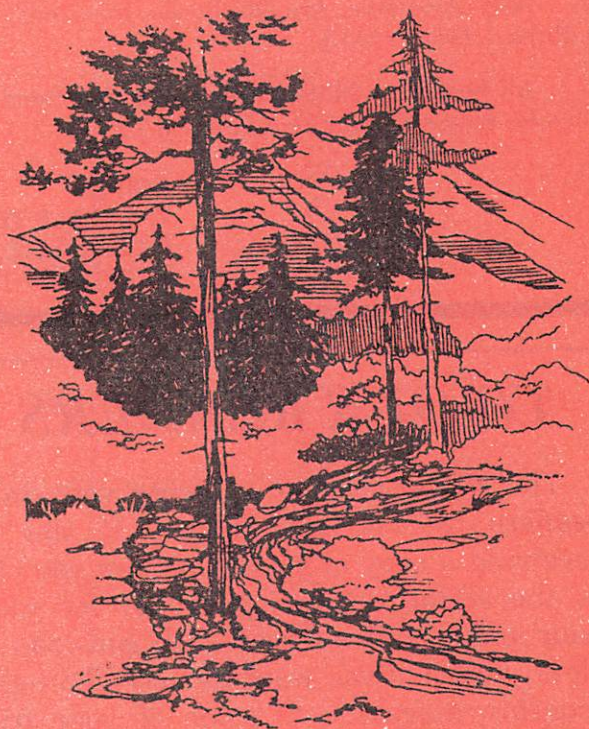


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



*The earth is the Lord's  
and the fulness thereof . . .*

*Psalms 24:1*

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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### ***Born Of Water And The Spirit***

One of the common desires of all human beings everywhere is to enter into God's kingdom of heaven. This is also the desire of our heavenly Father. Jesus taught, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Jesus Christ also taught that "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And, to explain that more explicitly, the Lord said, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5).

Thus it is indubitably clear that to enter into God's eternal kingdom of heaven one must be born again, anew, and that new birth must be "of water and the Spirit." How then one is born of water and the Spirit? This is something that one must do individually. It is a command for every person that one must comply with. It is not a mystical experience with which one is bestowed upon that is "better felt than told." We have all heard people talk about a "born again Christian." What do they mean? They are talking about someone who has had some kind of sudden and mystical experience by which that person knows that he is saved. But such an idea is just not found in the Bible anywhere. Sure, one must be born again to become a Christian, and if one is a Christian it is because he has been born again, since one cannot be a Christian in any other way. But there is no mystical experience promised in being born again, nor is there example of any such by which anyone ever became a Christian in the whole Bible.

The Bible very plainly teaches that when one hears the word of God, the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and believes in Him, and repents of sins and is baptized for the remission of sins, then, at that point one is born again by obeying the Truth and becomes a Christian and a member of the Lord's church, which is the body of the saved ones. Notice the parallel readings: "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." And, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (John 3:5 & Mark 16:16). Only the saved will go to heaven or enter the kingdom of God.

It is by the Spirit or the Holy Spirit that the word of God was delivered to man, which when man obeys leads him to salvation. Notice again: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart, **HAVING BEEN BORN AGAIN, NOT OF CORRUPTIBLE SEED BUT INCORRUPTIBLE, THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD WHICH LIVES AND ABIDES FOREVER.**" (1 Peter 1:22, 23). At another place, says the same apostle; "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1: 20, 21).

Therefore, when a person hears the Word of God preached and believes in Christ and obeys the commands of the gospel to be saved, that is, repents of sins and is baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, then the new birth, of water and of the Spirit, takes place, and the individual is born again to enter the kingdom of God. The 3000 people, about whom we read in Acts chapter 2 had done the very same thing to be born anew, they were born again of water and of the Spirit. When they had heard the gospel of Christ preached to them, they wanted to know from the preacher "What shall we do?" and promptly they were told to "Repent each one of you and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." What did they do? "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" And, they were praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Read Acts 2:37, 38, 41 & 47): Were they born again of water and of the Spirit? Sure, they were, because if they weren't the Lord wouldn't have added them to His church. Yet, that wasn't the result of a mystical experience "better felt than told", but they had obeyed the Word of God that was preached to them.

