what force acted upon it? It was there, presumably for an eternity. Why didn’t it “bang” before it did? Why did it bang when it did? How did mind emerge from matter? How did morality emerge from non-morality? How did an explosion or expansion form such order out of chance and chaos?

If it is true that making moral judgments about others’ behavior is wrong, why is that moral judgment not wrong?

None of these questions is intended to exhaustively address any of the theories or world views they represent. Yet, so many people unquestioningly and blindly accept these premises as fact when they are far from it. Seemingly, the last resort, if ever taken, would be to accept and follow what the Bible says. However, that is the fundamental dividing line. Hebrews 11:6 puts it well, that *“...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*



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

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Is Someone Else Teaching Your Child?

Nick Fowler

At what age should we start talking to our kids about tough subjects? 10? 14? 16? Never? “Let them learn for themselves”?

Last weekend I sat in a seminar for parents about teaching kids the true meaning of love. The speaker suggested that parents begin talking to their children about relationships, love, and even sex, at age 3! Why so early? Glad you asked. Unbelievably, most kindergartners have heard the word sex. Some of them even know what it means. We need to be teaching and explaining the proper form of love and sex before they get to school, to be indoctrinated there by humanistic doctrine in the textbooks.

Okay, if that was not mind boggling enough, here is one for you. How many of you have talked to your children about creation and evolution? This week has been a real eye-opener for me. On Saturday, I actually had to debate a fourth grader from this congregation on creation and evolution! This child believes that the earth was millions and billions of years old and that we actually descended from ape-like primates. Furthermore, he believes that whales and dolphins walked on land millions of years ago. And I could not change his mind!

Further, my wife ran into the same problem with her second grade class. They believed in evolution and an old earth because of the science books and Discovery Channel. The atheistic science community has finally raised a generation that believes falsehood as facts from early childhood!

Parents, talk to your kids about this! If you need help with answers, check out the website www.ApologeticsPress.org where you can find children’s books and other resources to help you, including a magazine for kids called *Discovery Scripture and Science for Kids*. Folks, we have a big job to do. Reversing the way someone is taught is going to take a lot of effort and consistent teaching.



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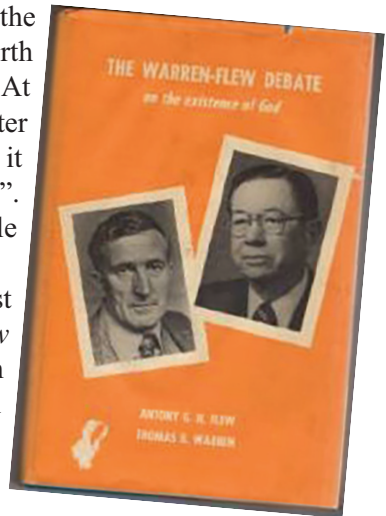
A BOOK EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD READ

Travis L. Quertermous

No, I'm not referring to the Bible (although certainly every Christian should read it daily!) Instead, I am referring to one of my favorite books, **The Warren-Flew Debate**. I read it for the first time when I was 18 years old and it inspired my life-long passion for Christian evidences.

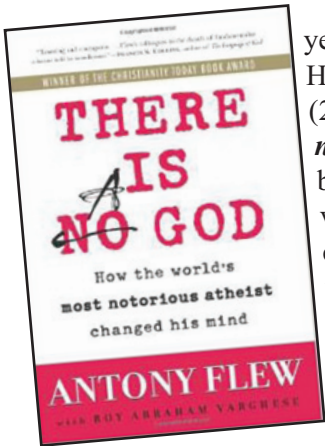
The debate itself was on the existence of God. The disputants were Dr. Thomas B. Warren, representing the Lord's church, and Dr. Anthony G.N. Flew who was the leading atheistic thinker in the world at that time. At the time of the debate (September 20-23, 1977), brother Warren was a professor of Philosophy of Religion and Apologetics at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, TN, and the editor of *The Spiritual Sword*. Dr. Flew was a professor of philosophy at Reading University in England. The discussion was held on the campus of what was then known as North Texas State University in Denton, TX. At the time, because of the subject matter and the renown of each of the speakers, it was billed "The Debate of the Century". Five thousand to seven thousand people attended each night.

Dr. Flew was in the affirmative first and defended the proposition, "*I know that God does not exist.*" Brother Warren denied that position. This was unusual in debates on the existence of God because it is usually the atheist that is attacking theism rather than having to defend his unbelief. In this, Dr. Flew utterly failed. Brother Warren took atheism out behind the intellectual woodshed in this debate!




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The last two nights of the debate, brother Warren was in the affirmative and he defended the proposition, *"I know that God does exist."* Dr. Flew, of course, denied that. With masterful logic, brother Warren showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that God *does* exist and Dr. Flew was utterly unable to answer any of his arguments, once again exposing atheism for the barren philosophy it truly is. As brother Warren repeatedly pointed out, the weakness was not in the man, for Dr. Flew was a world-renowned scholar, but in the weakness of his atheistic position.



An interesting postscript to this debate came years later when Dr. Flew renounced atheism! His last published book was **There Is a God** (2007)! The sub-title was *"How the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind."* In this book, Dr. Flew mentioned the debate and was very complimentary of brother Warren. One cannot help but wonder if that debate planted the seeds of doubt about his unbelief, as his defeat in the debate was so overwhelming!

Brethren and friends, **The Warren-Flew Debate** (also available on DVD) is more needed now than ever because atheism and agnosticism continue to grow among our fellow citizens, especially among our young people. Recent studies show that 15% of the American people now classify themselves as non-religious or secular, with about 5% of them claiming to be atheists or agnostics. Those numbers represented a two-fold increase from a similar study conducted just a few years earlier. So I urge you to obtain a copy of this book or the DVD, to study it, and then to pass it along to your children and/or grandchildren that they might be equipped to *"...contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). Anyone who reads this debate with an open mind will come away convinced that God exists and that atheism is pure hokum! 

Travis L. Quertermous works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Well-Driven Nails

Denny Petrillo

“The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd” (Ecclesiastes 12:11).



THE WORD OF GOD


Even though my grandfather was a master carpenter, I was not blessed with his construction abilities. My thumb can attest to the accuracy of my hammer strikes. Trying to nail drywall to the stud can be quite the adventure. I suspect that most who have tried to nail something to a wall have had the frustrating experience of having the nail miss the stud. Whatever is being attached simply will not stay.

Solomon is expressing the desire of every preacher. He wants his words to “stick.” He works hard and ponders how things can be said that will have the desired effect. His “*nails*” are “*given by one Shepherd.*” That is, they are given by God. So, God gives us spiritual carpenters the nails, and it is our job to make sure we nail them in the right spot.

There are some significant lessons that we can learn from this:

◆ **First**, we’re not using just any ‘nail.’ The words we speak are not ours (or shouldn’t be), but are the words of God. Paul wasn’t ashamed of the Gospel, because it was “*the power of God for salvation*” (Romans 1:16). People don’t need to be given our “nails” — our thoughts, beliefs, opinions. They need to be given the Word that can save their souls (James 1:21).

◆ **Second**, we have to know where the studs are. Preachers need to know the people to whom they preach. Teachers need to know their students. How many times have we heard a lesson or sermon that had no relevance to us? We feel like it was wasted time. When we’re teaching the eternal truths of God, we need to make sure that they are reaching the hearts of our listeners.

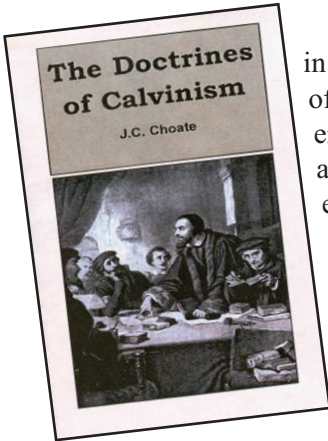
◆ **Third**, we have the responsibility of doing it right. No one wants a carpenter who can’t drive a nail in the right place. Equally, no one wants a preacher or teacher who hasn’t taken time to make sure that what is being said is absolutely true according to God’s Word. James warned that one should be careful about deciding to be a teacher, because teachers will incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). As Solomon says, we need to become “*masters of these collections*” of wisdom teachings (which ultimately have God as their source). 

Danny Petrillo is President of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

I Am a Tract.....

Mark Brewer



I am a tract. Someone spent time and effort in writing me. My author thought that the soul of one individual was worth more than the entire world (Matthew 16:26). The author also believed that the written word is still an effective means of communication.

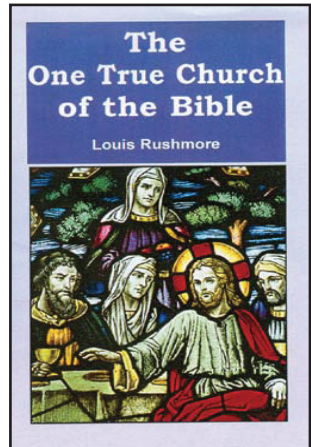
Because of these beliefs, a considerable amount of time was spent addressing a subject which was intended to lead people to the Lord and His church and/or help them in their service to Him. As the thoughts were put on paper, the author checked the facts and made extensive efforts to teach only the truth about

the subject addressed.

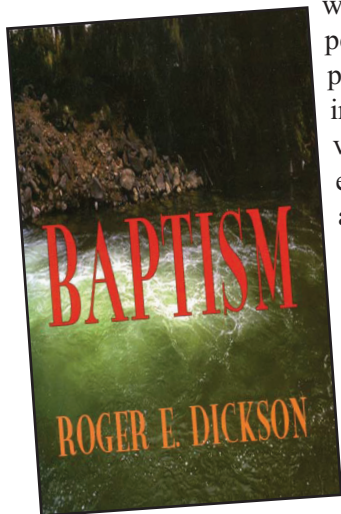
A printer went to work on me. An effort was made on this phase of my development to make me as attractive as possible and to make sure that the words produced were exactly the words of the author. Just as the author wanted to give the people something of value to read, the printer wanted to encourage people to read me.

Somebody in the local church made me available for people to read. Apparently they thought I was interesting, informative, and/or helpful. They must have believed that I had all kinds of potential.

They knew that I could be picked up in the foyer of the church building and read by those who were visiting. I could be handed out as people went door-to-door to encourage people to study their Bibles. I could be taken to various



THE WORD OF GOD



waiting rooms in the community and left for people to read. I could be mailed to distant places (or to local addresses). I could be left in a hospital room by somebody making a visit. The possibilities for good are almost endless. I may be the tool that helps convert a soul. I help others to teach and am used in strengthening brothers and sisters in Christ.

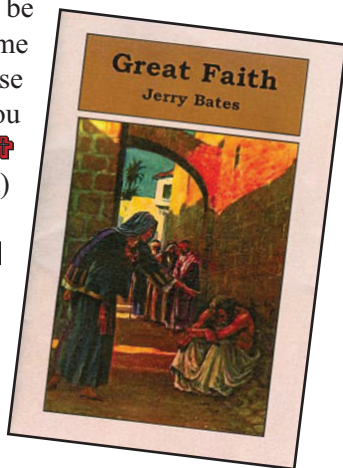
Unfortunately, I am doing nobody any good right now. I am sitting with all of my friends in a tract rack at the church building. I've been here for months, unused and neglected. I cannot begin to tell you how many people walk by me week after week without even looking my way, apparently they are unaware of my potential or of their

duty to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 20:18-20). Have you ever thought about the fact that somebody may spend an eternity in heaven just because you and I worked together? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Have you ever thought about how great it would be to listen to somebody tell you that they became a Christian or were led to the church because you handed me/or sent me to them? Will you put me to work, please? This week? ☩

(— Author unknown to me; adapted)

Many ask, "What can I do?" Send a tract through the mail, leave them anywhere and everywhere you go, put them in break rooms, lounges, and cafeterias. — Mark Brewer

Mark Brewer works with the church of Christ in Bay, Arkansas, USA.



