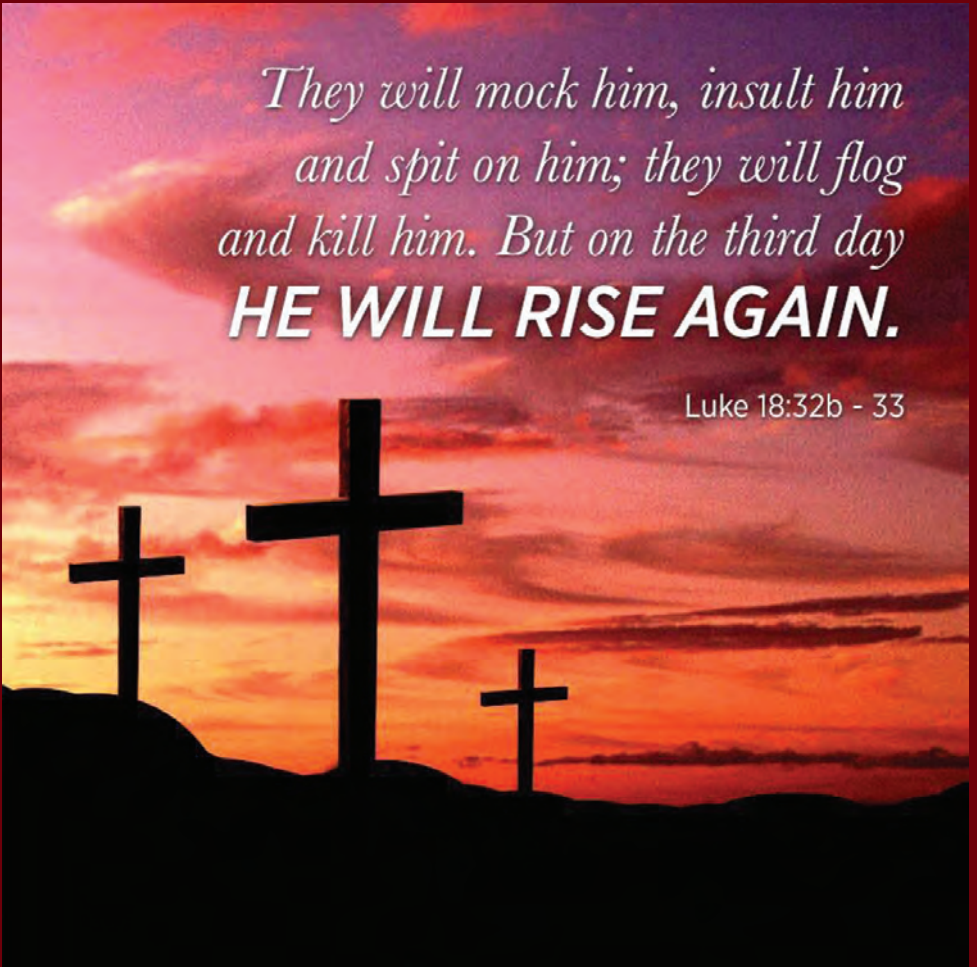


# V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

*They will mock him, insult him  
and spit on him; they will flog  
and kill him. But on the third day  
**HE WILL RISE AGAIN.***

Luke 18:32b - 33





# *Marriage*

Tertullian, Third Century A. D.

***Beautiful is the marriage of two Christians,  
two who are one in hope.***

***They are both servants of the same Master.***

***Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in spirit.***

***They are two in one flesh, and where there  
is one flesh, there is also one spirit.***

***They pray together, they worship together.***

***Instructing one another, strengthening one another.***

***Side by side they visit God's church; Side  
by side they face difficulties and persecutions.***

***Share their consolations.***

***They have no secrets from one another,  
they never bring sorrow to each other's hearts.***

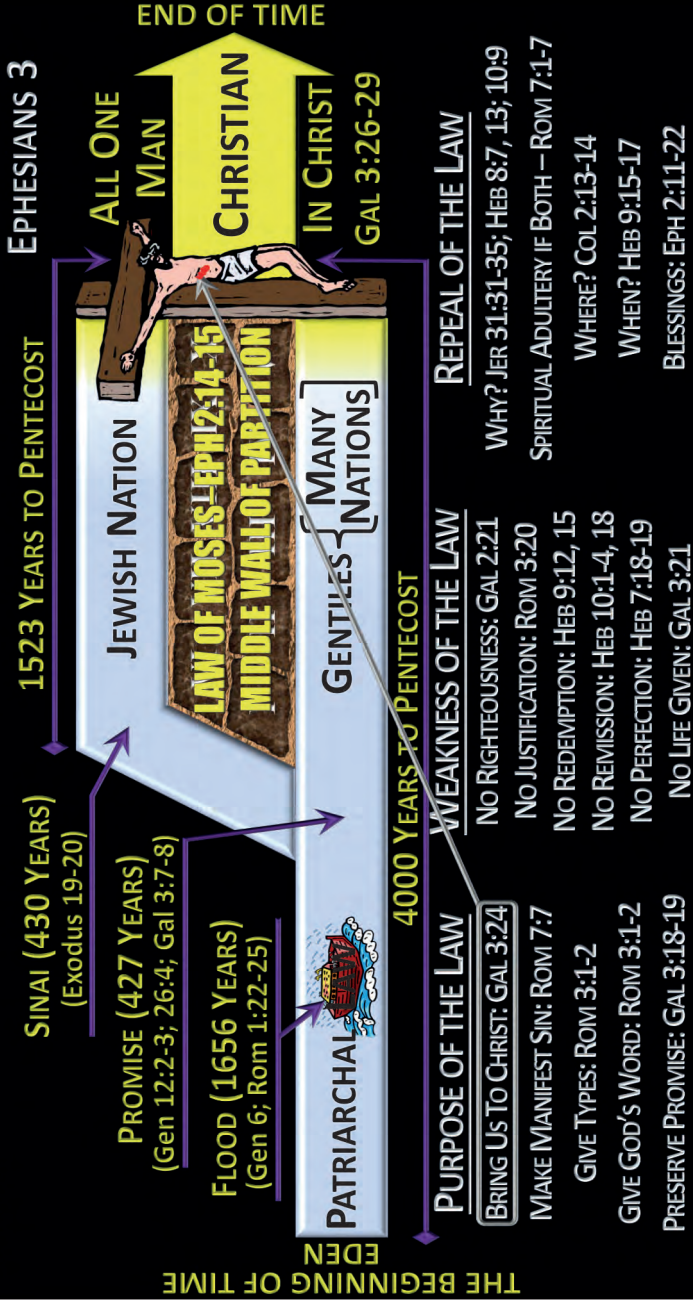
***Unembarrassed, they visit the sick and assist  
the needy. They give alms without anxiety.***

***Psalms and hymns they sing. Hearing and  
seeing this, Christ rejoices. To such as these,  
He gives His peace.***

***Where there are two together, there also  
He is present; and where He is, there evil is not.***

# The Middle Wall of Partition

By Robert C. Lingo



## PURPOSE OF THE LAW

**BRING US TO CHRIST: GAL 3:24**

**MAKE MANIFEST SIN: ROM 7:7**

**GIVE TYPES: ROM 3:1-2**

**GIVE GOD'S WORD: ROM 3:1-2**

**PRESERVE PROMISE: GAL 3:18-19**

## WEAKNESS OF THE LAW

**NO RIGHTEOUSNESS: GAL 2:21**

**NO JUSTIFICATION: ROM 3:20**

**NO REDEMPTION: HEB 9:12, 15**

**NO REMISSION: HEB 10:1-4, 18**

**NO PERFECTION: HEB 7:18-19**

**NO LIFE GIVEN: GAL 3:21**

## REPEAL OF THE LAW

**WHY? JER 31:31-35; HEB 8:7, 13; 10:9**

**SPIRITUAL ADULTERY IF BOTH - ROM 7:1-7**

**WHERE? COL 2:13-14**

**WHEN? HEB 9:15-17**

**BLESSINGS: EPH 2:11-22**

**HEBREWS 9:11-28 — THE BLOOD OF CHRIST FLOWS BOTH WAYS — 1 JOHN 2:2**

# ON WHICH SIDE OF BAPTISM IS SALVATION REALIZED?

<p><b>MARK 16:16</b> HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED...</p>	<p>...<i>SHALL BE</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>SAVED</b></p>
<p><b>ACTS 2:38</b> ...REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST...</p>	<p>...<i>FOR THE</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>REMISSION OF SINS</b></p>
<p><b>ACTS 22:16</b> ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED...</p>	<p>...<i>AND</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>WASH AWAY THY SINS</b></p>
<p><b>GALATIANS 3:27</b> FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST...</p>	<p>...<i>HAVE</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>PUT ON CHRIST</b></p>
<p><b>1 PETER 3:21</b> ...<u>BAPTISM</u>... ...NOT THE PUTTING AWAY OF THE FILTH OF THE FLESH...</p>	<p>...<i>DOETH ALSO NOW</i>  ...<i>BUT THE ANSWER OF (REQUEST)</i></p>	<p>=</p> <p>=</p>	<p><b>SAVE US, GOOD (CLEAR) CONSCIENCE</b></p>
<p><b>Romans 6:4-5</b> 4) <u>WE WERE BURIED</u> WITH HIM THROUGH <u>BAPTISM</u> INTO DEATH...</p>	<p>...<i>SO WE ALSO MIGHT WALK IN</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>NEWNESS OF LIFE</b></p>
<p>5) FOR IF WE HAVE BECOME UNITED WITH HIM IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH...</p>	<p>...<i>WE SHALL BE ALSO IN THE LIKENESS OF</i></p>	<p>=</p>	<p><b>HIS RESSURECTION</b></p>

*By Robert C. Lupo*

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**THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU**

(ROMANS 16:16).




Spirit to anyone now with *“a still small voice”* (1 Kings 19:12)!

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit neither makes decisions for a child of God nor does He directly guide him in making his decisions. Rather, the Holy Spirit influences those who endeavor to implement the Holy Spirit-inspired Word of God in their lives. This is especially true with actual, practicing Christians.

The providence of God and how the Holy Spirit is involved in that providence pertains to background circumstances that provide opportunities and choices about which the children of God can make their own decisions. Though the Holy Spirit is involved in Divine providence, that does not directly relate to God through the Holy Spirit speaking to anyone today. Also, providence is the backdrop to God answering prayers, but God’s invisible providence does not facilitate direct communication between the Holy Spirit and Christians today.

Whenever God communicated to mankind anciently through the Holy Spirit, that communication was confirmed or validated by miracles (e.g., Moses’ rod, Exodus 4:1-5; Gideon’s fleece, Judges 6:26-40; etc.). Since the age of Bible miracles ended long ago, *“a still small voice”* one may suppose that he hears today is not validated with Bible miracles, but instead merely by subjective or personal feelings. Without miracles for authentication, even if one really did hear *“a still small voice,”* he could not discern whose voice it was—God’s or Satan’s. Only one’s subjective and personal feelings could guess its source.

Direct leading, direction or communication ascribed to the Holy Spirit today **is not Divine in origin**. Neither are such assertions based on biblical evidence (i.e., the New Testament), but instead they spring forth from charismatic and Pentecostal doctrines, which are unscriptural and anti-scriptural.

Nevertheless, the churches of Christ are being led by the Holy Spirit when they are comprised of Christians who are being “led by the Spirit” (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18). Churches and Christians ought to consent to be led by the Holy Spirit today, but in order to do that, they must resort to the Holy Spirit-inspired, miracle-validated Word of God—the New Testament. In addition, we ought to *“speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Peter 4:11) and avoid speaking *“the language of Ashdod”* (Nehemiah 13:24). 



# The Resurrection of Jesus

**Jerry Bates**

The greatest demonstration of the Deity of Jesus and the truthfulness of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus. Most people recognize that fact; thus, the resurrection is also one of the most disputed accounts found in the Bible. It is not uncommon to hear people simply stating as fact that Jesus did not rise from the dead. Usually, they give little if any explanation to support their contention; they merely state it and apparently expect everyone to agree with their assessment. The resurrection accounts in the Bible are often dismissed as simply the created stories of the early church to give additional honor and authority to their founder, Jesus. Unbelievers will frequently assert that early Christians were looking for a reason to believe in Jesus; therefore, they were willing and eager to believe anything that would support a resurrection story that had been created. There is an interesting account in Luke 24:13-35 that clearly contradicts the above assessment.

In these verses, we find two disciples of Jesus walking towards the village of Emmaus, and Jesus appeared to them, but they did not recognize Him. They were talking about what had happened over the last few days, and they were disheartened (24:17). Their minds were filled with the bitterness of disappointments and lost hopes. Their Savior had just died! Their dreams of the coming Messiah had been shattered by the crucifixion of Jesus.

Furthermore, these disciples had already heard stories that the tomb of Jesus was empty. This was late in the day when Jesus was walking with them (24:29), and they had heard that some women had gone to the



tomb early that morning, had seen a vision of angels and had found the tomb empty. They also had heard that some other disciples had verified their story that the tomb was empty. These men also knew that Jesus had prophesied that He would be resurrected on the third day. Yet, they still had not come to the obvious conclusion that Jesus had been resurrected. At this point, we might want to metaphorically shake these men by the shoulders and tell them to wake up and believe the evidence. Notice that these men were not eager to believe the resurrection claim as many would have us believe. In actuality, we find the opposite is true. They were extremely reluctant to believe the resurrection, even though they had heard some reports that indicated the resurrection might very well be true.

Jesus said to these men that they were being foolish. Why were they being foolish? They were acting as fools because they did not believe or understand what the prophets had spoken concerning the Messiah. Jesus then reminded them that all which had happened was necessary and that it was all part of God's plan. Moreover, Moses and the prophets had foretold all these things. Furthermore, Jesus explained to them what the Scriptures had prophesied concerning Him.

One reason why these men from Emmaus did not believe the empty tomb reports was because they were isolating those reports from the Scriptures. Many today do the same thing. They dismiss the resurrection accounts as wild, fictional stories created by the writers themselves, forgetting that these accounts were only part of the whole plan of God as revealed in the Bible. They ignore the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the necessity of Jesus suffering and dying on the cross. They overlook the prophecies of Jesus Himself regarding His death and resurrection, just as these men seemed to place little importance to the words of Jesus.


Critics disregard other evidences regarding the resurrection of Jesus and view these accounts as merely wild stories. Preconceived ideas often make men blind to the truth. For centuries men believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to the earth. In 1589, nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death, Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. He went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound weight and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong,

however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right in spite of the plain evidence before their eyes.

We need to do what Jesus encouraged these men from Emmaus to do, believe **all** that the prophets had spoken. Luke implied that the reason they did not recognize Jesus was because they did not truly understand the Scriptures (24:25-26). They believed a portion of them. They liked the part about the Messiah as a king and a ruler. They did not like the part about the suffering Messiah; thus, they rejected it.

Jesus taught these men that the cross was absolutely necessary. It was neither a mistake nor a victory for Satan. A suffering Messiah was not a contradiction. There could be no crown without there first being a cross. They evidently had never understood that before. They had looked upon Jesus' death as a hideous and irreparable calamity. When Jesus spoke to them on the occasion now under consideration, they learned that the crucifixion was no mere accident. Instead of being the greatest of calamities, it was the greatest of necessities. Love cried for man's liberation, while the justice of God demanded his punishment. How could these conflicting demands be met? Christ paid the price for us. *“Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”* (1 Peter 2:24).

**Their minds were filled with the bitterness of disappointments and lost hopes. Their Savior had just died! Their dreams of the coming Messiah had been shattered by the crucifixion of Jesus.**

The Scriptures say that their eyes were opened, and they recognized that Jesus was speaking to them. Immediately, Jesus vanished from their sight. Now everything made sense, and they went back and told the apostles what had happened. What was the difference? They had seen Jesus! However, before Jesus revealed Himself to these men, He led them back to the Scriptures. Seemingly, He wanted them to fully understand the Scriptures and place the resurrection account in its context. That is exactly what we must do. We cannot isolate the resurrection accounts from the whole context of Scripture and God's plan as if we can accept or reject just that part. When we consider all the Scriptures, the empty tomb and other evidences surrounding the event, the truthfulness of the resurrection is the only thing that makes sense. 



**1932—2008**

## **Does God Speak To Man Today?**

**J.C. Choate**

The Bible contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible, then, is the complete Word of God, containing all of the Holy Scripture as spoken by God. The Old Testament was God’s Word to His people before the death of Christ. The New Testament is God’s Word for His people after the death of Christ. It is the New Testament that tells us how to be saved, how to live, and how to go to Heaven.

With the foregoing thoughts in mind, you may well ask, “Does God speak to man today?” The answer to that question is YES. First of all, we are assuming that God exists. That is not difficult to do when one stops to consider that everything that exists serves as a testimony to His creative ability. Something cannot come from nothing. Therefore, from eternity God has existed, and He created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein (Genesis 1:1). However, with God’s creation of man, He also had a purpose for his being: to honor and glorify his Maker (Genesis 1:26-27, 31). In the New Testament, we read these words, ***“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen”*** (1 Timothy 1:17). Yet, God would not be honored if man was forced to obey Him. So, God put a choice before him (Genesis 3). He could choose to obey or to disobey. To enable man to make a wise decision, it was necessary to set before him both the good and the bad. Therefore, God spoke to man to reveal His will, and then He warned him of sin and of the consequence of it. It was left for man to make the final decision as to what he would do.

God has always spoken to man. In the New Testament, the writer of

Hebrews said, ***“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds”*** (Hebrews 1:1-2). This portion of God’s Word says a lot. First, it tells us that God has spoken at different times and in different ways. Second, it states that God has spoken in the past and in the last days. In the past, as represented by the Old Testament, He spoke directly to the fathers or the heads of the households, and they passed His Word on to their families. An example of this was God speaking to Noah, Abraham and others of that time. Then later, God spoke to the people through the prophets like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others. By this time His Word was being written down so that His will might be kept permanently to enable people to go to it and read it at any time.