Every Christian is a born again person, born of water and of the

Spirit. One cannot be a Christian in any other way. There is no other kind, in fact.

## ***How God Speaks Today***

**J.C. CHOATE**

Does God speak today? He most certainly does. The question is, however, how does God speak? This question has been debated for centuries. Is it possible to know? Another related question is, to whom does God speak? Does he speak to a select number or to all? Then another related question would be, how does God speak? Does he speak directly, audibly, by a sign, through a vision or dream, or some other way? Surely there is a way to know.

Recently a man told a Burmese brother that God had spoken to him in two different dreams. How many times have we heard that? And how many times have we had different ones to tell us that God had audibly spoken to them, or appeared to them in a vision to reveal his will to them, or that God had given to them a sign to let them know that he wanted them to do or not do some particular thing? Where do these people get all of these ideas? Certainly not from the Bible because the Bible does not teach such things. That means then that such people are speaking out of ignorance, out of their feelings and imaginations, or as a result of being deceived by some false teacher. If one is convinced that God has spoken to him directly in some way then that must make him feel very important and to put forth every effort possible to defend such a belief. The devil certainly is cunning and goes all out to not only deceive one but to blind him to the truth and reason so that he will remain deceived.

God does speak to man today but he speaks to one and all alike through the written word, the scriptures, the Bible, and in particular, the New Testament, which is specifically directed to those who have lived, and will live, after the death of Christ and until he returns again.

The Hebrew writer says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1,2) Concerning the things that Jesus did, and are written about him, we read "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his

disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30,31). Then Paul tells us that all of the scripture is given by the inspiration of God and completely furnishes man unto every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Peter said, speaking of God, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3). We are told then that we should not add to the word or subtract from it (Revelation 22:18,19), that we should not substitute something for it (Galatians 1:6-9), but that we should obey the commandments (Revelation 22:14), 22:14), and be doers of the word. (James 1:22). Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17). James calls the scriptures the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), and Christ says, "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:47-50).

What do we have then? The fact is that God has always spoken and in these last days, our days, he speaks to us through his Son as is set forth in the pages of the New Testament. That word is written down for our learning that we might know the Lord and his will, that we might believe in him and obey his commandments. He speaks to all alike, and when all read and study and obey his teaching them he saves all alike and adds all to his church. (Acts 2). Since that word will never pass away (Matthew 24:35) then even in the day of judgment we will be judged by it. (John 12:48). Those who have believed it and obeyed it will be eternally saved, but those who have not done so, but have rejected it, added to it, or subtracted from it, will be cursed by it and will be cast into torment.

Should the Lord give additional revelation to one and not to another, as many seem to believe, then that would make the Lord a respecter of persons. Why would he tell something to one that he would not tell another? Why would he speak to one in one way and to another in another way? All of this would only lead to confusion and distrust in the Lord.

The fact is, God has revealed all of his will to man today through

Christ as it is written in the pages of the New Testament. He speaks to all alike in the same way. He has revealed the same message to all. He has said all that he wanted to say. Had he wanted to say more then he would have done so at the time he was speaking. Be not deceived. God has spoken and speaks today through his written word. He had revealed all of his will and if we are waiting for more we are waiting in vain. We are therefore to hear his word, believe and obey it, and then preach and teach it to others. Only then can we be saved.

*Especially For Women*

## ***Jealousy—Competition***

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

"... he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves." (Luke 22:26)

Aseema came running to the house. "Mother! Mother!" she called. "Come and stop the fight! Anthony and Thomas are fighting!"

Mary ran outside, following Aseema to the street where a crowd of children noisily watched the fight, shouting words of support to one boy or the other. She pushed her way through the crowd and pulled the boys apart, scolding them sharply. "Anthony—Thomas! Shame! What are you doing?"

Anthony's nose was bleeding, and Thomas' eye was swelling shut. "I am so surprised at you boys, and so ashamed," Mary said. "Why are you fighting?"

Anthony wiped his nose and looked defiantly at Thomas. "We were going to play ball, and I wanted to be the leader. I'm better than Thomas, so I *should* be the leader—"

"No! You're not the best!" shouted Thomas angrily. "I'm better than you! All the boys say so! I'm going to be the leader—not you!"