Verse Search



1. Paul did not preach to the Corinthians with excellence of _____ or _____. (v. 1)
2. What did Paul preach to the Corinthians? (v. 2)
3. How did Paul live while he was with the Corinthians? (v. 3)
4. What did Paul not include with his preaching? (v. 4)
5. Why did Paul preach the way he did to the Corinthians? (v. 5)
6. Paul spoke wisdom to those who were _____. (v. 6)
7. Paul spoke the wisdom of God in a _____. (v. 7)
8. If the rulers of this world had understood God, what would they have not done? (v. 8)
9. From what Old Testament passage is verse 9 quoted? (v. 9)
10. What does the Spirit search? (v. 10)
11. Who knows the deep things of God? (v. 11)
12. Who had the Corinthian Christians received? (v. 12)
13. Who taught Paul the words with which he spoke? (v. 13)
14. How does the natural man regard the things of the Spirit of God? (v. 14)
15. Why does he regard them that way? (v. 14)
16. What does the spiritual man judge? (v. 15)
17. What mind do Christians have? (v. 16)

[See inside back cover for answers]

VERSE SEARCH

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

NOTE: In this chapter Paul contrasts the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God. The gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified seems foolish to the wisdom of man; nevertheless it is God's wisdom, and it is the message that saves. When we speak, we must speak the gospel message without mixing it with man's wisdom. When we mix man's and God's wisdom, we destroy the power of the gospel.

God's wisdom can only be understood by those who are spiritually discerned. This does not mean that God must directly influence a man's heart in some way before he can understand God's will and respond. The natural man is someone who lives purely for this world and has no mind for spiritual things. To this man, spiritual things are foolishness and he has no appreciation for the value of the things of God. However, we should remember that God's mind and plans are not subject to the criticisms and judgments of man.



He Dropped the Ball!

David A. Sargent

We often use the expression, “He dropped the ball,” to describe someone who has failed to follow through on an assignment or to reach a certain goal. It is an idiom meaning to make an error, to miss an opportunity.

Some people trace the origin of that phrase to the 4th game of the 1941 Baseball World Series...

The Brooklyn Dodgers were playing the New York Yankees. The Yankees won the first game of the series by a score of 3-2. Brooklyn returned the favor the next game by beating the Yankees 3-2. Then the Yankees took the third game 2-1. In the fourth game it looked like the Dodgers were going to tie the series. Brooklyn was leading 5-3 at the top of the 9th inning. The Yankees were up to bat with the bases empty. There were 2 outs and the count was 3 balls and 2 strikes on Tommy Henrich. Henrich swung at the next pitch and missed the ball. Now, that should have ended the game. But the Dodgers’ catcher, Mickey Owen, dropped the ball!

The ball hit off the heel of his glove and rolled toward the Dodgers’ dugout. Henrich ran to first base before Owen could retrieve the ball. That started the Yankees’ rally. Next up to bat was “Joltin’ Joe” DiMaggio. The Yankees then went on to score four runs in that inning, and they held on to win the game 7-4. So, instead of the series being tied at 2-2, that victory gave the Yankees a 3-1 lead in the series. The next day, the Yankees beat the Dodgers 3-1 in Game 5. Thus, the Yankees won the 1941 World Series, and some say it was all because Brooklyn’s catcher, Mickey Owen, dropped the ball.

SALVATION


Despite his outstanding career in baseball, Owen was always known as the man who “dropped the ball”. When Mickey Owen died, the title of his obituary in the New York Times read: “Mickey Owen Dies at 89; Allowed Fateful Passed Ball.” Even in his death he was remembered as the guy who dropped the ball.

You and I have a lot in common with Mickey Owen, for we have ALL “dropped the ball!” ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23). ***“For we all stumble in many things”*** (James 3:2). To make matters worse, ***“the wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23).

But God loves us so much that He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins, that we might have forgiveness: ***“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”*** (Matthew 26:28) and eternal life with Him (Romans 6:23b).

In order to accept His offer of grace, we must: believe and trust Jesus: ***“‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household’”*** (Acts 16:30,31); turn from our sins in repentance: ***“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained”*** (Acts 17:30,31); confess Jesus before men: ***“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”*** (Matthew 10:32); and be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins: ***“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”*** (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

The love of God has made it possible for each of us to be remembered, not by “he dropped the ball,” but by ***“For by grace he has been saved through faith”*** (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Having dropped the ball, won’t YOU take hold of Christ in trusting obedience? 

David A. Sargent preaches for the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

SALVATION

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

Vance Hutton

Sin is such a small word with big consequences. It is a short word with long penalties associated therewith. Sin was at the heart of man being expelled from Eden, at the heart of the devastation of the flood, at the heart of the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the heart of the fall of men and kingdoms, and will cause folks to be lost eternally. It has been, and is truly, a reproach to all people (Proverbs 14:34).

Sin is defined as a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), that which is not right (1 John 5:17), a failure to do the good one knows to do (James 4:17), and a violation of the conscience (Romans 14:23). We would say it is a failure in pleasing our God.

To understand sin one must see the deceitful nature of it. Hebrews 3:13 refers to the deceitfulness of sin. It misleads, misguides, beguiles, and tricks. Our introduction to Satan in Genesis 3 has him beguiling and deceiving Eve (1 Timothy 2:14; 2 Corinthians 11:3). Sin appears to be right when it is so wrong. Satan makes sin so attractive, but it is so very ugly. It doesn't appear to be harmful, but it is so destructive, dominating, deadly, and divisive, separating us from God, from each other, and from heaven.

Notice some of sin's deceitful ways:

● **Deceived by Sin's Presence:** Some feel as if they have never sinned or that sin is not to be a very large concern in their lives. *"All we like sheep have strayed"* (Isaiah 5:3-6). All have sinned (1 Kings 8:46). Not one accountable person stands apart from sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20). All have fallen short (Romans 3:23). We are deceived when we think otherwise (1 John 1:8-10). Paul in Romans 1-3 points that all, both Jew and Gentile, stand condemned because of sin. All have to deal with the sin problem!

● **Deceived by Sin's Pleasure:** Moses made a choice that many fail to make. He said "no" to sin and its enticement to pleasure (Hebrews 11:24,25). Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 speaks of the pleasures of

SALVATION

unrighteousness. First Timothy 5:6 warns: “...*she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives*. The thorny ground in the parable of the sower shows the deceitfulness of sin’s pleasures. Don’t fall for this old trick.

● **Deceived by Sin’s Permeation:** How many have fallen into sin because “everybody’s doing it”? Do not follow a multitude to do wrong (Exodus 23:2). The majority were wrong in Noah’s day (Genesis 6). Most are traveling the wrong road today: “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it*” (Matthew 7:13,14). Be not deceived with this facet of sin (1 Corinthians 15:33).

● **Deceived by Sin’s Progression:** Some want to play with the fire of sin. Many see sin as a little thing. It could never get a grip on them! They see themselves as never being dominated by it. They fail to see the path of sin’s dominion and destruction. We had best know the trail of temptation-to-lust, to-enticement, to-sin,-to-death: “...*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 1:13-15). Many never would give in all at once, but sin has gotten them to the same bitter end, just piece by piece.

● **Deceived by Sin’s Promises:** Sin has a way of making us think we can sow to the flesh and reap as if we have been sowing to the Spirit. That always fails to work! (Galatians 6:7,8). Paul told the Corinthians not to be deceived into believing that we can live for Satan and be rewarded by the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Sin promises freedom and brings slavery. It promises happiness and brings sorrow. It even promises heaven, but will surely bring hell.

● **Deceived by Sin’s Power:** Sin has a way of searing the conscience (1Timothy 4:2). It has the power of bringing one into slavery to sin (2 Peter 2:19). We each can win victory over sin, but only through the Lord, the Word, prayer, and a dedicated life (Revelation 12:11).

Don’t be deceived by sin! You will live in eternity to regret it! ✝

Vance Hutton is the preacher for the Lord’s church in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.



Bible Find

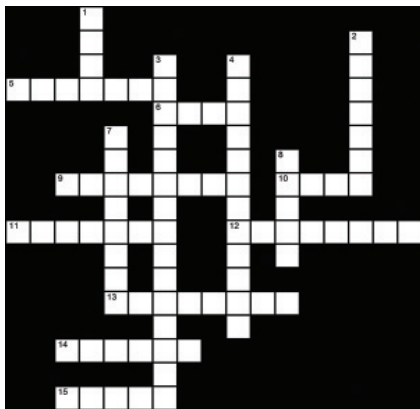
Bonnie Rushmore

OTHER NAMES

Many Bible characters had more than one name. Do you know the other name for the Bible characters listed below?

Across

- 5 Dorcas (Acts 9:36)
- 6 Saul (Acts 13:9)
- 9 Joseph (Acts 1:23)
- 10 Esau (Genesis 25:30)
- 11 Mishael (Daniel 1:6,7)
- 12 Azariah (Daniel 1:6,7)
- 13 Hananiah (Daniel 1:6,7)
- 14 Jacob (Genesis 32:28)
- 15 Sarai (Genesis 17:15)



Down

- 1 Matthew (Matthew 10:3; Luke 5:27)
- 2 Abram (Genesis 17:5)
- 3 Joseph (Genesis 41:45)
- 4 Daniel (Daniel 1:6,7)
- 7 Joses (Acts 4:36)
- 8 Simon (Matthew 10:2)

What Would You Do?

Bob Plunket

There was a terrible automobile accident. David Urey's wife lay critically injured on a West Virginia highway. The examining doctor said that she needed immediate attention from a neurosurgeon if she was to survive. Others said she could not be saved at all. Many advised him just to stay there with her and hold her hand and comfort her while she expired. He refused to do this. He first tried to charter a helicopter to take her to Washington, D.C., but none was available. In his utter desperation he said, "I will call the White House." Many told him this was ridiculous, that he couldn't even reach the White House, but somehow he did reach the White House, and President Nixon's private helicopter was immediately dispatched to Urey's aid. His bold action was rewarded.



THE CHURCH

It seems to me the church is in about the same desperate situation today. Many are lying on the highway of life suffering and dying. Some are advising that we merely hold their hand, comfort them, and tell them that everything is going to be all right. Just get them a sack of groceries, pay the utility bill, or see that they have a little something to ease the pain while they wait to die. Many tell us today that it is not soul salvation that is needed, but rather salvation of the body. Satan would love to see the church holding the hand and wiping the brow of a lost and dying world.

If the church is to follow the example of Jesus, we are going to have to be bold and tell men and women that they are lost without Christ, that they are without hope, that bread and drink and house and medication will not save them. Jesus did not die on the cross merely to make the world comfortable. It's true that Jesus did feed some people and heal some, but to these He boldly said, ***“Except ye be converted, except ye repent, unless you are born again you will perish. You cannot enter the Kingdom of God where there is joy and love and peace”*** (Matthew 18:3; Luke 13:5; John 3:16; Matthew 7:21).

It is time for the church to realize that we will have to endure the criticism of the by-standers and do what is necessary to save those who are lost in sin. Sometimes, we too, must decide between saving one and merely comforting one.

The real question is, “What are we doing?”



Bob Plunket preaches for the Colbert Heights congregation in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA.



***But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’
and not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)***



Have You Greeted the Visitors?

Joe W. Nichols

Jesus as head of His church sits on the right hand of God; the church which He purchased with His blood is His spiritual body. His spiritual body is composed of many congregations of people, each entrusted with the Gospel, to be used in seeking and saving the lost.

Most congregations have some means of seeking the lost: television, radio, evangelistic meetings, visitation programs, etc. Since God designed the church to be evangelistic, every opportunity of reaching out to the lost should be employed.

One such opportunity to “reach out” to others presents itself when visitors attend Gospel meetings or worship services of the church. What should be our reaction toward such visitors? Some visitors may be family or friends of church members, while others may attend as a result of an out-reach program of the church. Regardless of what might have brought them, they are present and merit some kind of response on our part.


THE CHURCH

Should we be so wrapped up in our own members that we ignore our visitors?

Should we stand and whisper to another member, “I wonder who those people are?” Should we just make a casual observation to see if someone we invited is present, while overlooking other visitors?

Or, should our primary concern be to greet *every* visitor, become personally acquainted with them, learn something of their interest in the church, and assist them in whatever their present need might be?

Since our ardent concern should be to make every visitor welcome, a good answer to the above questions might be in a proposed question: **What would Jesus do in a similar circumstance?** The answer most assuredly is that our Lord would be visitor-conscious — and so should we! Young Christians should seek to make welcome other youth who come into the assembly. Adult Christians should greet and make welcome every visitor, regardless of age. Of course, this takes awareness, time, and concern — but that’s New Testament Christianity!

When concern is shown to visitors first, then brethren can visit among themselves. One purpose of the open worship assembly is to give outsiders an opportunity to observe and participate in first century Christianity in action in the twenty-first century. There is no greater spiritual joy than to exercise some part in the conversion of a lost soul — such could be the outcome of taking time to greet all visitors and in making them feel welcome! 

Joe W. Nichols is a Gospel preacher living in Bastrop, Louisiana, USA.