Finally, God spoke to man through His Son, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. In the presence of Christ and His disciples, God spoke from Heaven to say, ***“...This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”*** (Matthew 17:5). The apostle John, one of the close disciples of Christ, said, ***“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”*** (John 1:17). Christ Himself said, ***“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”*** (John 12:47-50).

Now what do we have? We are told that God has always spoken to man. He has never left humanity in darkness, not knowing what to do. Rather, he has spoken to reveal His will and to enable us to make wise decisions. During the age before Christ, God had made a covenant with humanity, and later with the nation of Israel, called “the law of Moses.” According to Galatians 3:19, 24-25, ***“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ... Therefore the law was our tutor to***

***bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”*** So God gave a new covenant, sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to take out of the way that first covenant. We read, ***“Then He said, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”*** (Hebrews 10:9-10). From this you can see that Christ offered Himself on the cross to take away the first covenant, to establish the second covenant, which we call the “New Testament.”

When the matter comes up concerning whether or not God speaks to us today, many are thinking in terms of God speaking directly to man. Even though we have the written will of God in the form of the New Testament, still there are those who contend that—separate and apart from the Bible—God speaks in an audible voice through a vision, a dream or through some other means. However, the Bible does not teach this.

In summing all of this up, let’s make these points clear: God speaks today; He speaks through His Son; and Christ speaks through the written Word. That Word is recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Therefore, when we read the Word as recorded in the New Testament, God is speaking to us. His Word is spirit and life, ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”*** (Hebrews 4:12). It is the truth, ***“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth”*** (John 17:17). It will live and abide forever (1 Peter 1:23). In the end, we will be judged by it (John 12:48).

What God says, therefore, must be left as it is. We cannot add to it, subtract from it or change it in any way. ***“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”*** (Revelation 22:18-19). God has revealed all of His will to man in the Bible. Therefore, for anyone to say that God has revealed some new message to him today, he is deceived, and he is attempting to deceive others. 

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## **WHAT IF THE MEN HAD SAID, ***“HE IS STILL HERE”?*****

**J.J. Turner, Ph. D.**

With tear stained eyes, heavy hearts and baskets filled with burial spices, Mary Magdalene and other women sadly, early on Sunday morning, came to the tomb where Jesus Christ had been placed. Theirs was to be an act of love to finish the process of preparing His body for its final resting place in a borrowed tomb.

Luke leaves us this record of this event, relative to what the women found when they reached the tomb. ***“But they found the stone rolled away***



## GOD

*from the tomb. Then they went in and did NOT FIND THE BODY of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this that behold, two men stood by in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? HE IS NOT HERE, BUT IS RISEN! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee’”* (Luke 24:2-6; cf. John 20:1).

Have you ever wondered, as I have, what would have happened if the men had said to the women, “HE IS STILL HERE”? It takes only a few moments to reflect on this challenging thought to come up with numerous tragic thoughts. In fact, the answers would remove the bedrock truth of Christianity—**THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST**.

### **12 REALITIES IF JESUS HAD STAYED IN THE TOMB**

Out of an extended list of consequences if the men had said, HE IS STILL HERE, these are some major truths:

**1. If Jesus was still in the tomb, it means that He lied:** “*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matthew 12:40). “*From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be KILLED, and be RAISED THE THIRD DAY*” (Matthew 16:21).

**2. If Jesus was still in the tomb, there would be no proof that He was the Son of God with power.** The apostle Paul wrote, “*...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and DECLARED to be the Son of God with POWER according to the Spirit of holiness, by the RESURRECTION from the dead*” (Romans 1:3-4).

**3. If Christ was still in the tomb, there would be no Good News—GOSPEL—message to preach:** “*For I delivered to you FIRST of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He ROSE AGAIN the third day according to the Scriptures*” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; cf. Psalm 16:9-11).

## GOD

**4. If Christ was still in the tomb, then there is no basis for saving faith:** *“And IF Christ IS NOT RISEN, then our preaching is EMPTY and your FAITH is also EMPTY”* (1 Corinthians 15:14).

**5. If Christ was still in the tomb, then He was not the first fruit from the dead, proving once raised that there would not be another death:** *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the FIRSTFRUITS of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:19, 20).

**6. If Christ was still in the tomb, a deceptive hoax was perpetrated on the first-century disciples by someone claiming to be Him.** Read John 20:19-31 to see how the disciples were deceived if Jesus was still in the tomb; a deception they perpetrated into the world. Read the Book of Acts.

**7. If Christ was still in the tomb, then baptism for the remission of sins has no meaning:** *“Therefore we were BURIED with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was RAISED from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4).

**8. If Christ was still in the tomb, it means that when we partake of the Lord’s Supper we are only remembering a dead man in a tomb.** Yes, *“we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”* (1 Corinthians 11:26), which means He is alive—because He was raised from the dead and the tomb was empty that Sunday morning.

**9. If Christ was still in the tomb, then we don’t have the hope of having a resurrected body like His body:** *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will TRANSFORM our lowly BODY that it may be CONFORMED to His glorious BODY, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”* (Philippians 3:20-21; cf. 1 John 3:2).

**10. If Christ was still in the tomb, there wouldn’t be a church—an assembly—of CALLED OUT PEOPLE called by the Gospel** (2 Thessalonians 2:14). *“And I also say unto you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [i.e. death, jjt] shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18).

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**11. If Christ was still in the tomb, then the prophecy by David was a lie—a lie Peter perpetrated on the Day of Pentecost:** *“Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he foreseeing this spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up of which we are all witnesses”* (Acts 2:30-32).

**12. If Christ was still in the tomb, then the promise preached by the apostle Paul of Christ returning, with the souls of those who have gone to be with Him, is another lie:** *“For if we believe that Jesus died and ROSE again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14).



Thank God that the words were not, HE IS STILL HERE, BUT, **“HE IS NOT HERE, HE IS RISEN.”** This truth raises the question: What difference has it made or is it making in your life that JESUS HAS BEEN RAISED from the dead, guaranteeing your own resurrection from the dead? †

J.J. Turner is an elder and the preacher for the McDonough Church of Christ in McDonough, Georgia, USA.

For additional materials by J.J. Turner visit his website: [www.jeremiahinstitute.com](http://www.jeremiahinstitute.com)

**GOD**

# The Three-Fold Office of Our Lord

**Rodney Nulph**

Jesus Christ was certainly a man, but oh so much more than a man! Jesus was both fully Divine (God) and fully human (man). This embodiment of humanity and Deity is known among theologians as *hypostatic union*. Obviously, nowhere else has this dual nature ever been reality than in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus became man for us, while still remaining God, it makes Him uniquely qualified to perform certain duties for those who are redeemed by His blood. There were three main offices that were necessary to bridge the gap between sinful man and Almighty God—**prophets** who exclusively spoke for God, **priests** who exclusively sacrificed to God and **kings** who exclusively supervised under God. Jesus fulfilled all three of these offices perfectly!

## *Christ as Prophet*

A prophet of God is one who reveals God, speaks for God and communicates God's truths to the people. God's prophets both forthtold (preached current situations) and foretold (predicted future situations). Undoubtedly, Jesus flawlessly performed this when He came to "**reveal the Father**" (Matthew 11:27) and to reverberate God's will (John 8:28; 12:49-50). God revealed to Moses that some future day Moses' prophecies would no longer be authoritative, but the "**Prophet like unto Moses**" (Deuteronomy 18:15) would be the prophet that mankind would heed. Years later, the Holy Spirit guided Peter to quote Moses and apply that prophecy to Jesus Christ. Additionally, Jesus referred to Himself as a Prophet (Matthew 13:57-58; Luke 13:33). Truly, never a prophet spoke like the Prophet Jesus (John 7:46)!

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### *Christ as Priest*

The priests were those in the Old Testament who were responsible for offering sacrifices to God in order to atone for sin. However, every priest, until Jesus, had to first offer sacrifice for the priest's cleansing and then

for the people (Hebrews 4:15; 7:27). Jesus made one sacrifice for mankind, and that was the final sacrifice! As our High Priest, Jesus stands between us and the Father, as our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). It could be said that both the prophet and the priest stand between God and sinful man. In the case of a prophet, he delivered the Word of God from the top down. In the case of the priest, he delivered the sacrifices of people to God from the bottom up. So, Jesus is a Prophet who delivered the Word of God to humanity, and He is also the Priest who delivered His sacrifice, on our behalf, to God the Father.



### *Christ as King*

A king is someone who has the authority to reign over a group of people. Interestingly, Jesus is referred to as King throughout Holy Writ. The Messianic prophet of old testified to this fact (Isaiah 9:6-7). God through Daniel promised that Jesus would be King and reign over His kingdom (Daniel 7:14). When the Magi

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inquired about the young Christ child, they understood His Kingship when they said, “... *Where is he that is born King of the Jews...*” (Matthew 2:2b). Jesus Himself recognized this office before Pilate as He conversed, “*And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest*” (Matthew 27:11). Jesus’ Kingship declares several important things. First, He has a kingdom—the church (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13). Second, He has the authority to reign and judge (Acts 17:31; Revelation 19:11). Third, He is supreme over everything (Colossians 1:18). It is little wonder why Paul would refer to Jesus as “...*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:15).

The work of the Messiah, in many ways, was completed while He was upon this earth. However, Jesus remains active in His church and in His creation (Colossians 1:13-18). As Prophet, Jesus speaks to humanity through His Word. As Priest, Jesus sacrificed for the atonement of our souls (Hebrews 9:12; Revelation 5:9). As King, Jesus reigns over His eternal kingdom, the church. No question about it, He was a man, but oh so much more than a man. **He is Prophet, Priest and King!** †

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of Gospel Gazette Online magazine. He resides in Spencer, Wisconsin, USA.

## Funeral Wishes

Author Unknown

***Three buddies were discussing death. One asked the others, “What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?” The first said, “I would like them to say, ‘He was a great humanitarian who cared about his community.’” The second one said, “I want them to say, ‘He was a great husband and father who was an example for many to follow.’” The third guy said, “I want them to say, ‘Look, he’s moving!’” One day we will “move” as well when we will experience the general resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29).***

# ***HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE ANCIENT SUNKEN CITIES?***

**Betty Burton Choate**

We who read the Bible would be aware that God created man in His own image, giving him capability to live and work in the world in which he had been placed. Of course, buried deep in all of our heads are the pictures of “cave people” who would appear to be only a step into humanity out of the monkey age. We have been so schooled (literally) in this thinking, that even many believers in God’s Word would never doubt that it is the true picture of the development of the history of the world.

I do beg to differ. Between Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden and Genesis 6 where God warned Noah to build the ark because He would destroy the world with water, very few details are given of what that era was like. I am convinced that humans, fresh from their Creator’s hands, were much more nearly perfect in their bodily makeup than we. Scientists tell us that, though the cumulative effects are small, every generation sees additional genome defects. We may think we are the healthiest and the smartest people who have ever lived, but biblical history denies this.

What was Adam’s age when he died? Nine hundred and thirty years! All of the patriarchs listed before Noah had similar life spans. This tells us that, physically, there was no comparison between their health and ours. We can safely assume the same superiority in their brain function.

What do we read about the capabilities of these early people? We learn in Genesis 4:17 that Cain built a city!

In verse 21 we are told that Jubal was the father of those who handled the harp and organ! This verse attests to the well-known fact that there is music embedded in every living thing (Made in His image? Zephaniah 3:17 tells us that even God bursts out in song because of His joy over His people!) To design musical instruments hardly sounds like the work of cave people!

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In verse 22 we are told that Tubal-cain was a teacher! His field? He worked with brass and iron! Modern historians say that metalworkers in eastern Turkey knew how to make bronze as early as 3000 B.C. (shortly after the flood), but it was only around 20 B.C. to A.D. 20 that they figured out brass. Amazingly, according to Scripture, these earliest of humans already knew how to work with metals, long before the flood!

These bits of information describe accomplishments early in the history of man. With the passing of the centuries, as humanity became more and more ungodly, we can be assured that man continued to grow in his accomplishments. Even today, it would be quite a challenge for a man and his three sons to construct a boat 450 feet long, 72 feet wide and 45 feet high, able to withstand the overwhelming power of the flood. Yet, they did it!

Archaeologists are continually finding “OOPARTS”—“Out-of-Place Artifacts” that are buried in layers of water-laid residue, contradicting the ideas of evolution. These show that from ancient times, humans were as inventive and as intelligent as we are, and probably the more so.

Have you heard of the ancient sunken cities that have been discovered? Numerous ones have been found in recent years. One such city, in the Gulf of Cambay off the western coast of India, measures five miles long and two miles wide! Graham Hancock said, “Cities on this scale are not known in the archaeological record until roughly 4,500 years ago when the first big cities begin to appear in Mesopotamia. Nothing else on the scale of the underwater cities of Cambay is known. The first cities of the historical period are as far away from these cities as we are today from the pyramids of Egypt.”

In 1995, an underwater structure was discovered near Okinawa, Japan. The description is given: “Lying about 60 feet deep, the structure appeared to be manmade. Large steps could be seen, blocks of rock cut at right angles and smoothed. The discovery would send shock waves through the archaeological world. Japan’s Underwater Pyramids or Ruins as they have become to be known are a mystery. In all, around eight sites have been discovered.”



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Photos and text from: [www.rabbithole2.com/.../ancient\\_underwater\\_cities\\_found.htm](http://www.rabbithole2.com/.../ancient_underwater_cities_found.htm)

What do these dates and discoveries tell us? The Genesis record is absolutely true! The statement that no such cities appeared in the archaeological record until 4500 B.C. would date those remains to be among the earliest constructions after the flood. The Pyramids of Egypt would fall into the same age period. Do not these edifices tell us that there was tremendous knowledge and capability among ancient humans? Would not the knowledge of pre-flood peoples have been passed down to the descendants of Noah and his children?

The flood entirely changed the earth. Mile upon mile of water-laid layers throughout the world attest to the undeniable fact that at some time in the past there was a worldwide flood. Not only was the earth's surface altered, but land masses were broken up and separated. Archaeologists speculate that the aforementioned city off the coast of Japan was built on a land mass

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formerly connecting Japan and Taiwan. The fact that entire cities now lie *drowned* in the oceans—not *destroyed by war*—is evidence of huge, well-developed civilizations that not only flourished from ancient times but also that a flood that reached above the tops of the world’s mountains buried all that had existed. God’s purpose was not only to start over with a new family but to erase everything that the corrupt humans had developed as they were sinking deeper and deeper into the morass of evil.

I encourage readers to do further research on “Out-of-Place Artifacts” and sunken cities. Increased knowledge of the remains from the past will help you to more fully appreciate the kind of world in which Noah lived, and will also further strengthen the conviction that the biblical record of the Genesis flood is true.

Such study, and a look at humanity’s deteriorating conscience of right and wrong, will also serve as a strong warning. Jesus said that no man knows when He will return: ***“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be”*** (Matthew 24:37-39).

What was man’s condition before the flood? ***“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”*** (Genesis 6:5). As atheism and humanism grow in their influence, dominating the general message in our educational systems, believers in God are not only losing the battle in the world, but in so many cases our own children are being sacrificed on the altar of unbelief. Look around: **What percentage of the children born to Christian parents are remaining faithful through high school, college, and marriage? How many have given up their faith, married those who are not Christians and will have no faith to pass on to their children?**

The Scriptures are true. The Genesis flood really did occur, and our Lord really will come back some day. **Will we be ready?** †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, originator of *The Voice of Truth International*, living in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

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# God Created One Honey of a Bird

Dave Everson

Among the amazing animals God created is one that has an understanding about how to use humans and other animals to get to its favorite meal. The animal we are going to talk about is a bird, the honeyguide of Africa. These birds have the amazing ability to get food by leading humans and other animals to bee hives. Then, when the hive is opened, the bird has supper. Let's look at some of the amazing details of the honeyguide.

The honeyguide belongs to the family of birds called the Indicatoridae, which was named for the bird's ability to indicate where a bee hive can be found. The best known of this family is the genus *Indicator*, in which the honeyguide bird belongs. Native tribesman know that if they listen to and follow these birds for miles into the bush, they will find a supply of rich honey.

The honeyguide can memorize where each beehive can be found over a huge area of the bush. When these birds need food, they will find a human to lead to the food. By giving loud, attention-demanding chattering and flitting nervously around people, the bird will signal the need for the human to follow. The bird will then fly a little ahead and call loudly; when the human catches up, the bird flies on. This process will continue maybe for many miles until the bird reaches where the hive is. Then, the bird will change its call and sit in one place near the hive. Once the tribesman has opened the hive and gotten his honey, the bird will move in and eat the grubs as well as the beeswax of the honeycomb. They have also been known to eat candle wax. The honeyguide will also try the same type of behavior with a mammal called the honey bBadger. There has been some speculation about whether the honey badger follows because it knows

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food will be found by following the bird, or whether the bird follows the badger when it finds a beehive.

The honeyguide has a very thick skin that may protect it from the stings of the angry bees after the hive has been raided. These birds also have a very unique breeding behavior that depends upon other birds, but preferring a bird called the bee-eater, to feed and raise the honeyguide's young.

This behavior is called "brood parasites." The mother honeyguide will find a nest of one of several species of other birds. She will then enter the nest and lay a single egg. The honeyguide may also "pip" the host nest egg(s). This is pecking a small hole in the shell that slows down or stops development of the host egg. If any of the host nest eggs develops and hatches, the baby honeyguide will peck its nest mates with an especially sharp, curved beak. This repeated pecking will eventually cause the death of the host mother's chicks. The host mother will then raise the baby honeyguide, which will even produce calls that mimic the call of several bee-eater baby chicks. This appears to be a strong stimulus for the host mother to bring extra food for the baby, which then grows at a very rapid rate.