"Come here, Anthony and Thomas," said Mary, pulling the boys down to sit on each side of her. She looked at the other children, and motioned for them to sit down on the ground around her. "I want to tell you a story.

"One time Jesus and His friends were walking along the road and, as they walked, the friends began to quarrel. Do you know what they

were quarreling about? Who was the best, who would be first. Jesus told them something very different from what they expected to hear. He said, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' (Mark 9:35)

"That means that those people who are truly great won't be fighting to be first or to seem the most important, but they will be willing to stand back and let others go first. They will even be willing to do things for others—like a servant—because they are not jealous of others, or competing and fighting to be first.

"In another place in the Scriptures it says that there was a rivalry among Jesus' friends, as to which of them would be considered the greatest. They expected Jesus to be the King of the whole world, and they wanted to be important people in His kingdom. Jesus explained, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them . . . But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.' (Luke 22:24-26)

"So if you want to be like Jesus says, and to get along with each other, and to be really 'the best', you will each say, 'No, you be the leader.' And then you will play happily with each other instead of trying to out-do one another and getting into fights."

Too many adults in this world have not learned the lesson Jesus was teaching his disciples. There is jealousy and competition on every hand, often causing people to do dishonest and hurtful things to others, trying to cut them down and to push themselves ahead.

Parents need to be aware of this wrong attitude and to watch for it among their children. Then they need to teach patiently and persistently that this is not the attitude Jesus wants among His followers. On several occasions this very problem came to the surface among the apostles, and Jesus always corrected them and taught them that an attitude of humility and servitude was what He wanted.

Jesus explained His guidelines in several ways:

- "... he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves." (Luke 22:24-26)
  - "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35)
  - "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)
- On the occasion the mother of James and John even came to Jesus, asking that her sons be granted the honor of sitting on each side of Him

when He would one day be seated on His throne in His kingdom. Jesus said, "You don't know what you ask." But when the other disciples heard what had happened, the Scriptures say, "They were moved with indignation against the two brothers." (Matthew 20:24)

Competition—jealousy—rivalry—backbiting—boasting of oneself—belittling others: all these attitudes are indicators of small-minded, immature people. They are not attributes of the children of God or of spiritually mature people. But these attitudes are such a part of human nature that all people must be constantly on guard against them. For this reason, parents should begin teaching their children when they are very small that the truly great people don't demand first place or expect others to praise them and serve them. The truly great people of the world look for ways to serve, in order to make the home, the neighborhood, and the world a happier place.

## ***Rewards Of Reading***

**TOM HOLLAND**

In an age when seeing is such a significant force in life, thanks to television, videos, and motion pictures, we need to remember the importance of reading, especially the importance of reading God's Word.

God's Word is important to the young. It provides information by which young people may live a pure and productive life (Psalm 119:11; Ecclesiastes 11:9).

God's Word has the ability to provide the message of the Lord by which we are saved from sin, to an abundant life now, and eternal life in heaven (James 1:21; John 10:10; 1 Peter 1:5).

God's Word can edify the souls of God's people (Acts 20:32). God's Word applied to life enables a person to develop a godly character.

God's Word provides comfort to hurting hearts (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Our brethren in the first century were grieving over their loved ones that had died. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write words of truth by which people could be comforted.

God's Word produces faith, (Romans 10:17; John 20:30, 31), and faith is the foundation of hope (Hebrews 11:1).

A public reading of the entire Bible would take approximately 70 hours. It takes about 52 hours to read privately the Old Testament and about 18 hours to read the New Testament. If one reads the Bible one hour per day it would take 2 months and 10 days to read the entire Bible.

Reading the Bible is like working in a gold mine; priceless treasure is found in God's truth. Reading the Bible is like searching for diamonds, rich jewels of truth are found on every page.

To those who are determined to read the Bible through this year, keep reading. If you started to read the Bible through and stopped, you still have time to start anew and read the Bible through. Not only will you accomplish something that not too many people ever do, namely read the Bible through in a year, but you will have exposed your minds to words of truth that will enrich your life and also "give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

## ***Our Doctrine—Jesus Christ***

**ELWOOD HOLT**

There are congregations of Christians meeting to worship God just as the Christians of the first century did, using only teachings of Christ. These teachings are the New Testament.