Contrasts:

The young man stood among the strangers, looking around nervously, watching for an opening to get to the door and leave. He felt that he must be invisible, hearing all the greetings going on around him, yet no one seemed to “see” him. Yes, the Bible lesson had been good, even uplifting, but where was the welcome, the warmth of inclusion?

The young man stood among the strangers, wondering if he would be expected to remember all the names and faces of those who made it a point to meet him and to say warmly how happy they were that he had come to worship with them. He was glad he had filled out the card for further contact. He thought to himself: “This is like finding a new family!”

"I'm Right and You're Wrong?"

David Deffenbaugh



Whenever people disagree sparks will fly. Nobody likes to be wrong. We want to be right. Sometimes the desire to be right — or maybe it's the even-stronger desire *not* to be wrong — causes people to abandon all reason and objectivity, dig in the heels, and not-give-in-at-any-cost. Humans resist giving in to an admission that our actions or beliefs or understandings are faulty. Why? If it is, then that necessitates change. We may despise change (especially personal change) even more than being wrong.

It could very well be that this basic human trait is the driving force that has initiated a major philosophical shift in our world. That shift is under

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

the broad (and nearly indefinable) umbrella called “postmodernism”. The quality of postmodernism that concerns us at this point is that it holds that there is no absolute truth, no absolute right and wrong. Practically speaking, it means that one doesn’t have to concern oneself with right or wrong any longer. Everybody is right and nobody is wrong. While that might appear to take a lot of pressure off everyone, the fallacy of this philosophy is evident when applied in any number of practical settings. For instance, what happens to “recognized” moral wrongs like murder and rape? The postmodern loophole closed rather quickly.

POSTMODERNISM: The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can, in principle, be objectively true or false. The postmodern denial of this viewpoint — which follows from the rejection of an objective natural reality — is sometimes expressed by saying that there is no such thing as Truth. (Brian Duignan: Encyclopedia Britannica)

One area of great discomfort to many people is an investigation of the many points of disagreement among professed Christians. Who is right and who is wrong? The postmodern dodge is very common: “Everyone has his/her own interpretation.” That piece of illogical ground is very crowded. Many people wish to stand there because it is comfortable and it is easy. It gets rid of tension. But the ground is quicksand. It won’t support anyone.

Instead of evading the sticky question of who is right and who is wrong, and its inevitable discomfort, one ought to simply recognize that right is located with God. Someone may argue that such an approach is too simplistic and impractical. But isn’t that exactly Paul’s approach when he said, *“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”* (2 Corinthians 10:5; ESV)? Paul wasn’t out to prove he was right, but to bring men into submission to Christ.

Simply put, (and, no, not simplistic) Jesus is right, and when I stand with Him, I am too. If not, I should feel great discomfort. 

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the Southwest congregation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.

Right Belief Leads to Right Action

Hollis Miller

There is both a divine side and a human side to Christian faith. God is *the author* of the faith and men are *the respondents*. From the human side faith is composed of right belief and right action, both of which are legislated by God. That being the case, right belief may properly be thought of as the ground on which all else pertaining to faith stands. One may adopt a personally desirable moral code, a personally approved attitude, and worship in a personally satisfying manner, but if each is not governed by *right belief* each will be faulty.

Alexander Campbell spoke to the issue under discussion when he wrote, “Revelation has nothing to do with opinions or abstract reasonings; for it is founded wholly and entirely upon facts. There is not one abstract opinion, nor one speculative view, asserted or communicated in Old Testament or New... Facts, then, are the Alpha and the Omega of both Jewish and Christian revelations” (*The Christian System*, p.89). What God has said and done He has said and done out of His own counsel, and love for the Lord willingly submits to both (1 John 2:4; 2 John 6; Luke 6:46).

The teaching of Jesus that all men must honor the will of the Father will remain an integral part of His teaching till the end of time (Matthew 7:21). How can it be otherwise? The Pharisees, Saul of Tarsus, and even idolaters were all religious in their own way. But none of them were pleasing to God. For that reason they were required to change.

It is imperative that, when in the presence of the divine will, all men must consider themselves of unclean lips (Isaiah 6:5). Where God has spoken, no action is right which does not harmonize with what He has said.



Hollis Miller is an evangelist living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-38

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Some in the church today are labeling these biblical restrictions on female leadership in the church as “cultural”. They argue that the times and the culture have changed, so women in the church should be allowed to do whatever they have the talent and desire to do.

Where, in these verses, is there any allusion to culture? Remember, we are not to ADD to the Word!

What these verses do say clearly is (1) that the reason man is to have authority over woman is because man was formed first, and it was woman who was deceived! The order of authority goes all the way back to the creation! Culture has nothing to do with it!

(2) Paul identified his words as commandments!

(3) Now, a touchy subject: God’s intended role for woman was to be the keeper of the home, the help-meet of her husband, and the mother to her children. Being faithful through those challenging years molds a woman into a spiritual giant!


Whatever Happened To “Soul-Winning”?

Ardron Hinton

In the two decades that followed the end of World War II, you heard a lot about soul-winning. This was the era of the “cottage meeting” and of courses in personal evangelism. Churches of Christ grew and their works expanded. You don’t hear as much about soul-saving projects any more.

Several things have happened. One change was the radical cultural shift in this nation beginning in the late 1960’s. Society in general fell on hard times morally. The nation experienced prolonged economic well-being at the same time it was experiencing a social revolution that was largely negative in its impact. This combination fostered a self-serving lifestyle that was more concerned with pleasing self than being right with God. Concern with the “here and now” crowded out concern with accountability in the hereafter.

More than they really realized, churches were influenced by this philosophy, and program emphasis shifted from reaching those outside to keeping the ones we had content to stay put. World evangelism lost ground along with this decline in reaching those outside of Christ, locally. Teaching others the way of the Lord more perfectly began to take a backseat to just getting along, partly due to the fact that our own people often lacked a clear conception of where to stand.

The problems are complex, so simple solutions are not possible. But we must begin somewhere if we are ever to climb out of this ditch of complacency into which we seem to have fallen. First of all, we need to renew our faith in Christ to such an extent that we can take His “great commission” to heart. Christ is still the cornerstone of our religion, and faith in Him is still the power to search our own hearts for spiritual damage. We may be more CONformed to this world than TRANSformed into His likeness than we realize. Then, we need to seek new strategies for reaching the world as it now is, understanding that it is lost, whether it knows it or not. Finally, we need a prayerful renewal among us of dedication and commitment to the will of God. 

Ardron Hinton was a preacher of the Gospel and lived in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.

Behold the Fields

Samuel Pickens

When we look at the fields in which God has spread the green carpet of crops, which have grown towards the sky, ready for harvest, we can observe and comprehend that the field keeper would have set the boundaries of the field so that water could stay in it, he would have planted good seedlings, fertilized, and labored hard to attain this result.

The Holy Scriptures compare the fields to our spiritual life. Solomon, a king who planted the seed of application to God of his need for the true wisdom, and who filled his barn of knowledge with grains of wisdom through God, says this, *...to him who sows righteousness will be a sure reward*" (Proverbs 11:18); *"he who sows iniquity will reap sorrow"* (Proverbs 22:8). We, the people of God, must be careful in the kind of seed we are planting in the fields of our lives because we will reap what we sow.

We Reap What We Sow

When Apostle Paul, who was a chosen vessel of God to proclaim

the infallible Word of God — the Gospel — to the Gentiles wrote to the church of the Galatians, he affirmed, ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap"*** (Galatians 6:7). The law of nature is applied to the spiritual world and life by the apostle Paul.

When God created the heavens and the earth and all that it contains, He had established that the trees and the herbs will yield fruit according to their kind and the seed is in them (Genesis 1:11). This law of nature says that we can never expect grapes from a tree of thorns; it is not what the people of common sense would do. The same principle is being stated by Paul and applied to the spiritual realm.

My beloved friends, please realize that what we sow in the sowing time of our youth, the same we will reap at the reaping time of our old age and our eternity. We know that this is the learning time, but if we don't set our minds on

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learning and are allured by what we see and become slaves of the passing pleasures of sin, we can be assured that many life-killer diseases will adhere to us and slowly swallow our health and wealth. But rather, if we work hard and supplicate to our God “to bless our harvest,” and if we set right all our deeds with the light of the Bible, we will surely be blessed, as the man after God’s heart — David — said, ***“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy”*** (Psalm 126:5).

We Will Reap More Than What We Sow



Jesus Christ of Nazareth came down from heaven to save the sinful world. This great teacher proclaimed, ***“...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it produces much grain”*** (John 12:24).

Did you notice what our beloved Lord says? If a grain falls into the earth and grows, it gives much fruit. So let us be careful, spiritually, because what we sow in this life will yield manifold in this life and in eternity.

Our Lord has promised, ***“I am coming quickly and my reward is with me, to give every one according to his work”*** (Revelation 22:12). If we sow fleshly lust in this life, we will not be able to live healthily in this life and we will be lost eternally. Hence, we must be vigilant in what we sow now.

Let us, in this field of life, allow the sowing of the Word of God in our hearts, grow the crop of faith, remove the tares by repenting, fertilize by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, water by obeying in baptism, and grow in Christ Jesus in faithfulness till the end. May God Almighty bless us to do so. ✝

Samuel Pickens is a Gospel preacher working in Tamil Nadu, India.



Press Toward the Goal

Wayne Barrier

The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:14 that he was, *“pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* He stated in the previous verse that he was *“forgetting those things which were behind and was reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”* These words from Paul were written at the time he also wrote in Colossians 1:23 and said that every creature under heaven had heard the Gospel. Paul’s work was to take the Gospel to the non-Jewish world. The job had been done. Why was he making statements that indicated that he was under pressure to move forward and had urgent work to do? He could have talked about his success. He didn’t because even though all had heard the Gospel, most had not obeyed. There was much more to be done.


We have much, much more to do today. Countless millions pass into eternity every year that are not ready to meet God in judgment. How do we find motivation to press forward? Paul told us how. He said in Philippians 3:17, *“...brethren join in following my example and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”* He then discussed several things that were sources of encouragement as he pressed forward. These are summarized as follows:

- Our citizenship is in heaven and citizens enjoy God’s blessings today. (Philippians 3:20)
- We can look forward to the future when we will be transformed from this lowly body into a glorious new body (Philippians 3:21)
- We can be anxious in nothing because we can rely on God’s help

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by asking in prayer. His answer will provide peace that surpasses understanding. (Philippians 4:6-7)

- We can be strengthened in Christ. (Philippians. 4:13)
- We can think about true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good, and virtuous things and will be encouraged, motivated and strengthened. (Philippians 4:8)

Today, we need to press forward to spread the Gospel to all the world. This task is great and urgent. Paul asks us to follow his example. God has blessed us with the opportunity to be a citizen of His Kingdom with our future home in heaven. We must respond to these blessings by pressing forward so others can enjoy these blessings. 

Wayne and Janet Barrier, co-workers in the World Evangelism team, are sponsored by the Double Springs Church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

I Will...

- ◆ Like **Paul**, forget those things which are behind, and press onward (Philippians 3:13).
- ◆ Like **David**, lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence comes my help (Psalm 121:1).
- ◆ Like **Abraham**, trust implicitly in my God (James 2:23).
- ◆ Like **Enoch**, walk daily in fellowship with my heavenly Father (Genesis 5:22).
- ◆ Like **Jehoshaphat**, prepare my heart to seek God (2 Chronicles 19:2,3).
- ◆ Like **Daniel**, commune with God at all times (Daniel 6:10).
- ◆ Like **Job**, be patient under all circumstances (Job 13:15,16; James 5:11).
- ◆ Like **Aaron** and **Hur**, uphold the hands of the leaders in the church (Exodus 17:12).
- ◆ Like **Caleb** and **Joshua**, refuse to be discouraged because of superior numbers (Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9).
- ◆ Like **Andrew**, strive to lead my brother to Christ (John 1:40-42).
- ◆ Like **Stephen**, manifest a forgiving spirit toward all who seek my hurt (Acts 7:60).

— Author Unknown



REJECTION THERAPY AND EVANGELISM IMPLICATIONS

Barry C. Poyner

Recently the efforts of Jia Jiang went viral when he visited a Krispy Kreme on Day #3 of his quest to get 100 rejections. In his own words, “I am going through 100 days of Rejection Therapy, aiming to have one rejection per day by making crazy requests. My goal is to desensitize myself from the pain of rejection and overcome my fear. I’m also wearing a hidden camera (a camouflaged iphone) to have some fun with this video blog.”