Indeed, God has created some amazing animals to share this planet we call earth, and the honeyguide is one of the best examples. It is very hard to imagine how this bird could learn that attracting humans or honey badgers would get it food if God did not create this behavior in the first bird. Yet, it appears that many people choose not to believe what has been created around them. †

David Everson is a retired biology teacher and conducts creation science seminars. He is also an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA.

**"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." (Romans 1:20-23 NKJV)**

# BAMBOOZLED

Donald R. Fox

The English language has many words that introduce us to a host of words with similar meanings. One such word is “bamboozled.” This word is defined in part, “to take in by elaborate methods of deceit.” Alternatively, similar words are “hoodwinked,” “beguiled,” “deluded,” “hoax,” “snooker” and “mislead.”

As I dwelled on this odd word, I must confess I have been hoodwinked and bamboozled a few times during my lifetime. Not a lot of times, but I have accepted some things that were wrong while thinking they were right. Therefore, I was misled. It is an awful feeling to be duped. It is good and right that truth will always set one free. ***“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:32).

As I pondered this deceitful and wrongful way of obtaining the upper hand, I know there are definitely a few things about which I cannot be fooled. I cannot be bamboozled on the spelling of English words. The spellings of words are fixed by a standard—the dictionary. Now, I am not saying I can spell all English words, no way, but nevertheless, given time, I can look up the correct spelling to include the history of such words. Further, in a dictionary, there is a list of definite “Weights and Measures.” As an example, 12 inches equal 1 foot, and that is our standard.

Further, I cannot be bamboozled on what is biblical truth and what is not God-given truth. For many years now, I have trusted in the Word of God, the Bible. Do I know everything contained in the Bible? No, I do not. However, I can always determine the truth by accepting our standard, the Bible. Do you have a sense of what is right and wrong? Biblical principles and standards have been the mark of civilized governments and their laws. Consider “The Golden Rule.” ***“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”*** (Matthew 7:12). This declares the world’s only true standard of conduct. We challenge the secular-minded unbeliever to find a flaw in it. Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) The simple answer is, ***“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”*** (John 17:17).

We recognize there are mysteries and unknowns that are beyond human

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understanding. I would rather trust the Word of God than the intermixed and contradictory philosophies of men. *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deuteronomy 29:29).

We would make a mistake to seek biblical answers by way of the magnitude of religious creeds written and approved by mere men. Concerning creeds of men, Philip Schaff, in his three volumes, “The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes” made this statement concerning creeds on page 4 of this work. “They keep alive sectarian strifes and antagonisms.” On a positive note Mr. Schaff continued, “...but they reveal also the underlying agreement, and foreshadow the possibility of future harmony.” I appreciate Mr. Schaff’s optimism. However, sadly, creeds will always create “sectarian strifes.”

Don’t be bamboozled by religious organizations or assortments of theological creeds and think they have the authority to legislate in matters of faith or morals. That body of laws and ethical standards was completed when the last inspired writer wrote, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”* (Revelation 22:21). It is very common nowadays to hear the declaration that we are living in a new normal with its new morality. This is an enormous bamboozle. There is a drive to create a secular, non-religious society. Our society is crumbling because we have forgotten our heritage and because of the rejection of God-given standards. *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way”* (Psalms 119:104). ☩

Donald R. Fox worships with the Mayfield Church of Christ and resides in Slatton, Mississippi, USA.



### Did You Know?

Arlis D. Richardson

The Church of Christ does not subscribe to any church discipline, creed or manual other

than the Bible. It consists of obedient servants who have been baptized into Christ—thus added to the church by the Lord, and called Christians only (Acts 2:47; 11:26; Romans 16:16). It neither adds or takes away from the revealed Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18).

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# *The Living Word*

Patrick Morrison

There have been those who have charged that the Bible is nothing more than a dead letter, that it is devoid of any power to persuade or convict, that it is lifeless. Many assert that the Scriptures are meaningless without an operation of God upon the Word or upon the student of the Word to animate it and make it come alive. There is much said about the way that the Spirit of God is moving among people or helping to enlighten them in their understanding of the Word of God. Are these allegations true? Is it the case that the Word of God, the Bible, is nothing more than a dead letter, and that God has to act upon it in some mysterious (even miraculous) way in order for His Word to speak to us today?

What is being missed in this discussion is the fact that God has already acted upon His Word to make it living and active. Paul reminded Timothy that, ***“All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God”*** (2 Timothy 3:16). The word translated ***“inspiration”*** is from a compound Greek word that means “God-breathed.” That is, the Word of God comes from the very mouth or breath of God. The breath of God caused the inanimate, clay-fashioned body of man to become a living, breathing soul (Genesis 2:7). The Almighty gave life to man and life to His Word in the same way: He breathed life into them both! God, by means of the Holy Spirit, gave life to His revealed will for man. Peter recorded, ***“For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit”*** (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit is responsible for delivering the precious Word of God to man! He carried these inspired writers along as they penned the Word for posterity. It is, after all, ***“the sword of the Spirit”*** (Ephesians 6:17). No word from God, Christ or the Holy Spirit is ever without life! Jesus stated, ***“It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”*** (John 6:63). Shouldn’t we expect that the Word would deliver a living, active, soul-saving message from the Father?

Those who were charged with faithfully recording the Word of God were guided to write about the power of God’s revealed will. The Spirit Himself was

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using the hands of inspired men to point souls to God through the message of the Gospel. He put power in the message so that men might be saved by hearing it and obeying it. These inspired penmen would never have charged that the Word of God lacked power or that it was a dead letter. Quite to the contrary! James wrote, *“Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21). Paul understood that the Gospel message was powerful: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16). He understood that the power in the message was put there by a living God! The writer of Hebrews was also cognizant of the power



of Scripture: *“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12). The Word of God is very much alive! The Spirit of God acted upon the Word when He carried along those inspired writers. The Word of life comes from the source of life. It will always have life within it, for the living God Who gave it shall never die! †

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.



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## SALVATION

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# *If* You Claim You Were Saved Before Baptism...

Alvin Jennings

1. You would have been saved *before* your sins were forgiven. *“Peter replied, Repent and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven”* (Acts 2:38).
2. You would have been saved *before* your sins were washed away. *“Be baptized and wash your sins away...”* (Acts 22:16).
3. You would have been saved *before* you were born again. *“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’* (John 3:5).
4. You would have been saved *before* you were joined with Christ. *“All of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ”* (Galatians 3:27).
5. You would have been saved *before* you were saved. *“... baptism that now saves you”* (1 Peter 3:21).



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6. You would have been saved *before* the time the Lord promised He would save. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...” (Mark 16:16).

7. You would have been saved *before* you were freed from sin. “You used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching... you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17-18; “that form,” vs 3-4).

8. You would have been saved *before* you entered into Christ and without His blood. “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

9. You would have been saved *before* your soul was purified. “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth” (1 Peter 1:22a).

10. You would have been saved *before* you received the Holy Spirit and without belonging to Christ. “...the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32; also 2:38). “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9b).

11. You would have been saved *before* your faith had any value, before it expressed itself in love. “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6).

12. You would have been saved *before* obedience, which Jesus required for all who receive salvation. “He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). †

Alvin Jennings is a Gospel preacher residing in Hurst, Texas, USA.

### *Repentance*

True repentance results in a change of conduct (John the Baptist, Luke 3:7-8). However, lapsing into sin again (and again and again) does not necessarily mean repentance did not occur, “until 70 times 7 times” (Jesus, Matthew 18: 21-22).

Cecil May, Jr. is Dean-Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

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# Where Was Saul When He Was Saved?

Royce Frederick

One of the most vicious enemies of Jesus was Saul of Tarsus. He severely persecuted the church in Jerusalem and scattered them (Acts 8:1-4). Then, he pursued Christians to other cities, hoping to exterminate their faith (Acts 26:11). He also ***“...went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues [Jewish places of worship] of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem”*** (Acts 9:1-2).

However, the message which Saul **actually delivered** to the synagogues in Damascus was **very different** from the message he **had planned**: ***“...he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God”*** (Acts 9:20)!

What changed Saul’s **mind** and **message**? On the road to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him in a bright light, and he fell to the ground. After Jesus spoke to him, Saul stood up, opened his eyes and could not see. With the help of his companions, he went into Damascus. In that city, he did not **see, eat or drink** for three days—but he **did pray** (Acts 9:3-9, 11). Later, in his letters, he included himself with all “saved” people (1 Timothy 1:15-16; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 3:5).

**So, where was Saul when he was saved?** Many people teach that Saul was saved “by faith only” during that great event **on the road to Damascus**. One preacher even declared that Saul was saved **as he was falling off his horse, before he hit the ground!** However, the Bible does not mention a horse at all. In fact, Paul and the others had apparently been walking. After the Lord blinded him, Saul’s companions ***“...led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus”*** (Acts 9:8; 22:11). The idea of **adding a horse** to the story came from men, not God. Likewise, the


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idea of Saul being saved **on the road** is from men's imagination, not from God's revelation.

Actually, the Bible plainly tells us Saul was saved from his sins **after** he went into Damascus, not on the road. Blind Saul was waiting in a house in Damascus when Jesus sent Ananias to him. Ananias healed him, spoke to him about Jesus and finished by saying, ***“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”*** (Acts 22:16). This clearly shows that Saul **had not already been saved** on the road. **He still had his sins** when Ananias spoke to him **three days later** in Damascus. After Ananias spoke, Saul did not need to wait any longer. Through faith in Christ, he **obeyed** the Gospel that day; ***“...he arose and was baptized”*** (Acts 9:18). His sins were washed away by the blood of Christ when he was baptized into Christ. Saul was saved by God's **grace**, through faith, **when** he was baptized.

Jesus is not appearing to people today as He did to Saul. Yet, Jesus **is still blessing us** through that great event in the life of Saul, who was later called “Paul” (Acts 13:9). He became a dedicated apostle of Christ and led many Jews and Gentiles to salvation!

Through Paul, the Lord told us that the **location** of salvation is ***“in Christ”*** (Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Peter 5:14). He reminded the Christians in Galatia how they entered **into** Christ: ***“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”*** (Galatians 3:26-27). These, and many other verses, show that **a sinner who believes in Christ** is saved from sin **at the moment of baptism** (John 3:16, 3-5; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

We know Saul was **not** saved on the road to Damascus since he still had his sins three days later. We also know that he was saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:4-10), but **not** “by faith **only**.” Instead, he was saved “by faith **when**”—**when** he was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38). 

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

## SALVATION

# WHEN AND HOW IS ONE SAVED

Sunny David

Contrary to the teachings and opinions of men that one is saved at the very moment one believes in Christ or when one prays the sinner's prayer, the Bible very clearly teaches that to be saved in Christ one must hear His Gospel message and believe it, repent of sins, confess Christ to be the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. This does not mean, however, that this is all one must do to be saved and to go to Heaven, but each person must follow these initial steps to begin the Christian walk.

When Christ was going back to Heaven, He had charged His disciples to ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved”*** (Mark 16:15-16). Christ didn't stop at ***“He who believes,”*** but said, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”*** Preachers who offer salvation by “faith only,” therefore, deceive people (Romans 16:17-18).

Then, there are those who insist that one must have a supernatural experience to be saved or to be “born again,” an idea that is most irrational and unbiblical. This concept, variously advocated, supposes that ***at some particular moment, with emotions better felt than told,*** in answer to prayer, ***under the emotional appeal of revivalism*** or in some other bizarre circumstance, the sinner suddenly ***experiences faith***. At that moment, it is supposed that all his sins are forgiven, he is transformed spiritually, born again and saved eternally. Some claim to have such an experience during their sleep, when they suddenly saw, as they say, the sky opened and heard someone speaking to them to assure them that they were now saved. This is totally absurd. No biblical precept or example even hints at such a thing ever. In all of the cases of conversions as mentioned in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, no one ever came into Christ or became a Christian in the manner of such a false conception.

## SALVATION

On the other hand, no experience that any man ever had could rival that of Saul (Paul) on the Damascus road. He actually saw the Lord. Yet, three days later, as we read, he was still a praying penitent and grieving sinner, and so he remained till he heeded the command of the Lord given to him through Ananias to *“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins”* (Acts 22:16). Acts 9:18 says, *“And he arose and was baptized.”* The fact of the matter is that **one must both believe and obey to be saved**—not just believe (James 2:24, 26).

There are many other examples found in Acts, which is commonly accepted as the book of conversions, that show in all cases where people were saved from sin and became Christians, all had to believe and obey the Gospel. For instance, a large gathering of people, after hearing the Gospel of Christ, asked the disciples, *“What shall we do?”* The answer given to them was, *“Repent, and let everyone 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 2:37-38).

Again, when the evangelist Phillip entered Samaria and preached **Christ** there, we read in Acts 8:12 that *“both men and women were baptized.”* A little later, in the same chapter, we read about the conversion of the eunuch. There we read, beginning with verse number 35, Phillip preached Christ to the eunuch as they were traveling in his chariot and, *“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Phillip said, ‘if you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him”* (Acts 8:35-38).



## SALVATION

Clearly, one can see from all of these examples of conversion that there is a scriptural pattern given in the Bible to learn when and how one is saved.

When one believes in Christ, he changes his mind. When one repents of sin, he changes his will. Then, when he is baptized, immersed in water, to be saved—for the forgiveness of sins or to have sins washed away—he changes his relationship or his place from being of the world, for now he is in Christ. During baptism one shares in the death of Christ, thereby contacting the saving blood of Christ, which He shed in His death for the sinners.

So does the Scripture teach. *“Or 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”* (Romans 6:3-4). By being baptized, an individual is lowered into a body of water, and the water closes over one’s body. Just as a dead person is buried, so one is buried in baptism. Then, he is raised up from the watery grave to walk in the new life of a Christian. All of this portrays the man died to one kind of life and rose to another kind of life. He went down into the water a man of the world and rose a man in Christ, a different person, a new man (2 Corinthians 5:17). **God’s way is the only sure way.** †

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord’s church.

### *Kennedy’s Pennies*

*“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’”* (John 10:7, 9-10 NKJV). This is what Christians want, and want for you—salvation and life. Compare that with other religions that seek and destroy.



# Verse Search



## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-33

Jerry Bates

1. What was the “cup of blessing” to which Paul referred? (v. 16)
2. To what did the bread refer? (v. 16)
3. Though Christians are many members, we compose one \_\_\_\_\_ and one \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 17)
4. With what were Christians to have no fellowship? (v. 20)
5. When Christians sacrificed to idols, they were guilty of attempting to drink the cup of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the cup of \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 21)
6. Whose well-being are Christians to seek? (v. 24)
7. Why could Christians eat whatever was in the marketplace without asking questions? (v. 25)
8. What were Christians to do if they went to eat in the home of someone else? (v. 27)
9. What were they to do if they were told that a meat had been offered to idols? (v. 28)
10. For whose conscience was Paul concerned when he made the above injunction? (v. 29)
11. Whatever we do, eat or drink, is to be done to the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 31)
12. Whose good was Paul seeking? (v. 33)

**(see the back cover for answers)**



## VERSE SEARCH

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

18 Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; 26 for "the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness."

27 If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols", do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake, for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." 29 "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? 30 But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

**NOTES:** This text concerns the eating of meats that had been offered to idols. While the exact problem does not exist in most areas of the world today, the principle is still true. We are to be more concerned for the spiritual good of others than for our own personal rights. This principle is often overlooked to the detriment of the church. Even though an action is not wrong in and of itself, we may need to avoid such in order to be sure that a fellow Christian is not offended. We should seek to do only those things that build up another Christian. Concern for another person's good should supersede our personal desires or rights. In conclusion, have nothing to do with idols!



# 5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

## Blaspheming God

1. “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the \_\_\_\_\_, although I was formerly a \_\_\_\_\_, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained \_\_\_\_\_ because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:12-13).
2. “Having faith and a good \_\_\_\_\_, which some have rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to \_\_\_\_\_ that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:19-20).
3. “Let as many \_\_\_\_\_ as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all \_\_\_\_\_, so that the name of God and His \_\_\_\_\_ may not be blasphemed” (1 Timothy 6:1).
4. “Then he opened his \_\_\_\_\_ in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his \_\_\_\_\_, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in \_\_\_\_\_” (Revelation 13:6).
5. “And the scribes and the Pharisees began to \_\_\_\_\_, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks \_\_\_\_\_? Who can forgive sins but \_\_\_\_\_ alone?’” (Luke 5:21).
6. “I know your works, \_\_\_\_\_, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are \_\_\_\_\_, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be \_\_\_\_\_, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be \_\_\_\_\_ until death, and I will give you a crown of life” (Revelation 2:9-10).




- Answers:**
1. Ministry, blasphemer, mercy
  2. Conscience, Satan
  3. Bondservants, honor, doctrine
  4. Mouth, name, heaven
  5. Reason, blasphemies, God
  6. Tribulation, not, tested, faithful

# Numerical and Spiritual Growth Factors

Ronald D. Reeves

In recent years, brethren have dedicated themselves to a better understanding of the things that positively influence church growth. A review of the research material provided in conjunction with such efforts encourages us to develop and apply the following.

- 1. Faithfulness in daily Christian living:** Members are known for their stand for good as they lead their families in godly service.
- 2. Strong dedication to the cause of Christ:** Members exhibit a real personal commitment in spiritual efforts.
- 3. Energetic activity in the kingdom of God:** Members are not content to passively follow a few who do most of the work.
- 4. Genuine personal spiritual growth:** Members have an abiding hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- 5. Sacrificial Christian living:** Members do not hesitate to make personal sacrifices for the cause of Christ.
- 6. Love of the New Testament church:** Members care for the church as they care for their personal families.
- 7. Love for the souls of men:** Social and ethnic concerns are not allowed as barriers to seeking and saving the lost.

These seven traits will greatly assist us as we genuinely fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:7). May we grow in each of these areas. 

Ronald D. Reeves preaches for the College Avenue Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

## THE CHURCH

# Three Important Questions

Jimmy Clark

*“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* (1 Corinthians 1:13). These three questions are set against the following background. *“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:10-12). The plea made by Paul in Verse 10 is fully supported by the three questions. All three questions are rhetorical questions having a negative answer. Consider thoughts from these three important questions.