It is the belief of these people, who comprise the churches of Christ, that God should be worshipped just as the inspired apostles taught, following the pattern set down by first century Christians. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). This is the teaching of an inspired apostle. Furthermore, Christ has given no authority to anyone to change first century worship. In fact, Paul warned against anyone changing the teachings of Christ; "there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-8).

Members of the Churches of Christ believe that the Old Testament is inspired too; however, they believe that God did not mean for Christians to follow the Old Testament teachings in Christian living. They believe that the Old Testament is a record of the dealings of God with people, a "tutor to bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24).

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Old Testament (Moses' law) was "blotted out," taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). When the old law was abolished, the new and better covenant of Christ went into effect (Hebrews 8:6, 8; 9:15-18).

Taking the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, members of the Churches of Christ propose to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent.

To obey any "man made" doctrine, to follow after any creed other than the New Testament, to fail to obey the teachings of the New Testament, to add or to take away from the New Testament, would be against the clear teachings of Christ.

It is a plain teaching of the New Testament that "all authority" had been given to Christ (Matthew 28:18), and that God has spoken through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). Therefore the teachings of Christ are the only logical and safe teachings to follow.

Members of the Church of Christ believe that salvation is a free gift of God's grace and is not procured by man's works (Ephesians 2:8,9). They believe, though, that this gift comes through an active faith which leads one to obedience of all Christ's teachings.

So, we see that churches of Christ today have the same guide that was followed by the Christians of the first century, the teachings of Christ, the New Testament.

## ***What About Homosexuality?***

**DANNY PETTUS**

Like Jesus, Christians are to love the sinner, and hate the sin. Homosexuality is a sin. The Bible says, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

These verses teach that one cannot continue to steal, and inherit heaven. One cannot continue to practice adultery, or homosexuality, and inherit heaven. Jesus demands repentance (Luke 13:3).

Some homosexuals at Corinth, believed in Christ and were baptized into Christ and into his church. Did they continue to be homosexuals? No! The Bible says, "And such were some of you" (1

Corinthians 6:9-11). Not, "Are," but "Such *were* some of you." In the past, they were homosexuals, but not any longer. They had changed. What does God call this change? Repentance!

Both the Old and New Testaments condemn homo-sexuality. This sin carried the death penalty in the old Scriptures. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:13).

The law of Christ, the New Testament, also teaches that homosexuality is sin. Fornicators and sodomites are contrary to sound doctrine (I Timothy 1:9-10).

"Sodomite" is used today to refer to a homosexual. This is because homosexuality was one of the sins of the city of Sodom (Genesis 19). For our learning the Bible says, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

The New Testament condemns homosexuality by saying, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:26-28). The word of God says homosexuals "dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (Romans 1:24).

Several denominations accept, fellowship, and give their approval to homo-sexuality. They teach it is not a sin. They say, "it is different now." These denominations teach that Paul and Jude were influenced by their culture when they wrote, but now times are different.

We may live in a different time and culture, but the Lord who cannot lie said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Peter said, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever" (I Peter 1:24-25).

God is eternal, and so is his word! Men make laws that become outdated, but God is not a man! His word is to all generations. Every generation is to pass the word on to the next generation (II Timothy 2:2).

There are different cultures; However, culture does not change the word of God. The word of God changes culture! This change is called repentance! Man must not change the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19). We must allow the Bible to change us!

The forty men, who wrote the Bible, wrote it by divine guidance. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).

The commandments these men of God wrote are the Lord's! The apostle Paul said, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37).

Those who try to justify women preaching, ignore these verses. In doing so, they show disrespect for the word of God! Those who try to justify homosexuality, ignore the same verses, and in doing so, they show disrespect for the word of God!

If cultures are different now, they must change!