At this time, I want to draw your attention to Day #3 for his visit to the Krispy Kreme. Jia expected to receive a quick “no” to his request of having the employee make a doughnut in the shape of the Olympic logo of five rings in fifteen minutes. Instead, Jackie (the employee) patiently and creatively responded to his request, and in the end gave it to him at no charge, with a hug!

Jia was surprised beyond belief, and it made me think that so many of us expect a “no” when it comes to asking someone to study with us that we never ask anyone. Getting 100 “no” responses to your requests may be more difficult than you think!

“[Philip] heard him [the eunuch] reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:30,31). May the Lord forgive us for our unbelief! ✝

Barry C. Poyner is a professor at Truman State University and an elder in the church in Kirksville, Missouri, USA.

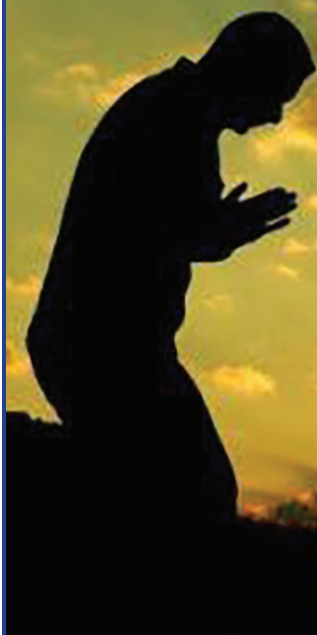
How Do You Measure Up?

“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’)

“But you have come

- (1) to Mount Zion and
- (2) to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
- (3) to an innumerable company of angels,
- (4) to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,
- (5) to God the Judge of all,
- (6) to the spirits of just men made perfect,
- (7) to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,
- (8) and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Hebrews 12:18-24



What Does the Bible Say About. . . *Worship?*

J.C. Choate



(Please consider the question,
read the Scripture, and check your answer.)

1. What is worship?

“All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name” (Psalm 86:9); “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker” (Psalm 95:6); “All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name” (Psalm 66:4).

WORSHIP

- ☐ Following a set of rules.
- ☐ Going to mass.
- ☐ Praising and glorifying God.

2. How are we to worship?

Christ said, “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

- ☐ To sincerely worship according to the Scriptures.
- ☐ According to conscience.
- ☐ Sincerely, to the best of one’s knowledge.

3. Whom are we to worship?

Jehovah God said, “I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...” (Exodus 20:2-5).

- ☐ God.
- ☐ Leaders of the church and “saints”.
- ☐ Images, idols.

4. How do most people worship God?

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

- ☐ As the Bible teaches, in spirit and in truth.
- ☐ According to their consciences.
- ☐ According to the doctrines and commandments of men.

5. On which day of the week are Christians to worship?

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

WORSHIP

- ☐ Thursday.
- ☐ The Sabbath day.
- ☐ The first day of the week.

6. Who is to worship God?

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41,42).

- ☐ Baptized believers; that is, all Christians.
- ☐ Only those who are most religious.
- ☐ All people.

7. Where are they to worship?

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

- ☐ In meeting-houses, halls, homes, etc.
- ☐ Only in cathedrals.
- ☐ In buildings dedicated for worship.

8. What are the acts of worship?

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42);

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19);

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God...” (2 Timothy 2:15);

“Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2) .

- ☐ To sing, pray, study, partake of the Lord’s Supper, and to give a portion of one’s earnings.
- ☐ Whatever the local church decides to do.

WORSHIP

❑ There should be burning of candles and incense, along with counting the rosary.

9. Does God approve of mechanical music (guitars, pianos, cymbals, etc.) in worship?

“...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16); *“...I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also”* (1 Corinthians 14:15).

❑ Vocal music (singing) is the only music God has authorized in worship.

❑ God allows all kinds of mechanical instruments.

❑ It doesn't matter how we praise God, as long as we are sincere.

10. How should Christians partake of the Lord's Supper?

“...whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself...” (1 Corinthians 11:26-29).

❑ Sincerely, searching one's own conscience.

❑ Abstain, for fear of offending God.

❑ All Christians are worthy.

Are you a Christian?
Where do you worship?
How do you worship?
It does make a difference.

J.C. Choate (1932-2008) spent most of his adult life in foreign mission work.

WORSHIP

THE ESSENCE OF LIVING IS GIVING

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

The above title may surprise some, but the evidence is overwhelming. God Himself revealed this truth about Himself in three ways: (1) In regard to His past gifts; (2) His present gifts; (3) His promised gifts.

THE PAST

The Bible is replete with examples of God making a promise and then fulfilling it for needy man. He **GAVE** Adam and Eve and their descendants sustenance and life.

He delivered Noah from the terrible flood by **GIVING** him the design and ability to build an ark. He made the rainbow for Noah and all subsequent generations. We have all benefited from this past, present, and future **GIFT** until the world ends.

God **GAVE** manna to Israel daily (except the Sabbath) for 40 years. He promised and **GAVE** Jericho into the hands of Joshua and Israel.

The Old Testament has many varied promises about the coming Messiah, the greatest **GIFT** of God. He came and blessed mankind with salvation. He has enriched the lives of all who allowed His teaching to transform them from **GETTING** to **GIVING**.

THE PRESENT

In our day, God continues to **GIVE** so many blessings we can't count them. The first one is new life in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He also **GIVES** the cleansing power of Jesus' blood to purge from their sins all who walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

God **GIVES** answers of what is best to all who pray in genuine faith, trusting in His love and wisdom. He continues to **GIVE** us the air we breathe, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the rich blessings of fellowship with all the saints. Paul said in a rhetorical way, *"If God did not spare His only son, but **GAVE** Him up for us all, will He not **GIVE** us all things with Him?"* (Romans 8:32). The obvious answer is YES. If He **GAVE** the most precious **GIFT** of heaven, even the Lord Himself, certainly He will **GIVE** all lesser gifts because of His eternal love.

WORSHIP

THE FUTURE


God cannot and has not lied during all the past time. It is impossible for Him to be against Himself, according to Hebrews 6:17-19: *“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...”* Therefore, we can rely with absolute certainty on each promise of what He will **GIVE** in the future.

God is a **LIVING** God who will **GIVE** eternal life to all His children in His realm, heaven itself, at the second coming of His Son (1 John 3:1-3). He will **GIVE** us a spiritual body like the glorious body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:42; Philippians 3:20,21). To the overcomers listed in Revelation 2 and 3, He will **GIVE** the promises written there. He will **GIVE** the redeemed complete, everlasting, perfect fellowship with Himself. He will **GIVE** us the privilege of praising and honoring Him forever. What a blessed **GIFT**!

APPLICATION

Christian, **GIVE** and **GIVE** as God has **GIVEN**, is **GIVING**, and has promised to **GIVE**. Your ability to **GIVE** is a result of *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (James 1:17).

GIVE a word of cheer, of encouragement, or praise; send a card of love and thanks, of consolation, of uplift; phone someone with a happy word of appreciation, of concern or care. Buy a Bible with God’s money of which we are only temporary custodians (*“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You”* 1 Chronicles 29:14) and **GIVE** it to a needy soul. **GIVE** of your strength and energy. **GIVE** of your best — physically, emotionally, spiritually and monetarily — to your Master. **GIVE** Him first place in your heart. Remember, He **GIVES ALL**.

Edeavor to imitate Him!
AMEN! 

Stephen D. Eckstein lives in Lubbock, Texas, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



There are always death and taxes; however, death doesn't get worse every year.



Amy went to her first show at an art gallery. One painting that caught her eye quickly was solid black with some blobs of yellow paint splattered all over it. The next painting was a dull gray color that had drips of purple paint streaked across it.

Amy walked over to the artist and said, "I don't understand your paintings."

The artist explained, "I paint what I feel inside me."

Amy responded, "Have you ever tried Alka-Seltzer?"



I saw my friend Fred the other day. He had a bewildered look on his face, so I asked him if he had a problem.

He looked at me and said, "I've misplaced my dictionary, and now I'm at a loss for words."



Dick is just sitting at his desk at work with an obvious look of consternation. Sam walks in, sits down, and asks him what the problem is.

"Well," said Dick, "I ran afoul of one of those awkward questions women ask. Now I'm in deep trouble at home."

"What kind of question?" asked Sam.

"My wife asked me if I would still love her when she gets old, fat, and wrinkly."

"That's easy," said Sam. "You just say, 'Of course I will.'"

"Yeah," replied Dick, "that's what I meant to say, except I said, 'Of course I DO...'"



In an upscale pet-supply store a customer wanted to buy a red sweater for her dog. The clerk suggested that she bring her dog in for a proper fit.

The lady promptly replied, "Oh, I can't do that! The sweater is a surprise!"



Don't tell me that kids are not smart. I read of a group of high school boys who played a prank on their school out in Montana. They let 3 goats loose in the school building. Before they let them go they

PROVERBS 17:22

painted numbers on the sides of the goats...1, 2, 4.

The school administrators spent the rest of the day looking for goat #3.



Cats are indeed a “different breed.” As Jeff Valdez says, “Cats are smarter than dogs. You can’t get eight cats to pull a sled through snow.” Mary Bly offers the observation that “Dogs come when they’re called; cats take a message and get back to you later.”



My face in the mirror
Isn’t wrinkled or drawn.
My house isn’t dirty.
The cobwebs are gone.
My garden looks lovely,
And so does my lawn.
I think I might never
Put my glasses back on.



John asked his friend Jim whether he had bought his wife a gift for Valentine’s Day.

“Of course,” said Jim. “I bought her a belt and a bag.”

“Well, Jim, that was very kind of you. I hope she appreciated the thought.”

Jim answered, “So do I, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now.”

Some Points to Ponder

10 THINGS MONEY CAN’T BUY:
(1) Manners (2) Morals (3) Respect
(4) Character (5) Common Sense
(6) Trust (7) Patience (8) Class (9) Integrity (10) Love



When an anemic child in one of Manhattan’s housing projects had to have repeated transfusions, tenants of the project donated a steady supply of blood until her life was saved. The girl was Chinese; the donors were about equally divided among whites and blacks; but the blood from the three races mixed just fine.



Augustus boasted that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble. Perhaps we cannot feel that we will leave the world much different than we found it, but each of us has had some influence, affected some life, and in some way can leave the world a better place.



We don’t hear as much about duty these days. We need to listen again to Ellen Sturgis Hooper who lived and wrote in the nineteenth century:

“I slept and dreamed that life was Beauty. I woke and found that life was Duty.”



IN A TIME OF PERSECUTION, CAN I STAND?

Betty Burton Choate

It's a question that should haunt every serious Christian: **If my life were threatened, or if the lives**

of my children or loved ones were threatened if I did not renounce Christianity, how would I stand? Probably none of us know the answer until we are faced with the reality, and we pray we would then have the courage of first century Christians.

We live in a time of relative ease: financially, physically, spiritually. We're not hungry. We don't keep a constant watch behind us because of fear of attack. We can worship as we choose, when we choose, without challenge. We have access to God's word in multiple translations, with any additional aids we desire — concordances, commentaries, word studies, Internet tools, etc.

Looking at the blessings listed in the previous paragraph we should conclude that we, of this age and in this country, are basking in the sunlight of God's love. As a Father — our perfect and heavenly Father — He would want to shower those good things on His children. And as faithful children, we are grateful for the outpouring of our Father's love.

In the midst of our ease and abundance, though, we would do well to remember God's warning to the Israelites as they were about to enter the

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land that was flowing with milk and honey: **“Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest — when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God...”** (Deuteronomy 8:10-14).

Sadly, in the past few decades, God’s warning to the Israelites also describes many Christians. Preachers and church leaders have grown increasingly desirous of ignoring doctrinal messages while concentrating on teaching the Bible only as history and as guidance in life’s morals and values. On the part of some, the silence concerning the oneness of the church, the doctrine of salvation, the New Testament pattern of worship, marriage and divorce, and other “divisive” matters is an attempt to avoid offending their religious neighbors and weak Christians. For others, the silence becomes compromise and ultimate blending with the denominational world, seeing all “believers” as part of the true body of Christ.

The result of decades of silence is that many Christians have such shallow knowledge of God’s word that they have no foundation on which to stand.

In addition to the silence from the pulpit and elders, the attention of many Christians has been focused on the world: getting ahead financially, having all the niceties of life, enjoying entertainment: sports, TV, video games, time-consuming nothings that eat up their days. For many, with both husband and wife working five days a week in order to “get ahead” in the material world, then taking part in their children’s extracurricular school activities, preparing meals, taking care of the house and yard, etc., etc., there is no time for carefully training up their children or for grounding the family in a strong spiritual life.