**The Question Over Division: “Is Christ divided?”** The religious world is greatly divided, and many believe that such is acceptable to God. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21). Jesus died that believers might be united in His church (Matthew 16:15-23; Acts 20:28). The apostles worked that all who obey the Gospel have the same fellowship that they had with the Lord (1 John 1:1-3). It is human wisdom that created the problem of religious division. The inventions of creeds outside the Bible, organizations unsupported by the Bible and doctrines contrary to plain teaching of the Bible that have made the sects that abound. Since there is only one Lord (Ephesians 4:5) there is to be only one body (Ephesians 4:4).

**The Question Over Devotion: “Was Paul crucified for you?”** Paul supplied his name to the question to squelch any thought of devotion made to him (or to any other person). All glory and honor are to be given exclusively to the Lord. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross places all devotion to the Lord. Paul wrote in the second letter to the Corinthians, *“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Paul

## THE CHURCH

made that personal application, where he stated, *“the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). Paul was converted to Christ, not mere men.

**The Question Over Discipleship: “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”** Jesus said to the apostles, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:19). When many Corinthians were baptized as is recorded in Acts 18:8, they did not become disciples of Paul, but they became disciples of Christ. The Lord himself said to Paul about the apostle’s stay in Corinth, *“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city”* (Acts 18:9-10). Everything about baptism unites the penitent believer with Christ, not any other. One’s old man is crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). One is buried with Christ into His death through baptism into death (Romans 6:4). One is raised with Christ out of the watery grave (Romans 6:4-5). Baptism moves one into Christ (Galatians 3:27). †

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



### *Robison's Rubies*

The Bible shows a lot of evidence of being the Word of God. It had to have a supernatural power behind it. All the prophecies point to someone who inspired men to write of things long before they happened. The Bible was written over a 1,500-year period by 40 different authors, and yet it unifies in the grand theme of pointing to the Christ and in telling about Him and His work. These claims I briefly make have thousands of volumes written about them. The inquirer can seek and can find the truth about the Bible. Examine the Bible. Test it. See if it stands up to expectations. Truth has nothing to fear. If you see it must be inspired, read it to see what God wants of you.

## THE CHURCH

# Jesus is Our Pattern




Greg Tidwell

Christianity is not a cold, abstract system. Christian faith is, rather, a personal relationship with the living God through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Son of God is our way, our truth and our life. The Lord's church must maintain her commitment to the Lord's truth. Christ's people must maintain their commitment to Christ.

The will of God is delivered to the church both through direct commandments and through the example of His authoritative spokesmen. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is our absolute pattern for godliness. Any departure from this form of doctrine is a step down the road to apostasy.

Through His example, Jesus showed us the way His followers should conduct their lives. The life of Christ outlined in the four Gospel records provides the perfect pattern of love, faith and obedience for the Lord's church. We are called to follow the example of Jesus in every area of life.

True faith and true obedience are the same thing. Faith is not merely an emotion, and obedience is not merely going through the motions. The Gospel message engages all of life. Jesus showed us the way. ***“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 NKJV). 

Greg Tidwell is the preacher for the Fishinger and Kenny Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, USA as well as the Editor of the *Gospel Advocate*.

## THE CHURCH

# Christians and the Church

Dan R. Owen

How important is the Lord's church to you? Do you love the church, pray for the church regularly and support the church with both your money and your service? A recent survey conducted through Duke University's divinity school revealed that many Americans value a relationship with God, but they have little interest in the church. Fifty-three percent of Pre-War Americans attended some kind of church when they were growing up. That figure drops to 45 percent with Baby Boomers and drops to 35 percent with Generation Xers. People today say they are committed to God, but not to the church. I love the Lord's church, because it is the very reason Jesus came into the world.


Jesus' purpose in coming into this world was to establish His church. As He looked toward His date with destiny in Jerusalem, Jesus told His apostles, ***"Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it"*** (Matthew 16:18). Peter had just confessed Jesus to be the Christ. On Pentecost, the culmination of the Gospel message was that God had indeed made Jesus ***"both Lord and Christ."*** It is those people who acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord and King of their lives who ***"gladly received his message"*** and became the first members of the church. It is by establishing Himself as Lord of the universe that Jesus established the church, because the church is comprised of those people who submit to Him as Lord and King.

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Human beings are ***"lost"*** because of their sins. The guilt of sin separates people from their God so that they are ***"dead in trespasses and sins," "separate from Christ"*** and ***"without hope and without God in the world."*** People who are lost have nothing to which to look forward but the outpouring of God's wrath (Romans 1:18; 2:7-8). It is only through being justified by the blood of Jesus that people can be ***"saved from the wrath of God"*** (Romans 5:8-9). When Jesus died as a sinless sacrifice on

## THE CHURCH

the cross, He did so to save the lost. However, only those who hear the proclamation of the atoning death of Jesus and respond to that Gospel in faith, repentance and baptism are saved from sin and God's wrath. The Lord adds all who are saved to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). Therefore, to say that Jesus came to seek and save the lost is exactly the same as saying that He came to establish the church.

Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). A ransom is a price by which one is set free from an impossible debt. Only in Christ Jesus do we have ***“redemption through His blood”*** (Ephesians 1:7). Through the blood of Jesus our impossible debt of guilt is paid in full. The heavenly host praises Jesus who ***“purchased unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation”*** (Revelation 5:9). Paul told the Ephesian elders to ***“shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”*** (Acts 20:28). To say, then, that Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for our souls is the same thing as saying He came to build the church. The church is all about the reconciliation of human beings to God. It is the center of God's eternal plan of redemption.

Since all of this is true, the church should be the most important thing on earth to us. We should love it, serve it, support it and pray for it always. We should do these things because only in doing so do we serve our Lord Jesus Christ who ***“gave himself up for it”*** (Ephesians 5:25). If we love Jesus, we will love Jesus' church. 

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

***“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength”*** (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NKJV). It should not have been that difficult to completely love God since He had made Israel a great nation and delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. God has done the same for us. He has delivered us from the bondage of sin and made us a great nation (1 Peter 2:9), the church or the kingdom (Colossians 1:13, 18). What is our response to God?







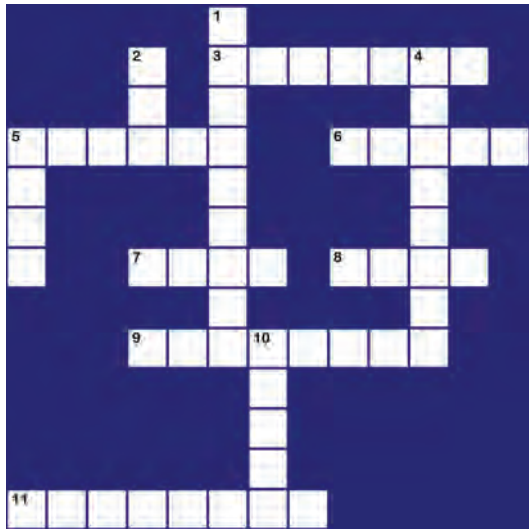
# Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

## PHILEMON

### ACROSS

3. What was Onesimus to the apostle Paul? v.16
5. What did Paul do daily for Philemon? v. 4
6. What did Paul say was to be with them in the Lord? v. 25
7. Paul wrote this letter with his own what? v. 19
8. Who else greeted Philemon with Paul? v. 24
9. Who did Paul say was profitable for Philemon? v. 11
11. Paul was what in Christ? v. 9



### DOWN

1. About what did Paul have confidence in Philemon? v. 21
2. What did Paul want from Philemon in the Lord? v. 20
4. Who was the fellow prisoner in Christ with Paul? v. 23
5. Who wrote the letter to Philemon? v. 1
10. What was Onesimus? v. 15

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## DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

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# LET'S NOT LET OUR BALANCE THROW US OFF BALANCE

*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out  
of it are the issues of life* (Proverbs 4:23)

### Fenter D. Northern

It is a mistake to think the above text applies only to Christian morals. If the heart is not kept with all diligence in respect to all doctrine regarding the way to be saved, the way to worship and the way Jesus built the church, one will refashion all these issues in his life to please his heart, all the while thinking he is A-OK with Jesus who loves him so much he is not concerned about the original pattern for which He died.

I have been a preacher and an educator in the church of Christ for many, many years. I have observed a great change in the general scope of religious thinking in our country during the latter part of the last century. A few over 50-years-old in the church will know what I am writing about. The young will have no idea and think the new, changed congregation is really “status quo” for the church of Christ. Older members, especially the elders, should know better.

From observation, talking to church members, reading articles in religious journals and friendly association with people representing differing denominations, one can sense a broad change across the entire gamut of religion, most of which in our country has presented itself in the past as “Christianity.” Worldly trends affect people, and these people who have affiliated themselves with churches are mostly unaware of, or uncaring about, strict, vital, Bible principles.

The changes I have observed have amounted to this: the meek and pious, usually very popular in a local congregation, have managed to be appointed elders in their congregations. Many are affected by current liberal religious trends and are usually insufficient in Bible knowledge to be leaders, especially in a religious meltdown like is happening in our country. They are untaught in New Testament Christianity, and the untaught


## **DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY**

are usually unfavorable to any disciplinary doctrine of Christ. They are like Israel of old who kept polluting its worship with pagan idolatry,

Some have been updating their congregations to be in vogue with the popular notions of religious change. It keeps attendance and contributions sufficient to build elaborate, impressive facilities. This change has invaded some congregations of the church of Christ to the extent that some elderships embrace untenable, non-biblical religious positions.

These current ideologies about worship are not only untenable by the Scriptures, but little effort or care is made to present the restyled local congregation's belief by using the Scripture.

Following are some things that I observe among good brethren whom I believe to have been affected by current doctrinal redactors. They see radicals of both conservatives and liberals. In refraining from being grouped among radicals on either side, they view themselves as sort of



**“Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”**

**(Deuteronomy 5:32)**

## DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY


being in-the-middle. They call this being *balanced*, pointing out that there are good and bad among the extremes in both churches. They have a pool of influential colleagues who have lenient tendencies toward traditional Bible doctrine. These good brethren desire to remain scriptural but try to manage their balance delicately.

In so doing, truth is strategically preached so as to omit any reference to any error that results from not obeying it. Positive preaching of the truth while purposely detaching the judgment of God from it is to cloud it. A question at the judgment might well be, “Why did you not preach my distinctive Gospel quite distinctively?” I recall a preacher preaching a straight-forward sermon on baptism as being a burial. A person who believed *multiple modes of baptism* shook hands with him at the door, complimenting his sermon, saying, “I *also* believe burial is a scriptural baptism.”

I believe we must handle the Word of God with as much humility and tact as possible, but that must not put a damper on my preaching explicitly to a person in error to the point that he or she can go away believing exactly what I preached but also believing his error on the subject is just as acceptable.

Jesus not only said the believer must be baptized to be saved, He added if one does not do that, he will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

Our Lord spoke the beautiful words in John 3:16 but also said, “***He who believes in the Son has eternal life,***” but the rest of the Gospel in the verse is, “***He who does not obey the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him***” (John 3:36).

The Bible not only reveals the way one must worship God, such as partaking of the Lord’s Supper each Sunday, but it says we must do all things according to the pattern (Hebrews 8:5). God said to man, here is the good fruit, but the day you eat the forbidden, you will die. Let’s not let our call for balance get us unbalanced so that the effect is that we hide the very truth we are claiming to uphold. 

**Fenter D. Northern lives in Montgomery, Alabama, and is a preacher of the Gospel.**

## DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

# Sitting on the Fence Post

Ernest S. Underwood

To say the least, Habakkuk was frustrated with what he thought was God's indifference to the problems of his day. In his cry, he said:

***O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.*** (Habakkuk 1:2-4)



Rather than being angry with this prophet, God went into some detail to explain some of the things that were unknown to him. In fact, the Lord told him to ***"Look among the nations and watch; Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs..."*** (vs. 5-6).

God continued to show the prophet the strength and fierceness of the Chaldeans. The prophet then seemed to complain about such harsh judgment, but finally stated, ***"I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will***

## DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

*answer when I am corrected”* (vs. 2:1).

I emphatically believe that God’s providential hand was present in the founding of this great nation—the United States of America. Its greatness can only be accounted for by accepting the fact that God has abundantly blessed it. Yet, then, much like Habakkuk, when things are not going as we think they ought, we begin to think that God has forsaken us, and maybe He has. However, if we truly trust in God, believing that He is actually in charge of His universe, we might well determine to quit trying to “second guess” Him and His sovereignty. Either He is in charge, or the forces of evil are in charge, and He is powerless to change it. Who is he or she that truly believes in God who will take such a position?

Much like Habakkuk, we are able to recognize the immense evil in our world and in our country, evil that is magnified in the lives and actions of those who are in political power, and those who support such powers. It is quite evident that most of those in the entertainment industry, those in government, most of the media and many in some religious circles are deeply engaged in immorality, dishonesty, fraud and total rebellion and denial of the Almighty God and His Word. It seems that every day we learn of many more barbaric acts of those of the Islamic religion. We are exposed by those in power to such things as “gay pride month” and something they call “same-sex marriage.” Our unborn babies are being murdered with the approval of the government, and a preteen girl can buy pregnancy prevention pills without her parent’s consent, while other children can be sent home from school for respecting the flag or bowing their heads in silent prayer.

Like those souls under the altar, those who had been beheaded for the cause of Christ, we sometimes want to cry, *“How long O Lord.”* Many may have thoughts of personal vengeance against the evildoers of our day. However, God still says, *“Vengeance is Mine.”* Maybe it would be best for all of us to adopt the attitude of Habakkuk and go “sit on the fence post” and watch and see what God does. After all, He may be working a work in our time that will be hard for us to believe it even when we see it. †

**Ernest S. Underwood is a preacher as well as a missionary to India. He resides in Doraville, Georgia, USA.**

# Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

## (Revelation 6:9; 20:4-10)

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection [note: this first resurrection cannot be the resurrection from baptism, as some suggest, for some who are baptized will be condemned to the “second death” because of their faithlessness].

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

It would seem from the picture given in Revelation 6 and 20 that those who have been martyred for Christ are now living and reigning with Him, during this era when the Word of God is binding Satan, so that he is not free to deceive the nations.

Mention of the “thousand year reign” immediately conjures in the minds of many the false doctrine of the “thousand year reign of Christ on this literal earth”—Millennialism. However, close attention to the passage shows that the reign is from the heavenly realm and is taking place **now**. Mention is made of the “rest of the dead” who will not see resurrection until the reign of Christ ends. When does it end? According to 1 Corinthians 15, **He will reign until death has been conquered, and then He will turn the kingdom back to God.**

Over those who reign with Him now, participants in the “first resurrection,” the “second death”—condemnation to hell—will not be a possibility because they have already taken part in the resurrection and exaltation with Christ.

Verses 7-10 reveal that at some point, Satan will be loosed for a short time and will again cause great deception. Evil will again be rampant, as in the days of Noah, before Christ returns with all His saints to judge the world.

# The Privilege of Teaching

Emanuel Daugherty

Teaching the Bible is a wonderful privilege—whether teaching children or adults. It is God’s way of expanding the borders of the kingdom. How different is true Christianity from other religions in that respect! Islam is spread by *the sword*. Catholicism and Protestantism conquered nations by *the sword*. However, the sword of the Christian “*is the Word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17). The marching orders of the church are “*go teach all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus said, “*They shall all be taught of God...*” (John 6:44-45). Nehemiah stated the objective of every teacher. “*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading*” (Nehemiah 8:8).

**It is a privilege to be a Bible teacher because not everyone can do so**, for many reasons: improper temperament, lack of knowledge and skills, inability to practice what he or she preaches, and lack of zeal for the task, to name a few. James 3:1 says, “*be not many of you teachers, knowing ye shall receive the greater judgment.*”

Teachers are special people—love them, honor them, stand with them and support them for their work’s sake.



**Teaching is a privilege because of the One for whom we labor.** God is the Bible School Superintendent. We teach what He desires. How marvelous and wonderful that God should want to use frail, many times inept, human beings to accomplish the greatest task in the world—the teaching of others to the saving of their souls! How privileged we are to be “*fellow laborers together with God*” (1 Corinthians 3:9).




## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

**It is a privilege to be a teacher because of what we are striving to accomplish.** To win the hearts, minds and souls of men, women, boys and girls to Christ is the teacher's goal. *“Jesus came to seek and save the lost”* (Luke 19:10). This is also our task (2 Timothy 2:2). Teachers change our communities and the way people live. Their example and training spills over from the classroom into our homes, communities and the lives of individuals. God wills it so. This is an expression of our light shining and our salt influencing those about us (Matthew 5:13, 16).

**Every teacher must remember the overall goal is to bring the soul home to God.** The classroom is your pulpit. The end result of your efforts is salvation! The lifetime spent in teaching others in the classroom, in the pulpit or in the home must end in increasing the kingdom. We should not be satisfied as teachers until we can see our students living the first and second commandments to *“love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all they strength”* and *“to love thy neighbor as thy self”* (Mark 12:29-31).

**Teaching is a privilege because of its great rewards.** One of those rewards is inner peace. You are fighting on the Lord's side in the greatest of all battles. What satisfaction to know that you have prepared others to fight, tended their wounds and helped them win a victory over the devil! There is also the knowledge that you are doing what you can to make the world a better place: giving peace, hope, safety and harmony to a world that is seeking to destroy itself. Then, there is the ultimate reward of the faithful. *“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Lord”* (Matthew 25:21).