If our nation makes laws, which approve of homo-sexuality, the truth still remains that on Judgment Day, not one person will be judged by those ungodly laws. "We ought to obey God, rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

The Lord will judge us, not man! We will be judged by the word of God. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

No one is born a homosexual. Not all agree with this statement, but learned men such as Pattison, Hauer was, Patton, Karlen, Money, Stoller, Gadpaille, and Bieber do not believe homosexuals are born homosexual. We must agree with these men, not just because they are authorities in this area, but *because they agree with the Bible*, which is the Word of God!

Contrary to some's doctrine, men are not born sinners (Matthew 18:3). It is contrary to the Bible to believe that God would let a person be born a homosexual, only to condemn that person to hell, if they do not stop practicing homosexuality!

"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). There's not a genetic cause of Drunkenness, murder, homo-sexuality, etc. Temptation comes from the devil!

Our upbringing, conditioning, and environment do lead to a person being tempted more with certain sins. What ever the sin is "which doth so easily beset us," God wants us to be a soldier, to put up a good fight, and to come out a winner (Hebrews 12:1; I Timothy 6:12).

Homosexuals at Corinth, Greece, received forgiveness from God after they quit practicing such behavior, and obeyed the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Some in the Lord's church today were living in homosexuality, but now they have been forgiven. Now they are living as Jesus commands.

Regardless of what the sin is, repentance is a must! The Bible says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

The Bible pronounces a woe upon all who say homosexuality is not a sin! "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). "Fools make a mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9). "He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 17:15). "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Proverbs 30:12).

God wants all to be saved (I Timothy 2:4). Jesus died for the sins of every man (Hebrews 2:9; I John 2:2). God's plan of salvation to every man is as follows:

Hear the gospel . . . . John 6:45 Believe the gospel . . Romans 10:9

Confess that belief . . . . Luke 12:8-9

Repent of sins . . . . Acts 3:19

Be Baptized into Christ . . . . Romans 6:3

After obeying God's plan for man, we must not give in to ungodly lusts (I Peter 2:11). God's grace does not extend to those who keep on living a life of sin (Romans 6:1-2). We are to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and live godly (Titus 2:12).

## ***Christ-likeness***

*"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4.*

*A caterpillar becomes like the color of the leaf upon which it feeds. Its color in this way indicates the character of the food it eats. It eats a*

*green leaf, it will be green. If it eats a yellow leaf, the caterpillar will be yellow. The lesson is obvious. The man who lives by every word of Christ will become like Christ.*

## **Predestination**

**NEAL POLLARD**

Many in the denominational world say the Bible teaches that God, before He created the world and mankind, chose a select number of individuals to be saved (generally 144,000 based on a misunderstanding of the book of Revelation). This, their brand of "predestination," is a perversion of the scriptures. To say that God chose "Mr. Jones" before time began, to be saved regardless of how "Mr. Jones" behaved in his body, or whether or not "Mr. Jones" complied with God's scheme of redemption in becoming a New Testament Christian, defies the slew of passages representing God as "no respecter of persons" (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; et al). There is the possibility that "Mr. Jones" can be numbered with the predestined who will live eternally in heaven. The New Testament church for which Christ died believes in "predestination." The Bible clearly teaches it, howbeit so different from the above stance.

### **What Is Predestination?**

Observe what some learned men, who know the original language of the Bible, have written:

1. *Thayer* says that it means, "to predetermine, decide beforehand, to foreordain: in the N.T. of God decreeing from eternity" (THE NEW THAYER'S GREEK-LEXICON, 1981, Hendrickson, pp. 541).

2. *Lipscomb*, in his commentary on Ephesians, writes, "those who enter Christ are foreordained in accordance with the provisions of God's will" (A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES, VOLUME 4, 1939, Gospel Advocate, pp. 26).

3. *Wuest* defines predestination thusly: "to divide or separate from a border or boundary before; To determine or appoint beforehand" (WORD STUDIES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, PART FOUR, 1940, Eerdmans, p. 34).

4. *Coffman*, perhaps, has the best definition of predestination in his commentary on Romans. He says, "The syllable 'pre' is simple

enough and refers only to the time (before the foundation of the world) when God 'destined' certain things to occur. God destined men to be conformed to the image of his Son, the meaning being obviously this that the destiny of every man ever born on earth was that he should obey God and be conformed to the image of God's Son. 'Destined' has special reference to the plan of God, his intention, the objective he had in view when man was created" (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, 1973, Firm Foundation, pp. 316-319).