“...and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble” (Mark 4:17).

Without strong foundational knowledge of God’s word and without deep conviction that we must hold fast to our faith in order to obtain the

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promise of eternal life with God, many Christians are totally defenceless before the increasing onslaughts we are facing.

The world grows more menacing to us every day. Judicial decisions are being made that threaten our right to stand for biblical principles: protection for the unborn, proper discipline and parenting of our children, the condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, the sanctity of marriage — shielding it from “no fault” divorce, from same-sex unions, from polygamy, and from the “live in” practice that has become accepted by many today.


Legally, businesses are being required to do the bidding of homosexuals; there is a growing political move to declare that sermons condemning homosexuality as a sin in God’s eyes should be labeled “hate crimes” and prosecuted accordingly. ***Must a preacher perform the ceremony for homosexuals or risk imprisonment because of his refusal?*** When our justice system has been overturned to the point that we cannot follow particular laws without transgressing God’s clear word, ***will we stand for truth in the face of persecution? Will we go to prison rather than compromise?***

Atheism and humanism have been in league for many decades to destroy our biblically-based culture. Now another threat is taking hold in many areas of the world: radical Islam. Their stated goal is to destroy the “western culture” that has already been largely corrupted by these atheistic assaults on our civilization.

In parts of the world where Islamists hold full power, they are brutally slaughtering believers in Christ, strongly convinced that they are doing “Allah’s” will. Muslims are proving every day that they are willing to die for Islam. Often, Christians in those nations are accused of “blasphemy” and are hauled off to prison. Before there can be a “trial”, a mob may stone them to death or hang them publicly for their “crime” against Islam. The “jihadis” may not incorporate all Muslims but they serve as the military for the developing caliphate, which all will accept or die.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I beg of all of us that we ask ourselves this vital question NOW: ***“In a time of persecution, can I endure?”*** NOW, we still have time to immerse ourselves in God’s word and commitment to Him so that we CAN stand. ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall***

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tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, living in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



In more than 40 nations around the world today Christians are being persecuted for their faith. In some of these nations it is illegal to own a Bible, to share your faith in Christ, to change your faith or to teach your children about Jesus. Those who boldly follow Christ — in spite of government edict or radical opposition — can face harassment, arrest, torture and even death. Yet Christians continue to meet for worship and to witness for Christ, and the church in restricted nations is growing.

—"PrisonerAlert.com"

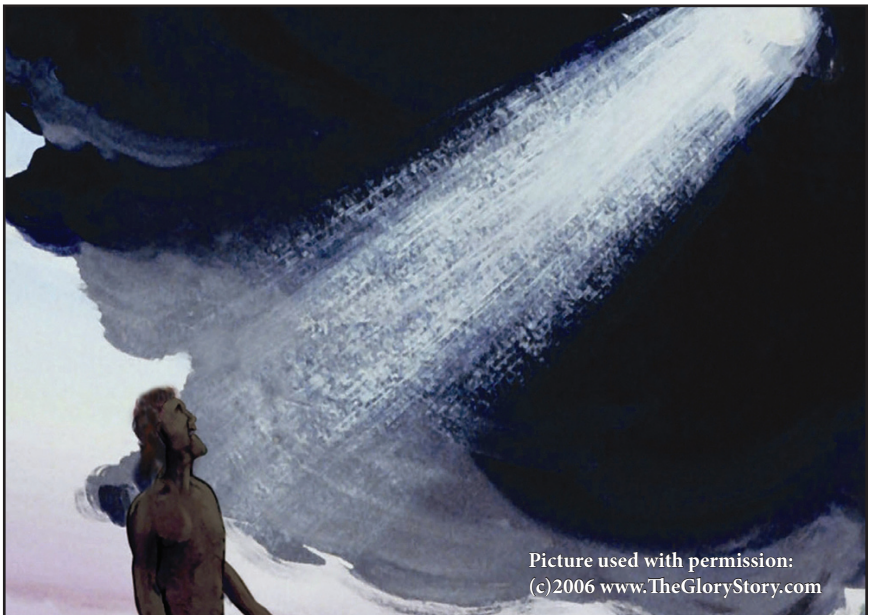
The Lord Formed Man

Loy Mitchell

“And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

God made man from the dust. This does not mean that man is “only” dust. Yet, scientists tell us that man’s body has the same properties as dust. This should make us realize our lowly origin, our essential frailty, and the destiny of the physical body. *“All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust”* (Ecclesiastes 3:20).

Even though we are made of dust we have been fashioned by the hand of God. When one considers carefully the symmetry, proportion, and adjustment of the human body, when one examines the hand, eye, and brain, he must agree with the Psalmist: *“I will praise you, for I am*



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fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:14).

God has placed a high value on the human body, for it houses the Holy Spirit. *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).*

However, of more importance, God gave man a soul. It is true that God gave the animals life, but theirs is only mortal, while man’s soul lives forever.

“Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Man is going to spend eternity someplace. Each person makes the choice. Paul tells us, *“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).*

Are you giving glory to God by serving Him daily?



Loy Mitchell preaches for the church in Knott, Texas, USA.

During the Civil War there was a Union soldier who was a watchmaker. After being drafted to serve, he left his business behind but carried with him his tools to make watch repairs. As he was in camp, he set up shop inside his tent. Every day different soldiers would bring their broken watches for repair and his business had never been better.

Then the call came to go into battle, but the watchmaker didn’t want to go. He had too much work to do on the watches. He told the officer that as soon as he had finished the repairs of that day, he would go. The other soldiers broke camp and went into battle, leaving the watchmaker behind. He had forgotten his purpose. His purpose in the army was to be a soldier, not a watchmaker.

Is it possible that we, too, forget our purpose? We have a tendency to get distracted and to forget our work as a Christian. Christ did not forget His purpose while on the earth. His purpose was to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He let nothing distract Him until He had finished the work His Father had given Him to do.

Watch out for distractions. Don’t forget your purpose in this life.

— Eddie Finch



Love Is...

Sheila Gibson

Love is perhaps the most over-used and least understood word in any language.

But what is its essence?

To love without condition means selfless reaching out, a giving up, putting the other person first.

Love forgives, and doesn't look back.

Love holds on, and doesn't give up.

Love doesn't measure past faults.

Love stands up and braces against the challenges of life.

Love is strong.

Love is soft.

Love is amazing when you feel it flowing out, and overpowering when it comes in like a tide.

The greatest love is not found in a season of new. It can only be fully discovered and revered in maturity. How can we know what we have without comparison, without recognizing we've weathered and grown? And how can we know how strong love is unless it has been through the fire?

We can only know we love unconditionally when we've confronted conditions.

The beautiful moments make the photos, the Facebook page, the Twitter feed.

The hard times make the love.

It is the hard times that tell you if you have the real thing or the pretty thing, the last-a-lifetime connection or the last-as-long-as-it-feels-good relationship. There are plenty of those around, and yes, it is easy to mistake one for the other.

Who doesn't like it when it feels good?

No one has the answers, a formula worked out neat and predictable, least of all me.

But I know it when I see it.

And I know it is worth having, worth working for.

On a day of icons, roses and chocolates and pretty cards, if you're receiving or giving, I hope you'll enjoy the moment.

Just know...the real thing is likely to show up on a Tuesday, disguised as something not glamorous, not photo-worthy, even unexpected.

And I guarantee...the Tuesday moment when love is demonstrated, not with beauty and ceremony, but in a flash of nitty-gritty, real life, and inconvenience...look there for the meaning, for the stamp of belonging.

Look to those moments to see love in all its power, showing up without the disguise of romance, standing in the gap and holding firm when you need it most and maybe deserve it least.

We can all be pretty and sweet on date night. But on a Tuesday...that's when the real thing happens, and the bonds are forged.

And may your Tuesdays be beautiful too, full of opportunity to give and receive real love, without condition, with all your heart.

<http://graceandlife.com>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop> [on that site, search for The PaperImage]

The Mystery of Marriage

Dan R. Owen

Marriage is a mystery, a part of the very order of creation. It is often used to illustrate the relationship between God and His people, between Christ and His church. It is a special, holy thing. Jesus was passionate about its importance and permanence.

In Genesis, while God was creating the world, He said, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him”* (Genesis 2:18). People need help and partnership in life. Marriage is God’s answer to that need. In Genesis 2:24 a monumental truism is stated about this relationship. It contains three great principles for a successful marriage. These can be summarized by saying that people must *“Leave,” “be united,”* and *“become one flesh.”*

Leaving involves the discontinuing of other relationships as *primary*. If a mother, a sister, a father, or a best friend has been the most important person in your life, you must no longer count them as “first”. You must “leave” that relationship in a sense and make your new spouse number one.




THE CHRISTIAN HOME

If not, there will be a measure of competition with the other relationship and it will prevent your marriage from becoming what it needs to be.

Being **united** is critical. It involves intentionally becoming partners in life. This means helping each other, discussing things, depending on each other, agreeing on courses of actions, and working together to reach goals. It means attaching to one another emotionally so that you really learn the other's needs and seek to fulfill them. It means building trust with one another by being continual support emotionally, practically, and in every other way.

Becoming **one flesh** is the sexual relationship. While it may come naturally at first, it must eventually be done deliberately, or it will be lacking. It must be done with consideration, which implies the presence of affection and communication and interest in daily life. It must not be neglected or Satan will use the neglect to destroy the marriage.

Because marriage is a covenant — actually between the man and woman, and before God — it is a firm lifelong commitment to the relationship by both partners. Married people must not merely have a relationship, but they must be dedicated to the nurturing and betterment of it. A covenant requires the promotion of understanding by each partner, and a continual effort to deepen and improve the relationship. A covenant is the keeping of vows, which means that each one must actively strive to do what needs to be done for the other.

God has always expected His people to honor their marriage covenant. We cannot casually cast aside those vows. We must preserve them and honor them according to His Word. May God help each of us to work at our marriages, for this is His will from the time of creation. 

Dan R. Owen is the preacher for the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

*“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ... **‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’**” (Ephesians 5:22-31).*



Daddy's Job

Kevin L. Moore

Coming home one evening after a long, hard day of work, all I wanted to do was plop down in my comfortable chair and relax. But my 4-year-old daughter had other plans. She enthusiastically met me at the door and wanted me to go outside with her and play. I tried to explain that Daddy was really tired and needed to rest awhile, but to her that was just


not acceptable. I then suggested we could play a game in the living room while I sat in my chair, but as far as she was concerned, nothing short of running around in the backyard would do. A few more feeble attempts were made to reason with this less-than-patient bundle of energy, when finally in exasperation she exclaimed, “But Daddy, it’s your job!”

I confess that she caught me off guard with such a profound statement, and my stubborn defense instantly collapsed. She was absolutely right. When I decided to become a parent, I accepted all the accompanying responsibilities, including my personal commitment to never neglect my family. This little girl needed to spend time with her daddy, and I had no right to deprive her of that basic need. With her simple and pointed words, she reminded me that love *“does not seek its own”* (1 Corinthians 13:5), and that all of my excuses were meaningless.

Paul admonishes his readers to literally *“redeem”* (exagorazō) the time they have been given (Ephesians 5:15). The word *“redeem”* means to exchange one thing for another, and since we have our children for

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

only a limited period of time, how are we using that time, and what are we exchanging for it? Surely providing for our families (1 Timothy 5:8) involves more than just material necessities. Am I providing love, security, a good example, encouragement, discipline, spiritual leadership, affection, affirmation, and undivided attention?

To this day, whenever I am tempted to selfishly focus on my own perceived needs at the expense of my children or am distracted from my God-given parental duties, the words of that precious 4-year-old child still ring in my ears: “But Daddy, it’s your job!” That’s all the prompting I need to readjust my focus and get back on track. Thank you, Lord, for our children, from whom we learn so much! 

Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

Eager Hands

She was so busy
and so eager,

Underfoot of Mommy,

Helping,

Spilling flour,

.. Dribbling water

— In the way of surer steps —

Unmindful that her “help”

Added often to her mother’s load.

But eager hands will learn,

Won’t they?

Oh, God,

Help us not to be too much

In the way of You

Or too much underfoot;

Help us not to make

Too great a mess for You

In our eagerness to help.

Eager hands will learn,

Won’t they?