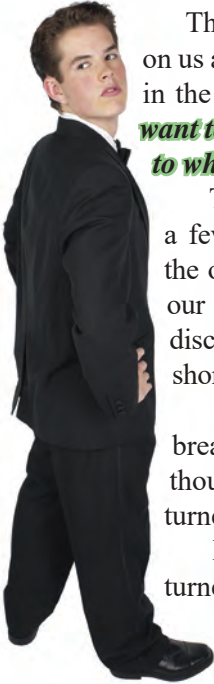
Oh, teachers of God's Word, do not despair! Yours is the greatest task on earth. *“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”* (Galatians 6:9). Keep on keeping on! As G.P. Bowser, the great black preacher, said about the potential of his students, *“He could be a diamond in the rough, and with a little polishing a diamond sure enough!”* 

Emanuel Daugherty is a longtime Gospel preacher and the former Director and instructor at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He and his wife Judy reside in Port Orange, Florida, USA.

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

# When Friends Turn Their Backs on You

Cliff Holmes



The saddest times often come when friends turn their backs on us and desert us. Jesus found this to be so, and it is recorded in the John 6:67-68. ***“So Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’”***

There was happiness at the feeding of the people with a few loaves and two fishes. There was also happiness on the occasion of Jesus walking on the water, as well as when our Lord brought relief to replace the fear expressed by His disciples as He entered the boat and brought them safely to shore.

Next, we find Jesus teaching the people about the real bread of life, which God sent to all mankind. The Jews, though, grumbled about it, and even many of His disciples turned back and walked with him no more.

Imagine the sorrow and distress of the Lord as they turned away from the free gift of God. He had taught so well, so diligently, so tenderly, and yet, they turned away. You can almost feel the heartache when Jesus asked the rest of them, ***“Will you also go away?”***

Immediately, Simon Peter answered Him saying, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”*** We need every day to renew our resolve that ***we will not go away from Jesus because we know that He has the words of life, and He is the Bread of life.*** †

Cliff Holmes has served variously over the years as a minister, a deacon and a song leader. He resides in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

# WHAT HAVE YOU GIVEN UP?


Gary C. Hampton

Jesus gave up being equal to God to come to earth to live as a man, living willingly as a slave (Philippians 2:6-7). Paul explained it in simple terms when he wrote, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus gave up Heaven for me, but I fear there are times that I have given up service to Christ to fulfill selfish desires. Sleeping-in instead of attending Bible class would be an example of failure to imitate the selflessness of Christ. Another example would be participating in my hobby instead of knocking doors to extend an invitation to some spiritual gathering, or in lieu of attending myself, would be another example.

Paul saw the importance of giving up the things that mattered to him in order to pursue the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:8-11). He was willing to suffer, even to the point of being killed, so that He could finish that all-important race (Acts 20:22-24). He declared, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

I need to take to heart Paul’s plea to the saints at Rome. *“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”* (Romans 12:1-2).

The only way to follow in the steps of the Savior is to sacrifice our desires in order to pursue the Father’s will. Each of us needs to ask ourselves, **“What have I given up?”** 

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

# POSITIVE PREACHING

Neal Pollard

God wants positive preaching, doesn't He? Truly, preachers are to affirm the truth of the Gospel. They must *explicitly express* what God says. Their preaching must not be doubtful or speculative. It must be certain and real! Clear affirmations and certain, confident stands concerning the Bible prove one to be *positive*. Is God pleased with anything else? Please allow me to suggest three things positive preaching is not.

**It is Not Preaching that Dodges the Issues!** Some church members have grown up and grown old without hearing moral lessons about Christian distinctiveness regarding clothing, sexuality, speech, acceptable relationships and the like. Whether the issue is homosexuality, immodesty, euthanasia, fellowshiping denominations, salvation by grace only, instrumental music or any other sin-problem or error, God's preacher will address and take a biblical stand on such matters. A man may please his fellowman in preaching morally and doctrinally neutral sermons, but he cannot gain the Lord's approval. Obviously, this must be done with patience (2 Timothy 2:24-26) and love (Ephesians 4:15). Yet, let no preacher ever shy away from it. Positive preachers face, define and answer the critical issues of the day!

**It is Not Preaching that Never Calls Names.** In a congregation filled with those who have escaped the world's pollution (2 Peter 2:20-22), the doctrines of men (Matthew 15:6-9) and religious bodies for which Jesus did not die (Ephesians 4:4), there are sermons and points of sermons which are bolstered and made clearer (i.e., positive) when one comes out of the realm of the abstract by giving concrete examples. There are situations where a denomination needs to be called by name, a specific, denominational practice needs denounced and a denominational personality must be identified as a false teacher (2 Peter 2:1). The same applies to error in the church, especially when it is a problem causing damage in a local area. There are times when names, ideas and actions must be explicitly addressed.

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Every time? No! To the exclusion of comforting lessons? No! With a sour, acrimonious attitude? No! However, a preacher who is afraid to ever call a name in a sermon may be too afraid (Revelation 21:8)! Common sense will help the preacher know when the need exists to pinpoint a name, a congregation or specific sect. Thus, his tone, attitude and demeanor will reflect sadness, genuine horror and sobriety rather than crudeness, delight and abrasive bitterness!

**It is Not Preaching Only What an Audience Wants to Hear.** God's messengers have been warned (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Some are not satisfied unless the preacher turns them away *feeling good about themselves*. There may be congregations who will cull out any preacher except one who gives them only soothing words. Prophets and priests once assured a people of peace even as God's righteous anger was kindled against their sinful ways (Jeremiah 8). Those who hear a preacher declare the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:27) may not know that there are some lessons which are harder for the preacher to preach than others.

If every preacher were polled about whether he preferred preaching on Heaven or Hell, most would express preference for the former. It is difficult to stand before a group and reveal an unpopular truth. It's emotionally draining to preach on a sensitive subject that affects several members in the congregation. It takes greater love and concern to warn a man lying on the tracks of an oncoming train than to smile and wave at him as the tragic moment looms!

One never has to be hateful or belligerent in standing for truth. Yet, one too afraid to engage the devil and his army in spiritual warfare is a distracted, unreliable and traitorous soldier (Ephesians 6:10). Paul gave advice to Christians that is quite applicable to preachers. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).✝

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

**Editor's Note:** God's preachers are obligated to preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), whether or not the auditors of the biblical lessons like them (2 Timothy 4:1-5). Certainly, God's preachers have no desire to make the Gospel any more offensive than it already is to those who are corrected by it, but it must be preached. It is possible and probable that many sermons have been sounded forth even in the churches of Christ wherein the whole Gospel has never been heard by the congregants. It ought not to be so!

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# Singing Affects Church Growth

E. Claude Gardner

G.C. Brewer, the renowned preacher of a past generation, once exalted singing in church when he thundered, “We sing better than we preach.” This may not be true today. In fact, both singing and preaching need to improve.

We sing as does Christ, *“in the midst of the church”* (Hebrews 2:12). Singing contributes to the growth of a congregation. Some singing neither enhances growth nor the quality of worship.

The purpose of singing can be condensed to **praise** and **teaching**. The two relevant verses are Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. All song leaders, worship planners and all Christians should commit these to heart.

*“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to*



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*the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19. *“Let the Word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3:16).

By observation, many of the songs used are songs of praise and adoration to the Godhead. Teaching songs that call for action are neglected. One is challenged to tabulate the praise songs versus teaching songs, and this may come as a surprise.

Praise songs can be sung with a depth of love and enthusiasm without having to make a commitment to work for God. Obviously, it is more comfortable to say these and be at *“ease in Zion”* rather than making a resolution for any planned action.

Church growth is a problem in the brotherhood. Some places and communities are losing members. Various factors are given for the lack of growth, and some have validity. However, here is one conjecture—failing to sing **old teaching songs**. We avoid a response of “Here Am I Send Me.” If we sing this type of song, we will conscientiously desire to actively strive to carry it out. We would not choose to be hypocritical

or to sing a lie. If we sing songs that call for work, we are apt to try to teach a friend, invite a neighbor and restore the wayward. This will affect the church.

Likewise, the imbalance of the type songs that ignores teaching will follow the trend in other phases of the worship. The prayers, classes and sermons may be void of action and personal responsibility. This will be a hindrance to congregational growth.

Hymn books can fail to keep alive songs that call for a response. Many of the older songs that have been classics are sidelined for the modern one-or-two-line songs that young people use. How many of these will be heard in 25 years, but the “old and boring” songs will remain. In young people groups, many of the staid and scriptural songs are unfamiliar, and they are unable to sing them.

Here are a few songs that will help Christians do soul winning. They call for a response. “I Want to be a Worker for the Lord,” “Seeking the Lost,” “Send the Light,” “To the Work,” “I Love to Tell the Story,” “We’ll Work ‘Til Jesus Comes” and “Throw Out the Lifeline.” It is clear that Paul commanded the church to

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use songs that *“teach and admonish one another.”* Have Christians overlooked this command?

Praise songs are *“to the Lord.”* When we **teach** and see the results, we give thanks and adoration to God. Songs of praise have an important place in the worship. We are drawn closer to God by these hymns. When I was a student in Abilene Christian College, I was impressed with the great Leonard Burford, song leader and musician. In chapel, he led many “heavy” hymns of praise that he had included in his special songbook. I have a copy that he signed given to me by his widow, Mary Delk Burford. Here are a few praise songs: “Fairest Lord Jesus,” “Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him,” “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind” and “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name.”

### Observations:

1. All Christians must sing. One may not sing as well as others, but one sings “to the Lord” the best we can.
2. We should sing all types of songs provided they present the truth of the Bible. We must sing the truth, the same as the truth preached.
3. Balance in songs that are used

will benefit the whole congregation.

4. We should know what we sing. *“What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding”* (1 Corinthians 14:15). 

E. Claude Gardner (1925-2017) was President for 21 years of Freed Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

### Kenney's Pennies

*“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you”* (John 15:12-14 NKJV). Truly the most ultimate sacrifice made for mankind, ever. Sadly, there are those who do not honor Him in our day. To love Jesus Christ is to obey Him. To honor Him is to recognize Him as more than a moral man, a good teacher or one of several prophets. True honor respects who Jesus was and is: the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One and the Son of God.

~ David R. Kenney



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# When Our Congregational Singing Becomes Wrong

Wes McAdams

I believe that congregational singing in the worship assembly is biblical, and I believe it is beneficial. However, I also believe our congregational singing can become wrong if we are not careful. If we think we are right simply because we are singing each Sunday, then we had better reexamine what the New Testament actually says. Here are some occasions when our congregational singing becomes wrong.

**Our singing becomes wrong when our hearts are not engaged.** The idea we find in the New Testament is that Christian music should come from the heart. In fact, it seems very clear from Ephesians 5:19 that the heart is the “instrument” with which Christians are to make music to the Lord. However, when our lips are engaged and our hearts are **not**, our worship is “in vain.” In other words, our worship would be meaningless.

I know I have been guilty far too often of singing a song from memory and realizing halfway through that I’m not even really paying attention to what we’re singing. My mind and my heart are focused on other things. How dare I come before the throne of God singing “Holy, holy, holy” while I think about something else! We must be so very diligent and intentional to engage our hearts when we sing praises to God. Otherwise, it is meaningless.

**Our singing becomes wrong when it’s just checking something off a to-do list.** Unfortunately, some have developed the mentality that worship is about checking items off a to-do list. “I showed up this week,” we seem to say. “I gave some money, I listened to a sermon, I took the Lord’s Supper, I bowed my head in prayer and I sang the songs. I fulfilled my obligation.” How sad when we approach worship in this way.

Certainly, these are things we ought to do, but it is extremely inappropriate to view worship as a dutiful obligation rather than a joy and a blessing. After all, it would be like me eating dinner in my own home,


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and afterward saying, “Ok, I did what I was supposed to do. I showed up for dinner. I ate with my family. I fulfilled my obligation.” I don’t think my kids or my wife would appreciate that very much. Do you?

Our time of singing together should be a highlight of our week. It’s our time to come together as a family and declare to our Heavenly Father how very much we love Him and how overwhelmed we are by His love for us. The statement, *“God loves a cheerful giver”* is true in more areas than just putting money in the collection plate. God is not pleased when we give to Him *“reluctantly or under compulsion”* (2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV).

**Our singing becomes wrong when it becomes all about the music.** This may sound strange, but I honestly don’t think congregational singing is about the musical notes. In fact, I think if we get caught up in the harmonies and the melodies, we’ve missed the entire point of our singing together. I like what a good friend of mine recently said. “The tone of the music should simply inform our hearts about the meaning of the words.” In other words, we sing slowly when we are singing contemplative and heavy-hearted lyrics. We sing upbeat and quickly when we are singing more joyful lyrics. However, when I hear someone say, “I’m tired of all these slow songs,” or “I like these upbeat songs,” I can’t help but wonder if he might be missing the point of the songs.

The New Testament teaching on singing is always about the words, not the notes or the tempo. Singing—in and of itself—can make us experience emotion, but that’s not the purpose of Christian singing. One of the purposes of Christian singing is to **express** emotion (James 5:13), but not to **create** it. Its other purposes are to express gratitude and to teach each other (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). The emotion we feel while we sing is certainly a rewarding byproduct, but it should never become the purpose.

**The Bottom Line.** Congregational singing can be such a wonderful time of building one another up as well as praising and glorifying God. However, if we are not intentional about it, we can allow our singing to become a meaningless ritual or a shallow exercise in admiring the sound of our own voices. Let’s be careful to keep the focus where the focus belongs and *“offer up a sacrifice of praise to God”* (Hebrews 13:15). 

Les McAdams preaches for the Baker Heights Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, USA.

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## PROVERBS 17:22

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I'm embarrassed by the wisdom of this suggestion, fellows:

"If at first you don't succeed, try doing it the way your wife told you."



As he was driving home from work, a man in a rural community was stopped by a local police officer. The motorist, informed that he had failed to come to a full stop at a stop sign, was handed a ticket.

"Don't I get a warning?" he protested.

The officer replied, "Sure, here's your warning: If you don't come to a complete stop next time, I'll give you another ticket."



Wanda's dishwasher quit working; so she called a repairman. Since she had to go to work the next day, she told the repairman, "I'll leave the key under the mat. Fix the dishwasher, leave the bill on the counter, and I'll mail you a check.

"Oh, by the way, don't worry about my bulldog Spike. He won't bother you. But, whatever you do, DO NOT, under ANY circumstances, talk to my parrot! I REPEAT, DO NOT TALK TO MY PARROT!"

When the repairman arrived at Wanda's apartment the following day, he discovered the biggest, meanest looking bulldog he had ever seen, but just as she had said, the dog just lay there on the carpet watching the repairman go about his work.

The parrot, however, drove him nuts the whole time with his incessant yelling, cursing and name calling. Finally, the repairman could not contain himself any longer and yelled, "Shut up, you stupid, ugly bird!"

To which the parrot replied, "Get him, Spike!"

See, men just don't listen.



The old Cherokee chief sat in his reservation hut smoking the ceremonial pipe, eyeing the two US government officials sent to interview him.

"Chief Two Eagles," one official began, "you have observed the white man for many generations. You have seen his wars and his products. You have seen all his progress and all his problems."

The chief nodded.

The official continued, "Considering recent events, in your opinion, where has the white man gone wrong?"

The chief stared at the government officials for over a minute, and then calmly replied, "When white man found this land, Indians in charge. No taxes. No debt. Plenty buffalo. Plenty beaver. Women did most of work. Medicine man free. Indian men hunted and fished all the time." The chief smiled, and added quietly, "White man dumb enough to think he could improve system like that."

## PROVERBS 17:22

### Funny Thoughts

I planted some birdseed. A bird came up. Now I don't know what to feed it.

What if there were no hypothetical questions?

One nice thing about egotists: They don't talk about other people.

If swimming is so good for your figure, how do you explain whales?

Show me a man with both feet firmly planted on the ground, and I'll show you a man who can't get his pants off.

Is it my imagination, or do Buffalo wings taste like chicken?

I enjoy your company most when I am by myself.

This man's work cannot be underrated.



While at the supermarket this weekend, I came across two women talking in the aisle I was going down.

"Harry and I have been together ten years now, and he makes me very happy," one said. "So I don't mind buying him what he likes even if it is a little more expensive."

"Well, with my Benny I have no choice. He's just plain fussy," her friend replied.

As I passed by their carts I discovered both women were loading their shopping carts with high-quality cat food.



I have a dog that talks in its sleep.

One day a visitor was astonished to hear the dog bellow, "My name is Christopher Columbus! I am seven hundred years old! I own America! I invented the internet! I know that Elvis is still alive—I bit him yesterday!"

When the visitor asked what was going on, I replied, "Don't worry about it. You've heard the saying, 'Let sleeping dogs lie.' Well, this sleeping dog lies."



"Peter!" his mother scolded. "There were two cupcakes in the pantry this morning, but now there's only one! Do you have a logical explanation?"

A long pause, then Peter replied, "It must have been too dark. I didn't see the other one."



The woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to, he motioned for her to come nearer.

As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "My dearest, you have been with me all through the bad times. When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business failed, you were there. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house, you stayed right here. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. You know?"

"What dear?" she gently asked, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth.

"I think you're just bad luck."

# How Do You Measure Up?

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

Psalm 51:1-4, 10-13, 14b

# THE MAN AND THE COCOON

Gene Clemons

The following is a story of nature demonstrating the fact that struggles are a necessary part of growth and development for the Christian in this life. God places these struggles (or trials) before us to prepare us for that perfect home in Heaven with Him.

One day a small opening appeared on a cocoon. A man sat and watched for the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and could go no further. The



The man decided to help the butterfly so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then

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emerged easily but it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restraining cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening was God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would



be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. As Christians, struggles (or trials) are exactly what we need in our lives in order to grow and to develop properly. If God allowed us to go through our Christian lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us spiritually. We, like the butterfly, would not be as strong as we could have been. We could never fly!

## Conclusion

Brethren, let's thank God for our daily struggles (trials) and display the same attitude toward trials as the apostle Peter did. That great apostle said in 1 Peter 4:12-13, *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy”* (NKJV).✝

Gene Clemons is a Gospel preacher who resides in Pikeville, Kentucky, USA.