.....— Betty Burton Choate





5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

1. Then Paul answered, what mean you to weep and to _____ my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to _____ at Jerusalem for the name of the _____. Acts 21:13
2. And _____ said unto him, "Aeneas, _____ the _____ heals you. Arise and make your bed." And he arose immediately. Acts 9:34
3. Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of _____, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you _____, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. Acts 4:10
4. Then Peter said to them, _____ and be baptized every one of you in the _____ of Jesus Christ, for the _____ of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38
5. And you shall be hated of all men for my _____ sake: but he who _____ to the end will be saved. Matthew 10:22
6. Therefore God has _____ exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above _____, that at the name of Jesus every knee should _____, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every _____ should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11



Answers:

1. Break, die, Lord Jesus
2. Peter, Jesus, Christ
3. Israel, crucified
4. Repent, name, remission
5. Name's, endures
6. Highly, every name, bow, tongue

With Eyes Wide Open

John Gipson

The apostle Paul, in Romans the twelfth chapter, makes an appeal based on *“the mercies of God.”* The NIV puts it like this: *“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship”* (Romans 12:1). The action urged is *“in view of God’s mercy.”* I like Phillips’ translation which says, *“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God.”*

Are my eyes wide open to all the mercies God extends, or do they seem like pictures on the wall which I see every day, but don’t really see at all? Visit any hospital and you will come away with a new perspective. Do you have eyes to see? Lungs with which to breathe? A heart which functions properly? It’s so easy to take all of these things for granted. G. K. Chesterton has commented on our passing over the great mercies to which we are blind. He says we thank God for the presents in our stockings at Christmas, but we ought to thank God we have legs in our stockings!



The old adage is true. We don’t appreciate the water until the well runs dry.

“Nothing raises the price of a blessing like its removal; whereas, it was its continuance which should have taught us its value” (Hannah Moore).

TEXTUAL STUDIES



Consider what God has done in giving us life, sustaining us through the years, granting the blessing of family and friends, saving us from our sins, granting us the privilege of prayer, preparing for us an eternal home. And the list goes on and on. Do we have eyes wide open to the mercies of God?

Hannah Moore has a word in season for all of us: “There are three requisites to the proper enjoyment of earthly blessings:

- a thankful reflection on the goodness of the giver;
 - a deep sense of our own unworthiness;
 - and a recollection of the uncertainty of our long possessing them.
- ✓ The first will make us grateful;
 - ✓ the second, humble;
 - ✓ and the third, moderate.”

It’s a challenge, but we all need eyes wide open to the mercies of God. Then we will present ourselves as living sacrifices to God.

“Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men. ... He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves” (Psalm 66:5,7). ✝

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

The “I Am’s” of Paul

Patrick Morrison

When we think of “I am” statements made in the Bible, no doubt we think of the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the “I Am’s” of Jesus, He states that He is **the bread of life** (John 6:35), **the light of the world** (8:12), **the door of the sheepfold** (10:7), **the good shepherd** (10:11), **the resurrection and the life** (11:25), **the way, truth, and life** (14:6), and **the true vine** (15:1).

Not only do these “I Am’s” of Jesus equate Him with Jehovah (see Exodus 3:14), but it also shows our Lord to be a man of action. He did not say “I was,” nor did He say “I will be”. He said, “I am”. The church has too many “has been’s” and too many “will be’s” and not enough “I am’s”. We certainly could learn from Paul’s example regarding his readiness and willingness to work.

In the book of Romans, we find the “I Am’s” of Paul. What do these teach us about Paul, and what can we learn that might help us to be more diligent servants of our Lord?


Paul writes, *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise”* (Romans 1:14). Paul felt an indebtedness to all men from every walk of life. He had come to know the grace of God in the forgiveness of his past sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Timothy 1:15), and in being allowed to preach the Gospel (Ephesians 3:8). Paul desired to share the good news with all men, and his life reflects not only that desire, but his willingness to go into all the world with the message of salvation. Would to God that we in the church today felt the same debt of responsibility to the lost! We owe them the right and privilege of hearing the soul-saving Gospel! We march under the same orders as did Paul and the other apostles (Mark 16:15). Someone took the time to teach us the Gospel. Should we not do the same for the lost around us?

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Paul further writes, ***“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also”*** (Romans 1:15). His feeling of indebtedness to the lost did not cause him to despair at the magnitude of the task. He prepared himself to meet the responsibility he had to every soul he met. He was ready to preach. He was ready to declare the only message that can save the soul (James 1:21). So many times we realize our God-given responsibilities, but we fail to prepare ourselves to meet these challenges. We know we must go into all nations and teach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19), but are we ready to do so? Let us realize our mission and prepare ourselves to carry it out!

Paul then writes, ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”*** (Romans 1:16). Some assume that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, or that he was saved through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, or various other surmisings. It was only after Paul heard and obeyed the Gospel in baptism that he was saved (Acts 22:16), and that process is the same for every soul for all time. Paul was fully convicted of the saving power of the Gospel, for he had seen it work in his own life. Until we are fully convinced that the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, is God’s means of saving man, we will never be ready to convert the lost! The Gospel is man’s only hope! If we keep quiet about it, then souls will never have the opportunity to be saved (2 Kings 7:9; 2 Corinthians 4:3), and we will be lost for refusing the command of our Lord.

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand” (Ezekiel 3:17,18).

Are you faithfully doing the work of the Lord? Don’t say, “I was” or “I will be.” Get busy so that you can honestly answer, “I am!” 

Patrick Morrison works with the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.



Scavenger Hunt

through Matthew

Rebecca Rushmore

1. How many generations are there between Abraham and David, from David to the Babylonian captivity, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ?
2. What did John the Baptist eat in the wilderness?
3. After His baptism, how long did Jesus fast in the wilderness before He was tempted by the devil?
4. Name the two sets of brothers Jesus called to follow Him.
5. In what city did Jesus heal the servant of a centurion?
6. What was Herod the tetrarch celebrating when his oath led to the death of John the Baptist?
7. When Jesus fed the 4,000 with 7 loaves and some fish, how many baskets of leftovers were collected?
8. Who appeared with Jesus at His transfiguration?
9. Whose image and inscription was on the money used to pay taxes?
10. Name the prisoner Pilate released instead of Jesus at the demand of the Jews?

Adorable Hannah

Kabita Gootam

There was a certain Levite man called Elkanah of Ramathaim Zophim of the Mount of Ephraim. He was a descendent of Kohath (1 Chronicles 6:22-27). He had two wives. Their names were Hannah and Peninnah, meaning grace and pearls. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. The whole family used to go to Shiloh every year to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Jehovah.

Elkanah loved Hannah, but her adversary ***“...provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb...therefore she wept and did not eat”*** (1 Samuel 1:6,7). Because of Peninnah, her heart was grieved. ***“And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head’”*** (10,11).

Grieved Hannah poured her soul out unto the Lord, and the Lord heard her prayer. She conceived and bore a son. She called his name Samuel, saying, ***“Because I have asked for him from the Lord”*** (20). She weaned and brought the child before the presence of the Lord and said to the priest, Eli, ***“For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord. So they worshiped the Lord there”*** (27,28).

The great bitterness and sorrow of Hannah’s life brought her closer to God. James said, ***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”*** (James 4:8). The trials and afflictions are the test of our faith. Peter said, ***“...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 1:7). God said, ***“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me”*** (Psalm 50:15). King David of Israel sang, ***“Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the***


BIBLE CHARACTERS

day of my trouble I will call upon You. For You will answer me” (Psalm 86:6,7). The men of faith called upon the Lord in the days of trouble and God answered them. ***“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers”*** (1 Peter 3:12; John 9:31).

Hannah is adorable because she gave her most precious possession to the Lord. ***“Lo, children are a heritage unto the Lord. The fruit of the womb is His reward”*** (Psalm 127:3).



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Adorable Hannah approached the throne of grace in the day of trouble. When Samuel was old enough to give him up, Hannah kept her vow and brought him to the tabernacle of the Lord to serve Him all the days of his life. Like Hannah, we should be thankful to our Lord God for all His many blessings. 

Kabita Gootam is a member of the Gootam family in Kakinada, India, where they have been leaders for many years in helping to spread the Gospel throughout that country.

Lydia's Open Heart

Maxie B. Boren

Recorded in Acts 16:13-15 is the conversion of a woman named Lydia. The apostle Paul (with Silas, Luke, and Timothy accompanying him) had gone to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ. While there, on the Sabbath day, Paul and his companions went down by a riverside to pray. Some women had also gathered there, including a lady by the name of Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira, and being a seller of purple goods, was evidently in Philippi on business. She was a believer in God, and had apparently become acquainted with other believers, and in their company had gone to this place of prayer. It was there that she and the others met Paul and his helpers and obviously listened as the Gospel was taught.



Upon hearing the message of salvation so graciously offered by God through Jesus Christ, the Bible informs us that the Lord “opened” her heart


BIBLE CHARACTERS

to give heed. As a result of her receiving the Word, she was baptized, as was her household.

Some theologians have mistakenly interpreted the opening of Lydia's heart to mean that in some direct, overpowering fashion, God arbitrarily did the "opening" independent of Lydia's will. This, however, is a false conclusion.

The truth of the matter is that Lydia herself was responsive to the will of God as taught by Paul. Notice that verse 14 clearly states that Lydia "heard" what Paul and those with him had to say. Because of her receptive attitude to the Gospel, the Bible thus characterizes the Lord as having opened her heart. This should be understood in the same sense as the Bible telling us that God "hardened" the heart of Pharaoh. God did not harden Pharaoh's heart independent of his will, but only as he hardened his own heart. [Read Exodus 7:3,13,14, in the light of Exodus 7:22; 8:15,32; 9:34; and 1 Samuel 6:6.] The principle is this: whoever hardens his/her own heart against God's Word, the Almighty One has decreed that indeed such a person's heart will be hardened! But on the other hand, whoever is receptive and responsive to opening up his/her heart to God's message and His will, such a person's heart will be opened. Never does God arbitrarily and directly either "open" or "harden" a person's heart independent of his/her own free will.

Lydia was a person who wanted to obey God, and when she learned what His will was through the preaching of the Gospel by Paul and his companions, she responded to it. She obeyed her Lord by being baptized. Read what Jesus taught in Matthew 28:18,19 and Mark 16:15,16. In that sense...as Lydia listened and heard (received) the Gospel, the Lord "opened" her heart. The principle is also seen in such references as Matthew 7:7,8; Acts 13:44-46; Acts 17:11,12; James 4:6b-8; etc.

If we will open our hearts to God, our hearts will be opened. If we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. But, if we harden our hearts against God, our hearts will be hardened. If we turn our backs on Him and walk away from Him, He will "give us up" to that course of action. Read Romans 1:20-28. 

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

BIBLE CHARACTERS


Joshua, Moses' Successor

Gary C. Hampton

We can learn what God desires in and from a leader by looking at Joshua, Moses' successor, a man of faith. He, along with Caleb, rejected the report of the ten faithless spies and urged the people to go up at once to take the land (Numbers 13:11-14). Their confidence was based on their trust in the Lord's ability to deliver them.

God prepared Joshua for leadership through a series of events. It was he who led the people in battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). He was with Moses when he went up to God on the mount (Exodus 24:12,13) and when Moses came down and found the people worshipping the golden calf (32:15-20). He witnessed the unselfish nature of Moses when he would not forbid Eldad and Medad to speak for God in the camp (Numbers 11:24-30). The Father directed Moses to lay hands on Joshua to symbolize the transfer of authority (27:15-23).

Joshua's first instruction was to lead the Israelites and their flocks and herds over the Jordan (Joshua 1:1,2), a river which can reach up to a mile in width at flood stage. God promised to give the people all the land He had promised Abraham (1:3,4). The land was to be theirs, based on the condition that they would receive only that upon which they walked with the soles of their feet. It was theirs for the taking, from the Arabian Desert on the south to the mountains of Lebanon on the north, and from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

God promised to sustain Joshua just as He had supported Moses in all the works he did under the direction of the Almighty. Joshua knew that no man — even powerful Pharaoh — had been able to successfully oppose Moses. God promised that none would be able to oppose him either. The Lord's strength was his as long as he obeyed the commands. Prosperity and success would arise from keeping the law which was designed for man's good (1:5-9). We, now, must be careful to obey the new law, the law of Christ, if we want God to be with us. 

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Siwell Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

What About the Ten Commandments?

Russel G. Bell



The question comes to me, “If we are not under the Old Testament, which includes the Ten Commandments, does that mean we are no longer under the Ten Commandments?” You might be shocked, but yes, it certainly does.

Does that mean we can kill, steal, commit adultery, etc.? Certainly not,

for these laws are included in the New Testament, with the exception of one of the Ten Commandments, ***“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy”*** (Exodus 20:8) That is why Christians no longer worship on Saturday — the Sabbath — but on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, the resurrection day of our Lord, in honor of Him who died for us.

We have no command in the New Testament to obey the Sabbath day and keep it holy, yet the other nine of the original Ten Commandments are there, with elaboration that reaches to the heart of each one. This is no mistake, but is the will of God for man today.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 7:4, ***“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”*** In other words, when Christ died on the cross, the Old Testament Law (including the Ten Commandments) was taken out of the way. ***“But now we have been delivered from the***



BIBLE QUESTIONS

law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6). Should you follow a law from which Christ has delivered you? Certainly not, and that is why we follow the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

“... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. ... But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. ... But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:2,3,7-9,15-18). †

Russel G. Bell is involved in full-time mission work in India.

Law or “in God’s Image”?

Was “the Law of Moses” God’s *first* law for humanity?

Was it wrong for Adam and Eve to disobey God?

How did they know it was a shame for them to be naked?

Was it wrong for Cain to kill Abel?

How was it determined that, prior to the flood, “every intent of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually”, when there was evidently no written law?

Humans were made “in the image of God” with a built-in consciousness of the basic truths of right and wrong enumerated in the Mosaic law. Jesus re-stated them as eternal truths that are written in the hearts of all men, whether they choose to obey their conscience or not.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Is the Church Building a “Sanctuary”?

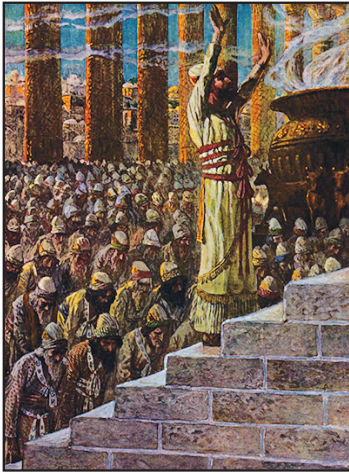
E. Claude Gardner



A congregation should build an attractive facility it can afford. Some have overbuilt and planned greater than they can finance. A church may choose to erect a building with architectural design rather than just a “cracker-box”. It may include a steeple and stained glass if this adds to attractiveness and aesthetics. God believes in the beautiful, as is seen in a bank of luscious red roses. He gives us a beautiful sunset to enjoy.

However, even with many embellishments of the “auditorium” it does not become a “sanctuary”, yet there seems to be a trend to use that terminology today without Bible approval. This has become an acquired view because the Old Testament sanctuary was for worship, and since the auditorium is set for worship, the conclusion by some is to call it a “sanctuary”. This does not have divine sanction.

BIBLE QUESTIONS



SANCTUARY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the sanctuary and temple were to be revered as holy. From the following passages, they were a part of Jehovah worship. *“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them”* (Exodus 25:8); *“You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord”* (Leviticus 19:30); *“Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!”* (Psalm 150:1). [All Scripture references are from the New King James Version,

unless otherwise noted.] It is observed that the Sabbath and sanctuary were in the same verse, which shows both were of the Old Covenant.

Jesus cleansed the temple, which was holy. *“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a ‘den of thieves’”* (Matthew 21:12,13). This rebuke does not apply to the Christian age in our church auditorium.

In the time between the testaments, the temple was desecrated by a Syrian heathen emperor, Antiochus Epiphanes, in 167 B.C. He conquered many countries, including Jerusalem. He erected in the temple a heathen idol, Zeus Olympus. On this idol he offered a sow (pork) and smeared the furniture with the liquid in which the sow was cooked. He was captured by Judas the Maccabean. Antiochus violated the temple that was holy (*Digest of the Bible*, p.619).

THE NEW TESTAMENT SANCTUARY

No longer are we under the Old Covenant, but now we have a New Covenant. *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry,*

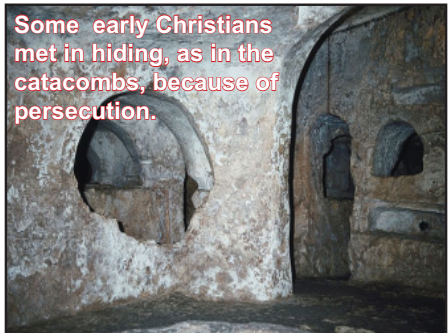
BIBLE QUESTIONS



inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises ... In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:6,13).

In our dispensation, Christians are not required to go to the temple. Stephen, the martyr, stated that we can worship any place. ***"However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands"*** (Acts 7:48). Paul also confirmed the same truth. ***"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands"*** (Acts 17:24). Christ taught a universal place. ***"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"*** (Matthew 18:20). The "gathering together" with Christ is what is important, not the place of gathering.

The worship today is in the ***"true tabernacle"***, which is the church. Hebrews 8:2 speaks of Jesus as ***"a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man...."*** The ***"first covenant"*** had a ***"worldly sanctuary,"*** but this is past. ***"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary"*** (Hebrews 9:1,2). The inspired writer showed that the old sanctuary had animal sacrifice, and obviously the church auditorium does not offer ***"beasts"***. ***"For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp"*** (Hebrews 13:11).




BIBLE QUESTIONS

CHURCH IS NOT MATERIAL

The church existed before church buildings were built. The early church met in the homes of Christians, and often in secret because of persecution. It was hundreds of years before specially-constructed meeting houses began to be used. The New Testament calls **the church** itself a spiritual building, a house, and a temple. *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, **you** are God’s **building** ... Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?**”* (1 Corinthians 3:9,16). *“For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built **the house** has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God”* (Hebrews 3:3,4).

The teaching by Christ of *“binding”* and *“loosing”* helps us understand the place of worship, bound and loosed. He said, *“...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:19b). Worship is bound (John 4:24), but it is loose as to the place, which can be anywhere — under a tree, in a home, in a church auditorium.

True worship in an auditorium is more important than the building. In it we must be holy, conscious of Him in Whose presence we have come. *“Be holy, for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16).

Calling the church building a *“sanctuary”* is not God-approved and is unnecessary. We must respect what takes place in an auditorium, but we should not have an attitude of sacredness toward the building itself. *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). 

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.



When The Rooster Crows... *

Matthew 26:31-75

Bobby Dockery

Introduction:

- ♦ For Peter, the sound of a rooster crowing brought the deepest of sorrows.
- ♦ As we examine that moment in Peter's life, we will also consider when the rooster crows for us.

Body:

I. WHEN THE ROOSTER CROWED FOR PETER.

A. In the Upper Room, Jesus warned, ***“You will all fall away because of Me this night...”*** (26:31.)

(NKJV uses the word “stumble,” NRSV has “become deserters”).

B. Peter refused to accept this and began a 3-step journey toward a crowing rooster:

- ♦ **The first step** was doubt. He questioned Jesus' word (Vs. 35; 1 Corinthians 10:12).
- ♦ **The second step** was distance. He followed from afar (vss. 56,57).



CHARTS AND OUTLINES

♦ **The third step** was denial. He swore he did not know Jesus! (Matthew 26:70-72,74).

C. Luke tells us that at this point: *“... the Lord turned and looked at Peter”* (Luke 22:61). In the midst of all that was happening to Him, Jesus knew exactly what was happening to Peter.

D. When Peter realized what he had done, *“... he went out and wept bitterly”* (Vs. 75).

II. WHEN THE ROOSTER CROWS FOR US.

A. We have all stood where Peter stood! Too often, when reality hits our good intentions, we deny Christ.

B. When the rooster crows, it is time for three reactions:

- ♦ A time for remembrance. *“And Peter remembered...”* (Matthew 26:75a; Revelation 2:5).
- ♦ A time for repentance. *“He went out and wept bitterly...”* (vss. 75b; 2 Corinthians 7:10.)
- ♦ A time for renewal. *“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”* (John 21:15-17).

C. When the rooster crows, it is not the end unless we allow it to be the end!

D. Lessons we all need to learn:

- ♦ Anyone can fall (Romans 3:23).
- ♦ When you fall, it does not have to be the end (1 John 1:9).

Conclusion:

The Devil has two favorite lies:

- ♦ “It is too soon...”
- ♦ “It is too late.”



*(See David Roper, Meet The Master, 2, (Truth For Today: Searcy, 1994, pp. 32-36.)

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA, and has been heavily involved in mission work for many years.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

WHO ARE WE?

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE AND PRACTICE?

Richard Taylor

OUR MOTTO: “Speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent, do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names.”

OUR CREED: Jesus is the son of God (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-7; Matthew 16:16-18).

WHO ARE WE? Just Christians, nothing more, nothing less! (Acts 11:26).

HOW DID WE BECOME CHRISTIANS? By following the New Testament pattern and by doing what the first century people did.

- They heard the word of God (Romans 10:14).
- They believed what was preached to them about Jesus (Acts 16:31).
- That He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16).
- That He came to earth in the flesh (John 1:14).
- That He lived without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- That He died on the cross for the sins of the world (1 Peter 2:24).
- That he rose from the dead the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).
- Having believed, they repented of their sins (Acts 2:38).
- They confessed Him before men (Acts 8:37).
- They were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:41).

GOD THEN ADDED THEM TO THE CHURCH (Acts 2:47). God does the adding, not men. As obedient believers, they were now Christians.

AS CHRISTIANS (God’s children), We meet on the 1st day of the week as did the early Christians. What do we do when we meet?

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

- We study God's word (2 Timothy 2:15).
- We sing praises to God (Ephesians 5:19).
- We pray to God through Christ (John 14:13).
- We eat The Lord's Supper [bread and fruit of the vine] Luke 22:14-20; Acts 20:7).
- We give as we have prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2).

WE CALL OURSELVES “THE CHURCH OF CHRIST”, because the church belongs to Christ (Romans 16:16). But the Bible also uses other expressions:


- The church (1 Corinthians 11:22; Ephesians 5:15).
- The house of God (Hebrews 3:6).
- The kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:24; Galatians 5:21).
- The body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18).
- The family of God (Ephesians 3:15).

OUR WORK:

- Saving souls (Matthew 28:18-20).
- Edifying one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Doing good to all men (Galatians 6:10).
- Being a light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

OUR HOPE:

Eternal life. *“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior...”* (Titus 1-3).

If following the New Testament pattern, being a Christian only, speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent appeals to you, we invite you to become a member of the New Testament church, the church that Jesus built. 

Richard Taylor, Associate Minister of the Midway Church of Christ in Utica, Mississippi, USA.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Introduction

Rusty Russwurm

A number of individuals have through the years mentioned hearing brother Doug Leatherman preach on the crucifixion of Jesus. A request was made to put his sermon into manuscript form. Upon receipt of the writings, I read them and was moved by the simple yet graphic discussions about Jesus's death on the cross. The reason for putting this into print is to send it to many parts of the world to help others have a better understanding of what Jesus has done for each of us individually. Our Lord did what no one else could do for you and me.

Douglas Leatherman, M.D. is well qualified to write about the crucifixion of Jesus. He is an avid student of the Word of God. He is a medical doctor who was widely respected during his time of practice. He has served the church of Christ in many ways in a number of congregations. He has been a teacher, a deacon, has preached on a number of occasions and has been a counselor for numerous people. He is considered to be an excellent instructor in the Word.

Due to health problems Doug is no longer active in his medical practice but remains active in the work of the church. Doug and Peggy, his wife, now reside in Enid, Oklahoma. They have a son and two daughters along with several grandchildren. While health problems have not allowed them to move at the same pace in life, it has not dampened their desire to remain true to the Word of God and help reach the lost.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

**Douglas Leatherman,
M.D.**

In this lesson a discussion of some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ will be explored. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane through His trial and His scourging to His last hours on the cross. This material is an accumulation from



FROM THE HEART OF...

various books, papers and commentaries over the past several years. I realized that I had taken the crucifixion more or less for granted all these years — that I had grown callous to its horror by an easy familiarity with the grim details and had formed a distant friendship with Him who gave His all for my sins. It finally occurred to me as a physician that I did not know or even presume to understand the actual immediate cause of His death.