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# “AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER”

Raymond Elliott

The apostle Paul, after he had given directives to *“put off”* the *“old man”*—that is, one’s former way of life—and to *“put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.”* He continued to list certain sins that should not be descriptive of the life of a Christian (Ephesians 4:22-31). Paul concluded this section of his letter to the Ephesian brethren by giving them this positive exhortation, *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32).

It is the word *“kind”* that I want to emphasize. This is an adjective that describes the heart and action of a devoted Christian. Paul stated that *“love is kind”* (1 Corinthians 13:4). In 2 Peter 1:7, we are admonished






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in our Christian growth to add faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and *“to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”* In Galatians 5:22, we read that *“kindness”* is one of the *“fruit of the Spirit.”* The apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:12, instructed to *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”*

Albert Barnes, in his *Barnes Notes on the Bible*, commented on the word “kind” as found in Ephesians 4:32: “There is no religion in a sour, misanthropic temper; none in rudeness, stiffness, and repulsiveness; none in violating the rules of good breeding. There is a hollow-hearted politeness, indeed, which the Christian is not to aim at or copy. His politeness is to be based on “kindness”; his courtesy is to be the result of love, good-will, and a desire for the happiness of all others; and this will prompt to the kind of conduct that will render his conversation with others agreeable and profitable.”

One of the most important reasons why we should be kind to one another is found in the word itself. Please remove the letter (d) from “kind” and what do you have? You have ‘kin.’ One definition of the word ‘kin’ is, “a group of persons of common ancestry.” Jesus said, *“But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren”* (Matthew 23:8). He saying that, we are not to elevate one brother above another; rather, we are all brothers and sisters on the same level. Yet, how did we all become ‘kinsfolk,’ spiritually speaking?

The answer is found in Galatians 3:26-29, which reads, *“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”*

Being ‘kin’ to one another, we will also be *“tenderhearted”* and *“forgiving.”* We are brothers and sister in Jesus Christ. We are God’s family (Ephesians 3:14-15)! 

Raymond Elliott is a preacher of the Gospel living in Prattville, AL, USA.



# **Faith, Hope and Love: The Most Powerful Trio in the World**

**J. Randal Matheny**

**This three-stranded cord will not be broken** (Ecclesiastes 4:12). No earthly powers can prevail against them. With them the Word of the Lord will continue to grow and prevail (Acts 19:20). Whoever possesses them will be counted blessed and will stand against all foes and discouragements.

We who belong to the light put them on as we learn to look for the Lord's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). They guarantee victory. ***“But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation”*** (1 Thessalonians 5.8).

## DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

### Faith. Hope. Love.

In days of darkness, they sustain us. They put God's faithfulness, promises and love in the center of our vision. We need them now more than ever. The challenges before God's family seem only to grow with the passing of the "times and seasons." Many jettison their faith for a popular religiosity. Others embrace bitterness and nurse grudges. Still others turn to earthly projects, losing sight of the hope of eternal salvation.

The saints must immerse themselves in faith, hope and love. It is not the hour for despair. The time is not for surrender. The season calls us to the courage of zeal, to the sweetness of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Just over 10 years ago, in an issue of the *Spiritual Sword* whose theme was "Press On," Editor Alan Highers concluded his stirring editorial this way: "We have fretted, worried, and experienced anxiety over the departures and defections of the weak and unruly. We must continue to oppose error and departures from the faith, but not at the cost of losing our vision and our sense of mission to the world: '*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation*' (Mark 16:15)" (Highers 2007, 2).

In the lead article of the same issue, Phil Sanders reminded the reader, "**In any and every culture the thing people need most is the gospel. People still need a faith to live by, a hope to live for, and a love to live with**" (Sanders 2007, 3).

The apostle Paul especially loved to join faith, hope and love. He saw them as powerful springs from which saints draw for life and success.

**Faith believes that God can and will. Hope looks forward to God bringing justice, salvation and the fruit of righteousness. Love builds the bridges of fellowship that transcend the material and earthly.**

For these were we created. In these do we find fulfillment. With these we are invincible.

In the last day, **faith will become sight, hope will receive its desire and love will remain to diffuse the eternal kingdom with the divine goodness.** Until then, let us embrace this three-stranded cord that will only unravel in eternity to leave us with the permanence of God's love. †

J. Randal Matheny is a missionary, a Christian publisher and an Editor in Brazil.

# Family Matters

Derek Broome



There are so many decisions to make and so many factors to consider when it comes to families. Let us take a moment and see what the Bible teaches us about families.

**We must start with two distinct individuals:** a man and a woman. They are two people, two souls and two life stories. They have sin; they struggle, and they need a Saviour, like all of mankind (Romans 3:23). Will they obey God's Word (Acts 2:38)? Will they be faithful to Him always (Revelation 2:10)?

**Now we see a married couple.** That which were two have now become one (Genesis

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2:24). Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Wives should submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22). The husband should be the head of the family as Christ is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). Will they be faithful to each other (Hebrews 13:4)? Will they get a divorce (Matthew 19:9)? Will they love and submit?

**A couple decides to have children.** The family is to be provided for and given proper care (1 Timothy 5:8). The father is to still be the head of the family and to teach his children the discipline and the instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Both parents should actively raise and train their children in the right ways (Proverbs 22:6). Discipline should be used in the home because the children are loved, and it is important for their training (Proverbs 13:4). Will the parents provide the care, training and discipline that are needed in the Lord?

**Then, we have the children.** Children are to honor and to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-2). They are to take the training they have received and be an example to other believers (1 Timothy 4:12). Children, just like their parents and every other individual, will fall prey to sin (Romans 3:23). It is ultimately going to be their decisions, which they make as individuals, whether they are going to follow the Word of the Lord. What will they choose?

The Word of God is pretty clear when it talks about families. God has always had a plan for families. The Bible shows us that families are important for so many reasons: faith, love, training, instruction, care, etc. It teaches us that it is up to each individual to choose to follow God and to fulfil his or her role in the family. The reality is that there is only one perfect family, and that is the family of God. As we live and work in our families at home and in the church, choices will come our way. Even when those around us choose the ways of the world, let us always choose the ways of God. May we always live as children of God. ✝

**Derek Broome is the Associate Minister of the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.**

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# MARRIAGE GOD'S WAY

Denny Petrillo


It is a fact that many marriages are in trouble today. It is also a fact that the Lord's people are not immune from this kind of trouble. The sources of trouble are many. Couples argue over finances, children, parents, time together, time apart, priorities, sex and a host of other items.

God inspired Solomon to offer some valuable advice concerning marriage. He said, "Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life..." (Ecclesiastes 9:9). This verse seems to offer some valuable tips for a successful marriage. Note the following.

**First**, the verse shows that successful marriages require the **giving of affection** ("whom you love"). While we live in a world that believes in free love and no restrictions to sexual affection, often marriages lack the kind of intimacy God wants them to have. Paul had something to say about this in 1 Corinthians 7:35.

**Second**, the verse shows that successful marriages require an **active search for happiness** ("enjoy life"). People need to focus more on making their mates happy rather than complaining that their mates do not give them happiness. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)? Could it be that the giver often receives more joy than the recipient?

**Third**, the verse shows that successful marriages require a **lifelong commitment** ("all the days of your fleeting life"). We live in a society that walks away from its problems rather than facing them. Jesus taught that what God has joined together ought not to be separated (Matthew 19:36). Successful marriages have two who are willing to tough out the tough times.

We can all have successful marriages—as long as we are willing to adhere to inspired instruction! "Marriage God's Way" pleases God and will be pleasing to the married, too. 

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

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME


# NOT FOR SALE!

Ken Tyler

A well-dressed couple came into a toy shop with their two children. “We want some toys that will keep the children entertained,” the mother said. “My husband and I both work, and the children are alone a great deal.” The sales girl showed them a variety of games and play equipment, but to each there was some objection. “It seems to me,” the mother finally said impatiently, “that if you knew what we are really looking for, you could find it among all of these toys.” The sales girl sighed, **“I’m sorry, madam, but I believe what you are really looking for—what your children want—is a mother and father, and we don’t sell those here.”**



This amusing little story describes the crisis of our society. Fathers and mothers are not available to raise their children. The worldliness of our society through computers and television is entertaining our children, and the results are devastating. Parents are so busy making *money* they have forgotten about making *character*. Something must be done. Our focus and emphasis must change. The Bible still says, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22:6). ***“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4).

**I challenge every father and mother to make the spiritual training of your children your top priority.** The years will reveal that you made a wise choice. 

Ken Tyler preaches for the Lord’s church in Arab, Alabama, USA.


## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

# MAKE CHILDREN GO TO CHURCH



A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, “I’m not going.” “Why not!” she asked. “I’ll give you two good reasons,” he said. “One, they don’t like me. Two, I don’t like them.” His mother replied. “I’ll give you two good reasons why you will go to church. One, you’re 47-years-old. Two, you’re the preacher.”

This joke was funny, but when you go get your child or children up to get ready to go to worship and they tell you they do not want to go, what do you say and do? Do you let them miss Bible class and worship? Do you insist they go whether they want to go or not? Who is the parent, and who is the child?

Do you make your children go to church services? Do you make your children go to school? Which one is more important—worship or school? Will schoolwork help get your children to Heaven? Will learning God’s Word teach the way to Heaven? These are two important questions we all need to answer for ourselves and for our children. 



# Hey, It Isn't a Matter of Salvation Anyway

Demar Elam

Frequently, we hear someone saying, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway.” Now this is sometimes said of things that really aren’t matters of salvation but fall into areas of expediency or opinion. However, some use this statement relating to everything God has commanded. Many say, “Well, the good thing about such-and-such is that it isn’t a salvation issue anyhow.”

Therefore, we are challenged with the idea of salvation issues verses non-salvation issues. It needs to be recognized that there are numerous things mentioned in the Bible where it is understood that a person’s salvation is not riding on how one carries out the thing mentioned. Often in areas of expediency, there might be multiple ways of doing something, and we need to freely grant people the freedom to do whatever they wish, since it is their liberty to do so. However, some are taking this statement, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway,” beyond its boundaries and making it apply to every command in God’s Word. This will lead to people being lost for failing to do what God requires of them. Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (John 14:15).

When we are working at exegesis, that is, a critical analysis or interpretation of a word or entire passage in the Word of God, we need to realize that there are areas of **expediency** and areas of **specificity**. There are some things that are specific and must be done exactly as God commanded. Then, there are things that are generic or general and can be carried out in many different ways. We need to allow complete liberty when the way of carrying out a command is generic. In these areas of expediency Christian *love* needs to reign. Jesus taught that the world would know we were His disciples by the great love we have one for another (John 13:34-35).

Let me use an illustration I learned from the late and beloved soldier of

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the cross, Gus Nichols. In Mark 16:15-16 we read, *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”* Please notice that the *“Go”* of this verse is specific. The disciples of Christ, in order to be obedient to Christ, must *“Go.”* The *“Go”* of this verse is not optional. Where are the disciples of Christ to go? They are commanded to *“Go into all the world”* (the entire world), and that is specific and not generic or optional. What are they to do when they go? Is there something that they are to specifically do? Yes, they are to preach the Gospel to every creature and baptize all who believe.

Please notice the **how** of this text is not mentioned. Why? God leaves the **how** of going up to those who are going. Therefore, it is generic or general in nature. Today, we can go by walking, riding in an automobile, flying on a plane, riding in a ship or using various other modes of transportation. What if the text had read, *“Go on horseback into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature?”* That would have been specific, and it would have meant that the only way to obey that command would be to go on horseback to preach the Gospel. However, the Bible is a Divine Book, and there are no flaws like that to be found in it. It would have been impossible to go on horseback into *“all”* the world, since oceans cannot be crossed on horseback.

Remember this: There must always be a background command for a thing to be done before there is a scriptural way of doing that thing. If there is no background command for the thing to be done, it should not be practiced, and there is no scriptural way of doing that thing. However, if there is a background command for the thing to be done, then one should proceed to carry out that command of God. First, search out the specific things to be done, and then look for the general or generic things that would be allowed in carrying out the background command.

Christians should approach this issue with an attitude that says if there is the slightest possibility that God wants me to do a thing, then I will do it, and I will do it the way the Lord has asked that it be done. However, if God has not spoken or authorized a thing to be done, I need to avoid adding to His Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-

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19). Actually, the statement, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway,” is what is commonly called a “cop-out.” This statement is being used by some today to simply get around doing what God requires.

“Salvation matters” are what God’s Word is all about. We need to view every single aspect of God’s Word as having vital and eternal importance contained in it. The heart of Scripture is dealing with matters of salvation. While it should be recognized that every single thing found in the Bible doesn’t have an eternal outcome connected to its being carried out in exactness, it needs to be understood that a host of matters do. One makes a vital and perhaps an eternal mistake by saying, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation or eternal importance anyway,” when it actually is a matter having eternal importance, and most importantly, eternal consequences.

A person might make himself feel better by saying, “Baptism is important, but ‘Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway.’” Just saying that baptism is not a “matter of salvation” doesn’t make it so. This is true of many of God’s commands throughout the Bible. Some seem to have the idea that if they just say, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway,” that they actually make it not a matter of salvation by their utterance of such a statement. Well, the fact is that doesn’t change any of God’s commands in the slightest way. The Bible plainly teaches that baptism is for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:15-16).

A person might make himself feel better by saying that baptism is not a matter of eternal importance, and that an individual can go to heaven without being baptized. However, that does not mean that God’s teachings on baptism are altered because that person thinks that way. Some say, “There are many churches and various roads leading to Heaven,” and that, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation or of eternal importance anyway.” However, that doesn’t change the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired holy men of God to write that the church is the body of Christ, that Christ is the Head of that body (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18) and that there is only “one” body (Ephesians 4:4). Paul instructed the Ephesians with these words:

***Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your***


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*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.* (Ephesians 5:24-27)

The redeemed are placed in that body, the church, by Christ upon their obedience to His will (Acts 2:47). Only those that have been placed in that body by Christ Himself will be saved. These great truths and many other matters of eternal importance cannot be waved off and reduced to nothingness with a feel-good expression like, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation or eternal importance anyway.”

Some folks are arguing:

What’s wrong with getting drunk every now and then? After all, it isn’t a matter of eternal importance anyway. What’s wrong with a little sex outside marriage? It isn’t a matter of salvation you know. What’s wrong with two men living together in a homosexual relationship or two women living together as lesbians? It is their business isn’t it? Besides, it is not a matter of salvation anyway. Worshipping any way an individual desires to worship is surely okay with God, but if it isn’t, one need not worry because after all, it is not a matter of salvation. Surely, God would accept any form of worship if the person is sincerely trying. Worship is not of eternal importance anyway. One’s salvation wouldn’t be riding on it.

Though individuals are making the arguments just mentioned, they do not alter or change what God has spoken and commanded through His divinely inspired Word, the Holy Bible. When individuals stand before Christ on the Day of Judgment, they will then realize that just saying, “Hey, it isn’t a matter of salvation anyway,” didn’t change God’s commands in the least. 

**Demar Elam is President of Philippines Theological College and lives in Athens, Alabama, USA.**

# A Common Hermeneutic

Cecil May, Jr

A specific commandment authorizes; silence about similar things prohibits. The apostolic command is to sing; silence about other kinds of music intentionally omits them.

That is a common hermeneutic that we all learned as children. When mama said, “Go play in the backyard,” **“backyard” was specific.** It commanded an enjoyable and a familiar play place. We learned quickly that her silence about other play places prohibited playing in the street or inside Phillip’s house next door, for example.

Why do we understand that so readily in every venue **except in worship to God?**



Cecil May, Jr. is Dean-Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.



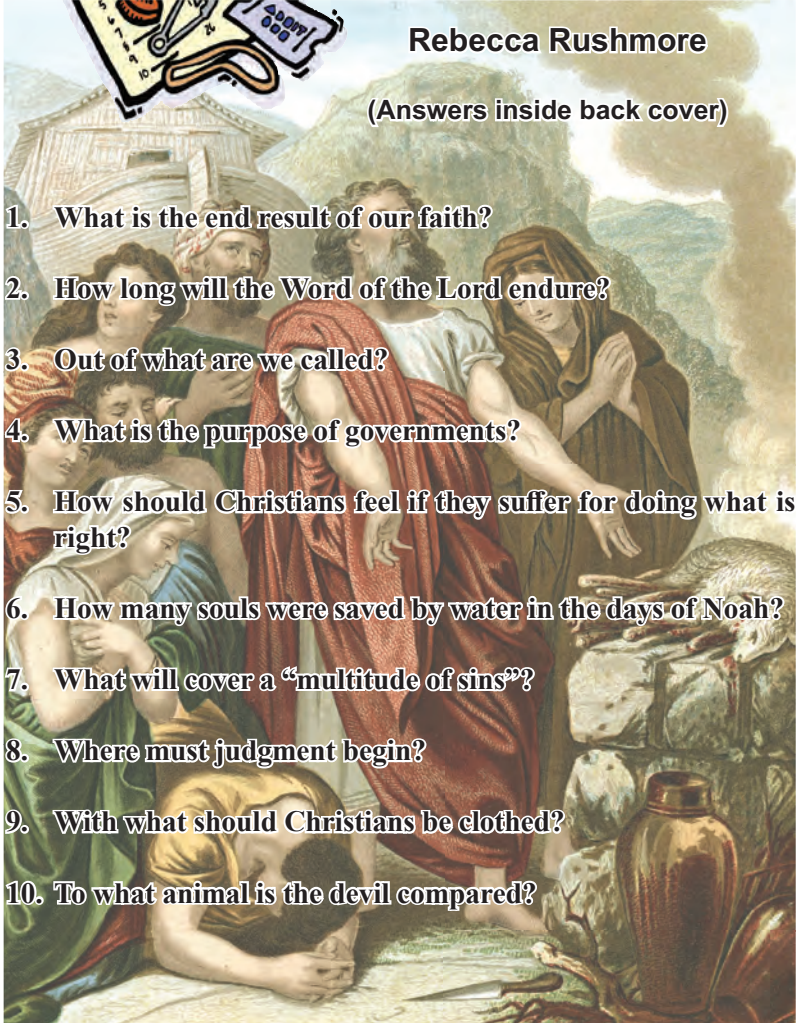
# Scavenger Hunt

through 1 Peter

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. What is the end result of our faith?
2. How long will the Word of the Lord endure?
3. Out of what are we called?
4. What is the purpose of governments?
5. How should Christians feel if they suffer for doing what is right?
6. How many souls were saved by water in the days of Noah?
7. What will cover a “multitude of sins”?
8. Where must judgment begin?
9. With what should Christians be clothed?
10. To what animal is the devil compared?