The Gospel writers do not help too much on this point, because crucifixion and scourging were so common during their lifetime that they undoubtedly considered a detailed description to be totally superfluous; so we merely have the concise words of the evangelist Matthew, ***“Pilate having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to them to be crucified ... and they crucified Him.”*** (Matt 27)

Dr. Pierre Barbet, a surgeon, did extensive research on this — both on an historical and experimental basis. However, he relates too many relics and questionable artifacts in which he postulates the cause of death. The infinite spiritual suffering of the Incarnate God in atonement for the sins of fallen men I have no competence to discuss. However, the psychological and anatomical aspects of our Lord’s suffering we can explore in some detail. That is, *what did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?*

The Cross

Crucifixion is the execution of a person by fixation to a cross. It apparently was first known by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world — to Egypt and Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice there and (as with most everything the Romans did) rapidly developed a high degree of efficiency and skill in carrying it out. A number of Roman authors (Livy, Tacitus, Cicero) comment on it. Many innovations and modifications are described in ancient literature.

The Christian or Latin cross as known today can only be traced back to the fifth century A.D. — and that an ivory cross in a London museum. Early Christians abhorred the cross and refused to write or describe it. The most common form used was the “T” or Tau cross, which was comprised only of two parts: the stipes, an upright pole or beam, and the patibulum, or cross armpiece. This was the common form used at the time of Christ. It was efficient, quick, and deadly. There is overwhelming evidence in recent archaeological findings that this was the most common type used.

The upright post (stipes) or beam was permanently fixed in the ground with a notch at the top into which the patibulum or crossbar could be slipped without

FROM THE HEART OF...

trouble. This crossbar would weigh from one hundred to one hundred and twenty pounds and the condemned man was made to carry this to the site of execution. It was during the Dark Ages that the cross was depicted in paintings, giving us the impression that Christ carried the entire cross.

These same painters also placed the nails in the hands, again a misconception, for they would easily strip out through the fingers. If we turn to the early scholars of both modern and ancient anatomy, we always find that *the forearm is included in the anatomy of the hand*. This does not refute the saying of Jesus to Thomas, **“Behold, my hands.”**

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim’s crime was usually carried in front of the procession and later nailed to the top of the cross; this would give it somewhat the characteristic form of the Christian or Latin cross.

The Physical Suffering of Christ

The initial agony and suffering began in the garden of Gethsemane when Christ knew His time had come. Luke tells us, **“And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”** (Luke 22:44).



Many critics have questioned this; however, a brief search into medical literature reveals a condition known as hematodrosis or bloody sweat. It occurs in the sweat glands of the body when a person is under extreme physical and mental anguish. This process of bloody sweat started the weakening and possible shock of the physical body of our Savior.

We move rapidly through the betrayal and arrest. It must be stressed again that important portions of the suffering of Christ are missing from the Gospel accounts. This may be frustrating but in order to adhere

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to our purpose of discussing only the purely physical aspects of the suffering, we will not delve into the emotional torment He must have suffered.



After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus had six trials — all containing unjust and false accusations. When He was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas the high priest, He suffered the first physical trauma. They mocked Him, spat on Him and struck Him in the face. In the morning, Jesus, battered, bruised, dehydrated and exhausted from a sleepless night, was taken to the Fortress Antonia (part of which remains today). Here Pilate examined Him and passed the responsibility to Herod Antipas. At the hand of Herod, He again apparently suffered physical mistreatment, then was returned to Pilate. It was then that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Christ to scourging and crucifixion.

There is much disagreement among the authorities as to the scourging. This was a Roman, not a Jewish, custom. The hands were tied high to a tree or post. A whip was made of a short wood handle and heavy leather straps bearing usually the sharp bones of sheep knuckles or lead balls on the ends. The Jews forbade more than forty lashes (thirty nine was the maximum allowed), but the Romans did not have this limit. The scourging was usually carried out by a Roman soldier. The whip was brought down upon the bare back, cutting the skin first; then as the beating progressed, the muscles were laid bare, bruised and bleeding with marked loss of blood. In a significant number of instances this was enough to kill a man. Ribs were

FROM THE HEART OF...

broken, nerves exposed. Again and again, down came the whip until either death or unconsciousness resulted. Both venous and arterial bleeding occurred. Large deep, dark, bruised surfaces began to appear. Finally the skin of the back would be hanging in long shreds, the whole area an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.

Now the half-fainting Jesus was untied and slumped to the pavement, wet in His own blood. The Roman soldiers saw great jest in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They threw a robe across His bleeding shoulders and placed a reed in His right hand and a crown of thorns was pressed upon His head. This crown was made up of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used as firewood). Again there was copious bleeding because the scalp is one of the most vascular areas of the body. Because they mocked Him and struck Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into the scalp, more blood was lost. Finally tiring of their sadistic sport, the robe was torn from His back. The adherent clots of blood and scum clung to the robe and the back wounds were opened up again to massive bleeding and excruciating pain, almost as if He were being whipped again.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans returned His garments. The heavy patibulum was tied across His bleeding shoulders. The procession of Christ, Roman soldiers and the women began the slow journey to the place of the stipes. Together with the exhaustion, scourging, blood loss and deep agony, His attempt to walk erect failed, and He stumbled, awakening the painful back. The rough wood scraped across the exposed flesh. He tried to rise but human muscles had been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the execution, selected a North African, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus followed, still bleeding, sweating and, in all probability, in cold, clammy shock, to the place of Golgotha. Upon arrival, Jesus was then thrown to the ground on His bleeding back and quickly the centurion hammered a large spike in the wrist of one arm, then the other. The arms were not stretched taut but were left sagging to allow flexion and movement. The patibulum or crossbar was then attached to the top of the stipes. Quickly the feet were nailed, the left then the right, with



FROM THE HEART OF...

the same size large crude nail. They were nailed through the arch of the foot leaving the knees in a flexed position. The title “King of the Jews” was nailed to the top of the cross.

With the knees flexed, toes downward, the full pressure of the body was placed on the nerves of the feet. When this could be tolerated no more, the body would sag so the entire body weight was borne by the nails through the forearm. This produced excruciating pain on the median and ulnar nerves of the hand until it could be tolerated no more. Again the knees were straightened as much as possible. This process of seesawing up and down further weakened and exhausted the body.

At this point, great waves of cramps would sweep over the entire body, the arms fatigue, then the legs fatigue. With these cramps came the inability to push upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles would be paralyzed and the intercostal muscles unable to act. Air could be drawn into the lungs but could not be exhaled. Jesus fought to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide would build up in the lungs and bloodstream and the cramps

would partially subside.

Spasmodically, He was able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It is most likely that during this time He uttered the seven short sentences which are recorded. The first was spoken while looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment: ***“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*** The second was to the penitent thief: ***“Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”*** Then looking at the terrified and grief-stricken John, he said: ***“Behold, thy mother,”*** and



FROM THE HEART OF...

looking to Mary, His mother: ***“Woman, behold thy son.”*** The fourth cry was from the beginning of Psalm 22: ***“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”***

He had endured hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissues were torn or stretched from the nail wounds. His lacerated back yielded to unrelenting pain as He plied up and down on the cross of rough timber. Then another agony began, a crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium (a sac around the heart) slowly filled with fluid due to the extreme trauma and shock. The heart became compressed by the fluid. Let us remember again Psalm 22:14: ***“I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”***

It was now almost over. Loss of tissue fluid had reached a critical level, the compressed heart was struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the vital tissues. The tortured lungs were making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues sent their stimuli to the brain — Jesus gasped His fifth cry, ***“I thirst.”*** Let us remember another verse from the prophets in Psalm 22:15; ***“My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”***



FROM THE HEART OF...

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour vinegar wine which was the staple drink of the Roman legionnaire, was lifted up to His lips. He apparently didn't take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus now was in extremis and He could feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words, probably little more than a tortured whisper, ***"It is finished."*** His mission of atonement had been completed. Finally, He could allow His body to die. With one last surge of strength, He once again pressed His torn feet against the nail and straightened His legs, taking a deeper breath and uttering His seventh and last recorded cry: ***"Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit."***

In order not to profane the Sabbath, the Jews asked that the condemned man be removed from the cross. The Romans usually left the bodies on the cross to rot. The common method of ending a crucifixion was fracturing — the breaking of the bones of the legs — preventing the victim from raising himself to breathe. The victim then died from suffocation. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they found that He was dead already, so they pierced His side for confirmation, but did not break His legs, as had been prophesied in Psalm 34:20 and 22:16.



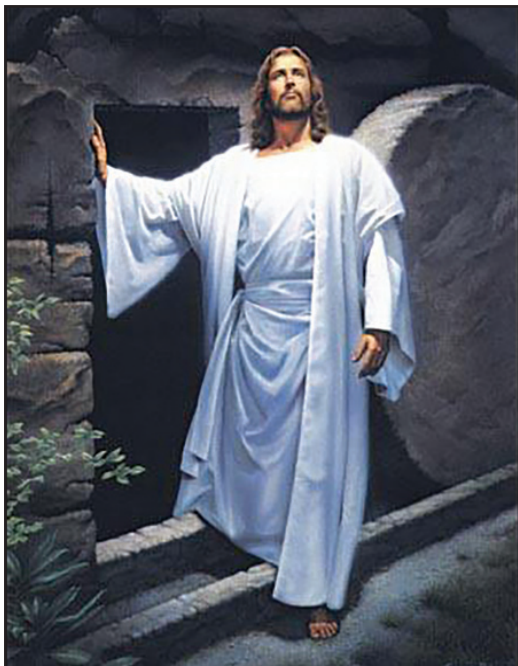
Remember God's most precious gift to man was His only begotten son. His saving power is free if we but obey his commands. Do we understand just how deep and all encompassing this love is? I think not; if it were so, then all mankind would be brothers and love would abound everywhere.


Solomon said, ***"The conclusion, when all has been heard is ... fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man"*** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

FROM THE HEART OF...

The Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus, whose crucifixion we have just reviewed, said: *“Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28).



Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more (Romans 6:3-9). 

THERE IS NO TIME FOR APATHY IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST!

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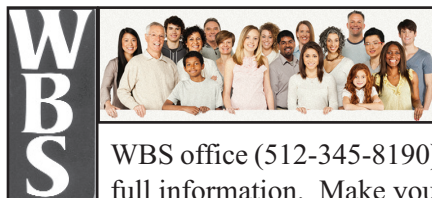
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Gospel Gazette Online is a monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by

Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. **(www.gospelgazette.com)**

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

- * For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
- * 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”.
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◆ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from Page 37)

1. speech; wisdom
2. Jesus Christ and Him crucified
3. in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling
4. demonstration of the Spirit and of power
5. that their faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God
6. mature
7. mystery
8. crucified the Lord of glory
9. Isaiah 64:4; 65:17
10. all things, the deep things of God
11. the Spirit of God
12. the Spirit Who is from God
13. the Holy Spirit
14. as foolishness
15. they can only be discerned spiritually
16. all things
17. the mind of Christ

Scavenger Hunt (page 84)

Answers:

1. Fourteen each: Matthew 1:17
2. Locust and wild honey: 3:4
3. Forty days and forty nights: 4:2
4. Peter and Andrew; James and John: 4:18, 21
5. Capernaum: 8:5-13
6. His birthday: 14:1-12
7. Seven: 15:32-39
8. Moses and Elijah: 17:1-7
9. Caesar: 22:15-22
10. Barabbas: 27:15-26

Bible Find

(from page 43)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Does God feel emotions?

There are precious identifications with God in the emotions we, as humans, experience. We are made in God's image; we have the capacity to feel love, longing, sorrow — yes, what we feel is human-sized, but it is a very real sharing with what God feels toward the souls of mankind! Listen to His words:

“The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17). (1) The omnipresent God is ***here, in our midst***, not sitting off in the distant heavens and merely observing what is going on in the world, as the religions of the East teach. (2) Our behavior elicits response from Him: ***gladness, singing!*** It is an amazing thought that the very God of creation can be moved to joyful singing because of something a mere human has done!

Through the prophet Hosea, God described His patient and gentle care for His people: ***“When Israel was a child, I loved him.... I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them...”*** But in response to their disobedience and idolatry, God cried, ***“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart churns within Me...”*** (Hosea 11:1,3,4,8).

We cannot read these words without feeling in our own hearts all the emotions we know toward our own children, or toward the ones to whom we would give spiritual birth through the Gospel — the love, the patience in helping them to take their first stumbling steps, the kissing of the wounds when they fall, the gentleness and love with which we lead them along, easing their burdens whenever we can, even bending down to their little heights to provide whatever care they need. God used these very words to describe His emotionally-induced provisions for His children. But in Israel's disobedience that required correction, what strong words God used to describe what the thought of that punishment did to His own heart: it ***churned*** within Him! What an amazing Father we have!

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