# Mary and Martha

Martha Lynn Rushmore

*Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42 NKJV)*

The focus of this passage is not that people should be unconcerned with household chores, but that the proper attitude toward Jesus is to listen to Him and to obey His words. A sharp contrast was portrayed between the two sisters. Mary sat and listened to Jesus, while Martha prepared for a meal. The phrase only ***"one thing is needed"*** (Luke 10:42) refers to listening to Jesus' words, which Mary had chosen to do. The same theme is seen in Luke 8:1-21.

Mary and Martha were sisters to Lazarus. They lived in the town of Bethany, and Jesus came to visit. Martha was preparing the meal for their guests. Martha was just like us. Friends visit, and we want everything to be just right. However, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him, and on another occasion, she had also washed Jesus' feet with oil and dried them with her hair (John 11:1-2). In the Luke 10 account, Martha complained to the Lord that Mary was not helping her. Jesus replied that Martha was busy with much serving. Mary had made a better choice—serving the Lord.

John 11:1-12:12 provides additional information about Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, died. As noted already, they lived in Bethany. Mary and Martha sent for Jesus to come because Lazarus was sick. Jesus told the disciples that they needed to go

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to Bethany. They did not want Jesus to go because the Jews wanted to kill Him. However, two days later, Jesus told His apostles that through the death of Lazarus they would believe.

Martha went out to meet Christ and told Him that if He had come earlier, Lazarus would not have died. She said Lazarus had been dead four days and that *“he stinketh”* (John 11:29 KJV; *“stench”* NKJV). Then, Martha departed to get Mary. Martha and Mary—in great distress—returned to Jesus. It seems that our Lord cried because of the sadness of his friends, not because of the death of Lazarus.

Going to the grave, Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again. She thought it was the final resurrection to which Jesus referred. However, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead at that time.

Martha seems to get a bad name because she was preparing physical food for the Lord instead of letting Jesus feed her spiritual food. We do the same thing. If company is coming, we scurry around trying to get the house cleaned, dishes washed, floors swept, furniture dusted and cooking done.

We, too, should be studying God’s Word more and getting our spiritual food. We seem to overlook the fact that Martha went to meet Jesus first and then ran to get Mary and bring her to the Lord. We ladies all have some of Martha and Mary in us. Let us remember to keep our priorities straight. †

Martha Lynn Rushmore is a Staff Writer for The Voice of Truth International and Gospel Gazette Online. She and her husband teach extensively stateside and abroad. They reside in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

### Did You Know?

Jesus posed many questions in His teaching ministry. Some questions were designed to rebuke (Matthew 8:26). Others were used to test the faith of His followers (Matthew 9:28). Jesus also used questions when teaching a truth (Matthew 10:25). How many questions can you find?

~ Rebecca Rushmore





## BIBLE CHARACTERS

# Six Ways Satan Will Attack Us

(taken from 2 Kings 18-19)

David Conley

Satan is **not** interested in our wellbeing! He truly wants us to fail in our walk with God. There are multiple ways he attacks us. The King of Judah, Hezekiah, was attacked by Satan, using the forces of the king of Assyria. These are six of the ways he attempted to defeat Hezekiah and the people of Judah.

1. Try to convince them that they are all alone.
2. Twist the truth.
3. Lie about what God actually said.
4. Try to turn them against each other by “speaking their language.”
5. Make a deal with them.
6. Try to convince them that they can’t really depend on God.

Satan used the king of Assyria against Hezekiah. He may use people today against us! When that preacher on television speaks, is he speaking God’s Word? When those family members put pressure on us, are they guided by the truth of God’s Word? When those folks at work (or school) invite us to participate in their activities, are they activities with which God would be pleased? When Satan attacks us in these (or any other) ways, let’s do what Hezekiah did. He turned to God for the answers! †

David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.

**Satan is not interested  
in our wellbeing!**

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# Josiah, He Sought God in His Youth

John Stacy

The name “Josiah” means, “Jehovah supports.” His father was the wicked king Amon. His father reigned two years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in God’s sight. He followed the way of his father and worshipped idols. Amon forsook the Lord and walked not in the way of God. His servants conspired against him and slew him in his own house (2 Kings 21:19-23). Josiah’s grandfather was the extremely wicked Manasseh.

It is believed that during Josiah’s reign the following prophets were at work among the people of God. They were Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nathan and Habakkuk. Josiah was the sixteenth king of Judah, and he reigned 31 years.

**First** of all, as we begin a study of this king’s life, we find that he sought God as a youth. Second Chronicles 34:1 says that he was 8-years-old when he began to reign. Verse two says, ***“He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, or to the left.”*** Solomon had earlier said, ***“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...”*** (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Look closely at 2 Chronicles 34:3. Josiah was about 16 at this time. ***“For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”*** We see the great zeal of Josiah in the next two verses, ***“And they broke down the altars of Baalim in his presence, and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down: and the groves, and the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burned the bones of the priests upon their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.”***

## BIBLE CHARACTERS

His reform and revival reached even as far as Samaria, as we can see from reading 2 Chronicles 34:6-7. In my judgment, Josiah can take his place alongside other great young people in the Bible like Daniel, Joseph and the three Hebrew children who were thrown into the fiery furnace.

**Secondly**, as we study Josiah, we find that at age 26, he repaired the Temple of God. Second Chronicles 34:8 tells us that he sent Shaphan, Maaseiah and Joah to repair the house of the Lord his God. How sad to think that the house of God had been neglected. It had been neglected so long that if not repaired, it might have been utterly ruined! What about the house of God today? The house of the God is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

The prophet Haggai spoke of the house of the Lord to his people. He said, ***“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie in waste?”*** (Haggai 1:4) Many of our churches have died or are dying because of neglect. Do we think more of our own houses? From the prices we pay, it certainly seems so. Maybe we need to ask the question raised by Paul in Hebrews 2:3, ***“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?”*** There is no escape from neglect. It can only bring ruin.

It was a sad thing to see the house of God in disrepair, but there was something even worse than this. Hilkiyah the priest found something that had been lost. He found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses (2 Chronicles 34:14). Think of it! The Bible or at least part of it had been lost in the house of the true and living God! Some say the priest had found the Pentateuch. Others say it was the Book of Deuteronomy. In Acts 17, we read of the unknown God. In our generation, we know about the unknown church. Yet, here among the people of God is the unknown book—the Bible! This just goes to show how far apostasy will take one away from God.

What about us? Is the Bible an unknown book among our people? How many of us read and study it daily? Do we really know what it teaches? Someone said what we need is not more biblical preaching. We need to practice the Bible we already know! Amen to that. Many among us don't bring a Bible to church. We don't study the Bible school lesson

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because Sunday school is a thing of the past to many of our people. Many of our preachers don't preach the Bible anymore. It is a Scripture and a lot of stories. Or, perhaps it is a lesson in current world events or a mixture of morality and politics. The positive thinking, health and wealth Gospel just won't cut it when it comes to saving human souls. Nothing can replace the Gospel (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

In 2 Chronicles 34:18, the scribe read the book to the king. The king rent or tore his clothes. He then asked the scribe and the priest to go to the Lord about this matter. The king was deeply troubled and seemed to believe the wrath of God was upon the people for their failure to live in harmony with God and His book (1 Chronicles 43: 20-21).

These men did not go to Zephaniah the prophet. Some think he was dead. They did not turn to Jeremiah because it is believed that he was in Anathoth. They went to Huldah the prophetess who lived in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 34:22). She said the Lord would bring evil upon these people because of idolatry. The curses found in the book would be poured out on Judah and would not be quenched (2 Chronicles 34:24-25).

One of the finest tributes ever paid to a king is found in 2 Chronicles 34:27. Huldah said of Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34:27, ***“Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the Lord.”*** The next verse says that he would die in peace and never live to see the evil come upon his people.

In the **third** point, we find Josiah reading the book of the Lord to the people. If it was the entire Pentateuch, it would have taken about ten hours to read. Most scholars think he read the Book of Deuteronomy. The Bible simply and profoundly says, ***“...and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.”*** Second Chronicles 34:11 says he made a covenant with the Lord. He and his people promised to follow the teachings of the book in their lives. His commitment was made with all his heart and soul. He commanded the people to do God's will, and they did it. All the days of his life, they departed not from following

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the Lord, the God of their fathers (2 Chronicles 34:29-33).

The final chapter in the life of Josiah ended with his death (2 Chronicles 35:20-24). The text tells us that the King of Egypt named Necho came to Carchemish to fight the Babylonians. Josiah for some reason thought he must also go to war. However, the Egyptian king told him he did not want to go to war with Judah. He even said that God told him to fight the Babylonians. Josiah was told to stay out of God's business. However, he disguised himself and went into battle. He was mortally wounded by an archer on the Plains of Megiddo. He was taken back to Jerusalem and buried. All of Judah mourned for Josiah, including Jeremiah (2 Chronicles 35:25).

From Josiah we learn that a man can rise above his family. He served God in spite of his youth. He devastated idolatry, which was such an abomination to God. He built up God's house and paid attention to God's book. He was a king of reform and revival. He served God with his whole heart. Yet, at the end of his life, he did something foolish. By failing to do God's will, he was killed. †

John Stacy has been a longtime preacher and author of religious books. He lives in Newbern, Tennessee, USA.

### Robison's Rubies

Mark 6:34 has a turn that is unexpected. It records that Jesus *"saw a great multitude and was moved for compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd."* So, what would

His compassion cause Him to do for them? This is where the unexpected turn comes. The answer is this: *"So He began to teach them many things."* Isn't that interesting? Compassion caused Jesus to teach. We usually think of compassion meeting physical needs—feeding the hungry, ministering to the sick—and Jesus wants people to do those things, as well! Yet, here, compassion caused Him to teach. Christ's teaching is motivated by pure compassion. When people teach the doctrines of Christ, the right attitude to have is His—one of compassion.

~ Andy Robison



# Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

**Andy Robison**

Why do bad things happen to good people? This is the question of the ages—one of monumental significance in the discussion of the existence of God.

Atheists argue that God cannot have all three traditional characteristics, that is, that He is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving (omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent). Since there is suffering, they say that at least one of those characteristics fails Him. “If He is powerful enough to stop it and knows about it, He must not care enough to stop it,” they allege. Or, “If He is powerful enough and loving enough to stop it, He must not know about suffering.” Thirdly, they posit, “If He knows about it and cares enough to stop it, He must not be powerful enough.” From Ivy League academia to street smarts, people use this kind of argument (differently worded in many cases, to be sure) to attack the existence of God. How can this be answered? Can it be answered?

First, realize that when God created everything, it was **“very good”** (Genesis 1:31). He made no error or pain. Man was given freewill with the placement of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden, and man was warned (Genesis 2:16-17). Where there is choice, there must be consequences. Man chose unwisely, and the consequences of death and suffering were set in motion (Romans 5:12-14). The existence of suffering in the world is not God’s fault; it is altogether man’s fault.

There are several reasons men might suffer, but they are all traced back to sin. First, ***one might suffer because of his own sin***. This is **not** always the case, but sometimes it is. Job’s friends tried to make him out

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to be some kind of profligate sinner, because they held to the theory of retribution—one suffering must surely deserve all that he is getting. One of them even said, **“Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves”** (Job 11:6). Still, it is possible to bring on one’s own suffering by one’s own sin. An alcoholic or a drug addict knows the pain of self-inflicted illnesses and perhaps arrests.

Secondly, ***it is possible to suffer because of someone else’s sins***. A drunk driver might kill an innocent, travelling family. That family suffers because of the sins of someone else. That is where people cry, “Unfair!” I guess it is unfair, but in this world of freewill, that is how it has to work. If God took away consequences, he would essentially be taking away choice. If my choices had no consequences, would they be choices at all? Could a drunk be drunk enough to unwittingly kill a ***deserving*** family but not an ***undeserving*** family?

The laws of nature factor in as well. God set in motion the laws of nature. He, throughout history, has only temporarily suspended them for miraculous verification of His messages (Exodus 5-12; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4). All such miraculous deeds have now ended (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Acts 8:14-17). If, as some seem to expect, God would halt the course of natural law whenever it would accidentally (or purposely) hurt someone (e.g., misuse of fire or water), we would have no knowledge of natural law on which to depend. Yet, we depend on a lot of natural law for our good (use of fire, water, chemical reactions for prescription drugs, etc.).

Thirdly, ***one might suffer because of sin’s very presence in the world***. After sin entered the world, a totally new set of circumstances followed. There would be death and disease. Some cite evidence that a major climate change would have indeed happened after the global flood of Noah’s day, which was brought about because of man’s wickedness (Genesis 6:5). The **“world that then existed perished”** (2 Peter 3:6). Perhaps the changed world allows for more climate disturbances (hurricanes, tornadoes) that hurt people. In other words, innocent people are hurt by natural disasters and by seemingly random incidents of disease.

Still, the existence of God need not be questioned. There is plenty of evidence otherwise (in design, cause-and-effect) that points to His

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reality. Furthermore, on top of all that, He has indeed done something about suffering. He did not take it away because that would have taken away freewill. Rather, He came and suffered with us representatively in the person of His Son (1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:5-7). *“He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”* (Hebrews 5:8). Now, having been risen from the dead, He sits at God’s right hand to mediate on behalf of those still on earth suffering (Hebrews 2:18; 7:25).

Suffering is a real problem. We are right to do all we can to avoid and alleviate it. However, remember, it is not God’s fault. Neither His existence nor His love can be questioned because of it. In fact, through it, He shows Himself to be *“the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort”* (2 Corinthians 1:3). †

Andy Robison is the minister for the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ and the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA.

### Kenney's Pennies

*“Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.’ And they said, ‘That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart’”* (Jeremiah 18:11-12). Jeremiah was called “the weeping prophet” because he wept over the status of his country and what was coming. It is shocking to see so many who ought to be weeping today over the course their country is pursuing, but instead, citizens and even the people of God remain silent—consenting or even supporting wayward and ungodly paths. Especially the people of God ought to know better. These days have been coming for a long time because too many put their priorities over God’s priorities at the ballot box. I pray they repent of this and nations can avert disaster.



## BIBLE QUESTIONS

# Is Alcoholic Wine to Be Used in the Lord's Supper?

Kevin L. Moore

We read of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper in Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The bread is unleavened (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12), representing Christ's body. The cup containing "*the fruit of the vine*" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18) represents Christ's blood, shed "*for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28).

Leaven or yeast was prohibited in all grain offerings to God (Leviticus 2:11; 6:14-17). Because leaven permeates and ferments, it is metaphorically applied to pervading (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:21) and corrupting (Galatians 5:9) influences, including doctrinal error and corrupt behavior (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Jesus warned about the "*leaven*" or negative influence of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod [Antipas] (Matthew 16:6,11,12; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15; 3:6; 6:14-28; 12:13).

The Greek word often translated "*wine*" in our English Bibles is never employed with reference to the Lord's Supper. The expression used is *gennema tas ampelou* ("*fruit of the vine*"), contextually meaning the juice of grapes (Leviticus 25:5; Revelation 14:18). The same species of yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) converts carbohydrates to carbon dioxide in bread (causing it to rise) and to alcohol in grape juice (causing it to ferment). Seeing that yeast (leaven) was prohibited in the Passover bread (Deuteronomy 16:3), it follows that the same would be absent from the fruit of the vine (i.e., non-alcoholic). †

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

## BIBLE QUESTIONS

# Were the Pharisees the Last "Blind Leaders of the Blind"?

Ardron Hinton

This expression was applied to the Pharisees in Matthew 15:12-14. They were neither the first nor the last to deserve the designation. Consider the political and social leadership in our own nation today. We have spent staggering amounts to improve education, yet we are told there is a crisis in American education. We have poured billions into eliminating poverty, yet we are constantly bombarded with horror stories concerning the plight of millions of people. We are clearly in deep trouble with crime in the U.S., and yet it has been given all sorts of attention for decades. Could it possibly be that those leading us are not solving problems because they are **blind** to what really lies at the root of **all** these troublesome developments?

Money hasn't bought us the security we have sought. Why suppose that spending more will change things? Readily available data show a clear connection between all of these problems and certain developments in our society: (1) the decline of traditional homes, (2) the acceptance of non-biblical moral and ethical standards, (3) a secularization of public education, (4) increased concern in religion with people-pleasing, (5) increasing lack of a sense of responsibility in the public media and (6) growth of centralized bureaucratic power in government. There is no improving the plant (society) without first correcting the roots that feed it. If our leaders are blind to the real trouble, what then? †

**Ardron Hinton (1929-2015) was a preacher of the Gospel and lived in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.**

**Editor's Note:** Vacuums and voids seem to attract something to fill the nothingness. Subsequently, the absence of God in our homes, in our schools, in society and in our government has facilitated the increased influence of Satan and his minions in those areas and every other area of human existence. *"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5 NKJV).

# **It is Finished**

Jerry R. Kendall

## **Introduction**

1. Said by a mocked, forsaken, thorn-crowned, wounded, bleeding, dying man.
2. Cry from silence and darkness; what was finished (i.e., not “I,” but “it”)?
3. Jesus Christ had brought things to their **intended** end (Acts 3:18).
4. The Lord had performed the **final act** in the fulfillment of a purpose.



## **Body**

- I. **Christ's suffering finished (Luke 24:25-27).**
  - A. His suffering shows the greatness of God's love (Romans 5:6-9).
  - B. His humiliation was finished; now exalted (Philippians 2:3-22).
  - C. His "separation" from the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 17:5).
  - D. His service to the Father's will **now** complete (Luke 22:15, 42-44).
  - E. His fulfillment of Scripture was complete (John 19:28).

## CHARTS & OUTLINES

### II. Christ's Work of Atonement Finished (Hebrews 2:17).

- A. His sacrifice was complete (Daniel 9:24; Hebrews 9:26; 10:9-12).
- B. Price paid for redemption and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
- C. The "Lamb of God" provided (John 1:29; 3:3-6; Revelation 6:6).
- D. His sinlessness brought the Law to an end (Colossians 1:20-23; Romans 6:14; 8:3-4; 10:3-4; Galatians 3:13, 21-25; 4:4-5).
- E. **Reconciliation** made possible (2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Colossians 1:20-23).
- F. Strength for every trial and defense against every peril (Philippians 4:13).

### III. Christ Crumbled Satan's Kingdom (Matthew 12:29).

- A. The war against Satan and his kingdom finished (Ephesians 6:10-17).
- B. The seed of woman bruised the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
- C. Our hope based upon the finished work of Christ (Revelation 20:1, 17-18).

### IV. Christ's Finished Work Proved.

- A. Temple veil torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50-53).
- B. The resurrection of Jesus—His sacrifice accepted!
- C. Christ exalted to right hand; value of Christ's work.
- D. Holy Spirit on Day of Pentecost (John 14-16; Acts 2).

### V. Christ "*Finished*"; what is the Meaning?

- A. Banking term: promissory note: fully paid; payment made.
- B. Deed to property: fully in force; Christ signed in His blood.
- C. Priestly word; perfect lamb without spot or blemish.
- D. Artist's word; masterpiece completed; no improvements!
- E. One sent on mission: upon completion—"TETELESTAI"—"It is finished!"

## Conclusion

- 1. Work of Jesus is **finished!** He did not cry as victim, but as Victor.
- 2. The Greeks believed that true wisdom was being able to express much

## CHARTS & OUTLINES

in little. They desired teachers to give “a sea of matter in a drop of language.” When Jesus exclaimed, **“It is finished,”** He did just that. This was not the Savior’s painful, deep wail of despair. It was not a whimper of defeat or just an empty cry. It was His **shout** of victory! It was not the sound of tragedy, but the exclamation of triumph. He had completed the mission of His Father. It was the Lord Jesus Christ declaring the accomplishment of all He came to do. He had revealed God to man and fulfilled the Law. Now He was paying the price for salvation. He was not speaking of suffering’s end alone, but of the ultimate achievement—redemption for man! What appeared to be the moment of Satan’s triumph was actually the occasion of his defeat. Christ wrapped one arm around the pillar of sin and the other around the pillar of death, and Satan’s kingdom crumbled! What our Lord was expressing is summed up in the word **“DONE!”** His death became our ransom from sin, and the Father was satisfied with it and in the work of the Christ. May all obediently accept Christ, for He has **finished** His reconciling ministry. †



Rebecca Rushmore

### DID YOU KNOW?

In Genesis 9:1, God instructed Noah and his family to “multiply, and fill the earth.” The first nine verses of Chapter 11 describe how the people rejected God’s instructions, instead attempting to build a city and a tower to keep from scattering over the earth. God forced them to disperse when He “confused the language of all the earth” (11:8). Today, there are over 6,900 different languages. Based on the number of native speakers, the top four languages are (1) Mandarin Chinese (845 million), (2) Spanish (329 million), (3) English (328 million) and (4) Hindi (182 million).

# *Overview of the Prison Ministry of Daryl Townsend*

## **Why Prison Ministry?**

The Great Commission is the foundation on which the church has always based its evangelistic efforts. This charge by our Lord has sent brethren and their financial support to all parts of the world to find those in sin that need the Savior. Our efforts have born much fruit in many places at home and abroad. However, I believe we have neglected one of the greatest mission fields anywhere in the world—local prisons and jails.

Jesus made it clear in Matthew 25 that our treatment of the poor, the sick, strangers and those in prison would play a *surprising* role in our fate on Judgment Day. In fact, Jesus declared that aid-



**Men Converted to Christ While in Prison and Now Free in Every Way**

ing those who could not aid themselves was truly serving our Lord and not those actually in need. There are those in prison who are begging for someone to love them enough to share the Gospel with them. How can we continue to neglect those who are eager to hear and to receive the Gospel so that they can be free from their sins? After all, men that have committed crime have committed sin. Therefore, the solution to preventing crime is really preventing and dealing with sin in an inmate's life. The only solution for sin is the Gospel!

## **FROM THE HEART OF**

### ***The Prison Situation***

There are over 140,000 men and women in state prisons or county jails right now in the state of Florida. In fact, the prison population in Florida doubled between 1995 and 2005 and has continued to increase albeit at a slower rate. There are many reasons for this. First, the population is growing in Florida, and more people equals more crime. However, the rate of crime is increasing also on a per capita basis (crimes per thousand residents). Furthermore, Florida prison inmates must now serve a minimum of 85 percent of their sentence. These factors have resulted in a large and a continually rising Florida prison population. Another startling fact that contributes to the continued growth in the prison population is the high recidivism rates. Almost 50 percent of prison inmates will be back in prison within five years of their release. It is obvious that punishment alone will not stop offenders from repeating. We know that it takes the Gospel to really change men's behaviors by changing their lives.

### ***My Background***

I was raised in the Lord's church, and I have been a Christian for 40 years. My late father served as an elder at the Lakeshore church of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida for 22 years. I graduated from the University of Florida in 1983 with a B.S. in Agriculture and a major in Dairy Management. I worked for the next 20 years honing my skills as a dairy manager on dairies of up to 1,500 cows, and I worked doing domestic and international consulting and sales in the dairy industry. In 2004, I left the cows behind and embarked in fulltime service to our



**Robert and Katie McConnell**  
Robert is a recent graduate  
of our transition program

## FROM THE HEART OF

God by serving as an evangelist at the Middleburg church of Christ.

It was during that first year that I began to experience prison ministry. My work in the prisons began by visiting a former member's son in the county jail. A few months later, I was teaching a Bible study at the jail for juvenile offenders. After a few months, one of my students wanted to obey the Gospel. However, there were no facilities to baptize him at the jail. I soon was able to baptize that young man at the Reception and Medical Center in Lake Butler, Florida. That was my first trip to a prison. During that process, I met a brother in Christ, Gary Wyder, who was already doing ministry there. Gary had been laboring in prison ministry in that area for over 20 years. My involvement in the prison work steadily grew from that point in time.

Within two years, I left the work at the local church and began doing prison work full time. I soon started a 501 (c) (3) called *Off the Chain Ministries*. The non-profit allowed for fund raising from individuals and businesses to support things necessary for aspects of the work, especially for the transition program, but outside of the scope of the local church. I have been engaged in this mission field for the last 13 years.

### ***Prison Ministry Goals***

My goals for the prison ministry are the following:

- **Encourage/Restore Existing Members:** I have yet to find a prison where there are not members of the body of Christ already. Many have fallen away or have been ostracized by their families and/or their local congregations. They need restoration with God and then with their physical and spiritual families.
- **Reach the Lost in Prison:** As I have already stated, prisons and jails are fertile mission fields. We typically baptize 20 to 60 men each year. These are men who have seen the lies of Satan and false gospels in their lives and in prison. They want the hope that can only come through Jesus. Everyday there are more men with whom to study than time allows. The fields are ripe unto harvest!
- **Build up the Body of Christ/Establish Local Congregations in**



## FROM THE HEART OF

**Prisons:** Christians need each other. That is the biblical pattern. Christians need to be able to worship together in “spirit and in truth” whether in prison or in the free world. There needs to be a Lord’s Day worship service where inmates can commune with our Lord in His Supper each week and sing with only the “*fruit of our lips*” (Hebrews 13:15) to God and to each other, and to hear the true Gospel proclaimed in every prison.

- **Involvement After Prison—Transition Program or With a Local Church:** For prison ministry, or any evangelistic effort to be successful, there must be follow-up and discipleship. Men leaving prison must get connected to local congregations to stay faithful. They must discover a new family that will replace the negative influences that they have known previously in their lives. Local congregations must do their part to make prison ministry effective—locating congregations that are willing to open up to these men and to encourage them in their new lives despite their past. They need forgiveness, mercy, accountability and discipleship—the same as all of us who are sinners.



2nd House Purchased in 2009. Capacity of 6 men

To that end, we operate two transition houses where we invite men converted in prison to come be residents for at least six months after their release. We can house up to nine men. These men agree to extra accountability with their lives including

their finances, required classes in addition to our congregation’s activities, etc. We provide help with initial living expenses (clothes, food, etc.), transportation and any costs associated with re-entry into free society. We facilitate employment and provide a safe, secure place to live and to exist. Brothers in the program who are employed pay rent, have the use of a car

## FROM THE HEART OF

and receive other living expenses. Men are encouraged to stay until they are prepared to be on their own. Some men stay for well past a year.

- **Reach the Families of Those in Prison:** The families of inmates know better than anyone the cost of sin in the lives of their loved ones. It is amazing to me how many marriages do stay intact during their incarceration. Some men are even married while incarcerated. These families



often have been shunned by friends, family, churches and others, and they feel all alone. The humiliation of the crimes committed often bring shame on their loved ones. We have been involved in studying the Bible with wives, children, mothers and fathers of inmates. These family members may be a greater mission field than the inmates themselves. Again, follow-up by local congregations to these families is critical.

### ***The Specifics of My Work***

There are 15 prisons and more than 12,000 inmates within an hour's drive of where I live. The only "faith based" correctional institution in the world is within 20 miles of my house. This area is ripe for prison evangelism. I have been working primarily with two prisons for the past 13 years, Reception Medical Center in Lake Butler and Lawtey Correctional in Lawtey.

The work I do on any given day in a prison is varied, but it always centers around teaching the Gospel of our Lord. I have several group Bible studies that are similar to what we would have in a local congregation. I may study with three or four men or with as many as 25 in a group. We study specific books of the Bible, other topics of interest or deal with specific questions the men may have. I also teach detailed programs on

## FROM THE HEART OF

addiction, what biblical manhood is, how to handle money, victim impact and dealing with sexual sin.

In addition, I do what the correctional system refers to as Spiritual Advisor Visits. These are one-on-one studies or counseling that I do with men who request to see me. Every inmate is granted one of these “visits” each week for



a maximum of two hours. These “visits” are great opportunities for men to discuss personal issues they may be having or to deal on a deeper basis with some doctrinal question that they may have. There are usually more men who would like these “visits” than I can see. I often do these visits at various other facilities around the state, too.



Finally, I often preach or help conduct worship services at institutions. These Lord’s Day services are like any Lord’s Day service in the free world. We are allowed to bring in the elements to allow these brothers to partake of the Lord’s Supper. We sing and pray together. The service tends to be less formal than what many of us

in the church are accustomed. The inmate Christians who attend the service are also allowed to participate.

Much of the work I do is shared with other brothers in Christ who

## **FROM THE HEART OF**

devote their time and energy to this ministry. Some brethren from area congregations share in this outreach at various facilities also, besides other brothers with whom I work who do this on a fulltime basis. Gary Wyder, Greg Whipple, Carlton McPeak and Tom Dugan are a few of these dedicated brothers. Like all of God's work, it takes a team to accomplish His mission.

### ***What You Can Do to Help***

First, I solicit your prayers for this work. I understand more clearly every day how important it is for God's providential guidance to help us in this ministry. Pray for us, for the men who have already been reached and for those who are searching for a better way from a destructive life. Pray for the men who are released. The temptations in the free world are so powerful for these men.

Next, you can help the prison work by getting involved directly with men and women in prison. This can be done in several ways.


- 1. Write letters.** Prison is a lonely place for many men. Some of the inmates receive little or no correspondence from others in the free world. Take the time to write to those who have been added to the body of Christ already or to those we are trying to reach with the Gospel. Maybe you can't go to a prison, but surely you can write letters encouraging men and building a relationship with them. This opportunity should be limited to men or couples together.
- 2. Send and grade Bible correspondence courses.** Frankly, I usually don't ask for men to sign up for correspondence courses because too many of them would sign up. I know that sounds crazy, but there simply are not enough volunteers to grade and keep up with them. Some of the men who take the courses ask questions and want to correspond with the person handling them. This takes a good bit of time and effort.
- 3. Hold a Bible study in a jail or a prison.** Maybe there is a jail or a prison near you where no one from the Lord's church is involved. Would you be willing to try to establish a link and get permission to see and teach

## FROM THE HEART OF

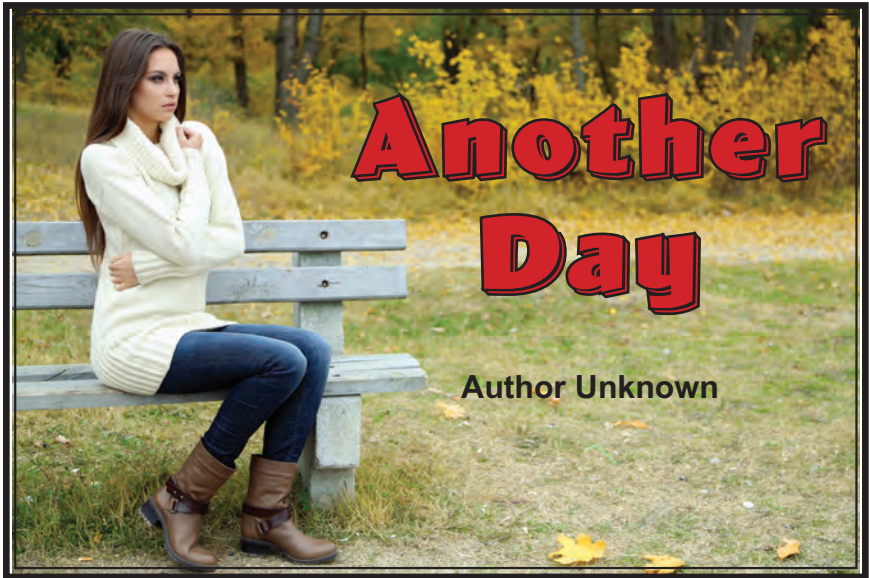
men there? Remember, our goal should be to establish local congregations in prison. I can help you get started if you are interested.

4. **Work with families of inmates.** Often someone is needed to make contact with family members. This could be as simple as calling or visiting them and offering to study with them, to just talk or to invite them to services.
5. **Work with inmates once released.** I have already mentioned how important it is to follow up with men once they are released into the free world. They need to be connected to a local congregation, a new family. They will need mentoring and accountability, jobs, a ride to services, etc. It takes God's people to reach out and to help disciple these men to help them in their new lives. Prison ministry must extend beyond walls and wire to be effective.
6. **Support the work.** Anyone wishing to be involved in the above areas or helping to support the work financially can contact me at:

P.O. Box 588  
Middleburg, FL 32050  
904-631-0351  
[www.offthechainministries.com](http://www.offthechainministries.com)

Lastly, remember there are men in prison right now who are praying for someone to come and to offer them hope for a better life. Will you please help to give them the Gospel? It is our only real hope! 

**[Editor's Note:** Increasingly in western society, material prosperity has impacted unfavorably widespread interest in spiritual matters—as people essentially enjoy their version of heaven on earth via things and the proverbial good life. Consequently, response to the Gospel of Christ these days is much greater in developing nations where general prosperity lags. Hence, many of these candidates for conversion to Christ are willing to place their hope on a *heavenly* hereafter. **Inmates in our prisons in western society—like the United States—in some ways experience circumstances more nearly like the hopelessness known by citizens of developing nations. Therefore, they are often more fertile ground for sowing the seed of the kingdom than other segments of society in our western world.** We must not overlook the good soil in which to sow the Word of God. I know brother Townsend personally, admire his godly labors for our Lord and have joyed in sitting at the feet of this excellent student and proclaimer of God's message. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



# Another Day

Author Unknown

*Lord thank you for Another Day within this life of mine  
Give me strength to live it well whatever it will find*

*Bestow from your abundance the treasures I may lack  
Lord give me strength to live each day for I cannot have it back*

*Lord thank you for Another Day in which to make amends  
For little slights of petty words inflicted on my friends*

*Lord thank you for Another Day in which to try to be  
A little more deserving of the gifts you've given me*

*For yesterday is over and tomorrow is far away  
And I remain committed to the good I do today*

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- \* 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”.
- \* If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

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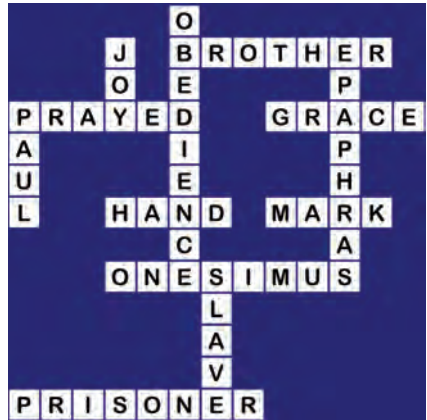
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## ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

### Verse Search (Page 38)

1. The communion of the blood of Christ
2. The communion of the body of Christ
3. Bread, body
4. Demons
5. Lord, demons
6. Others
7. The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.
8. Eat whatever is set before them asking no questions
9. Do not eat
10. The one who told them the meat had been offered to idols
11. Glory, God
12. Many others, not his own

### Bible Find (page 47)



### Scavenger Hunt (page 84)

#### Answers:

1. salvation of our souls (1:9)
2. forever (1:25)
3. darkness (2:9)
4. to punish evildoers & praise those who do well. (2:13-14)
5. happy (3:14)
6. 8 (3:20)
7. charity (love) (4:8)
8. the house of God (4:17)
9. humility (5:5)
10. lion (5:8)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

# HE IS RISEN!

I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-20)