In summary of those four good definitions, we can understand "predestination" to mean that the destiny of all men was in God's mind eternally. He determined, before man was even created, that he would save those who met the conditions of his grace (conditions we refer to as the "plan of salvation.")

### **The Limitations/Conditions of Predestination**

Conditions are important to contracts, where one party defaults benefits if they fail to meet those conditions. An advanced college course may have as a non-negotiable condition that the student take an introductory course in preparation for it. Most clubs outline conditions for membership, whether they are based on income, interests, occupation, or similar provision. Most every will has conditions to which the potential recipient must comply. The concept of conditions in the eternal plan of God should, then, make perfect sense.

At the grocery store, a sale item will often have as a qualifier, "limit three per customer." The fourth item will not be covered by the sale. A college athlete is limited to four active years of participation in his sport. The speed "limit" is sixty-five on the interstate. If a person driving ninety-five meets a state trooper, he will be penalized for exceeding the legal limit. The concept of limitation, like conditions, is easy for us to understand. God, too, has limitations relating to the salvation He offers.

The conditions of predestination are not foreign to us. We must hear the word of God (Romans 10:17). We must believe the word of God, having faith that Jesus is God's Son (Romans 10:10; John 3:36). We must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). We must confess Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:10). We must be baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27; et al). We must live faithfully until death (Revelation 2:10). If a person meets all of these conditions, he shall be saved. From the beginning, God has intended to save those who do the above.

Thus, the limitations are easy to grasp. As revealed in Mark 16:16, only the baptized believer will be saved. God destined only those who

were baptized into the body of His Son to be saved. This limit of saved ones is not 144,000, as some suppose; rather, the limit of those who will be in heaven are only those who were baptized believers, members of the church for which Christ died, and faithful until death (in addition to those who die before they are accountable to God and those who are mentally incapable of being accountable to God).

### **Passages Which Refer to Predestination**

While many of the passages of the New Testament embody the principles of predestination in God's scheme of redemption, at least five refer to predestination specifically.

1. In Acts 4:28, the phrase "determined before" in regard to the plan of God as He used His enemies to accomplish His eternal plan reveals the idea of predestination.

2. In Romans 8:29, the text says that Christians (28) are the fore-known and predestined ones to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

3. In I Corinthians 2:7, the mystery and the hidden wisdom of God (His plan for saving sinful man) is said to be "foreordained" before the world unto our glory.

4. In Ephesians 1:5, the saints addressed in verse one are the "us" of the fifth verse who are predestinated (foreordained).

5. In Ephesians 1:11, Paul again says "we." The antecedent of this pronoun is Paul, the saints at Ephesus, and all the faithful in Jesus Christ are predestinated.

Clearly, these passages teach that God determined to save everyone who would become a child of God and who would remain faithful until death. Should we believe in pre-destination? Absolutely! However, because the scriptures teach that only those who wear with fidelity the name "Christian" are destined to be saved, we must stand on that understanding of predestination. To believe any other way on this matter would be to our own spiritual hurt (Revelation 22:18,19).

## ***The Last Days***

**MIKE BENSON**

*"Are we living in the 'last days?'"*

Yes. Carefully study the following:

1. The Old Testament prophets said "the mountain of the Lord's house" (i.e., the church) would be "established" (i.e., built) in the "last days." "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). See also Micah 4:1.

2. The church Jesus promised (Matthew 16:18-19), was established on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 2:47), thus the "last days" (i.e., the Christian age) began in Acts 2, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise. In fact, the apostle Peter told his audience that what was happening on that very occasion (in Acts 2), was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy which was to come to pass in the "last days" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-17). Hence, the "last days" began on Pentecost.

3. Thus, we are now living in the "last days," and we have been living in them for nearly 2,000 years. We read, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has *in these last days* spoken to us by His Son . . ." (Hebrews 1:1,2a). Here the Hebrew writer makes it clear that the last days were currently in effect. If the last days were already in effect at that time, then we must conclude that they continue today.

Summary:

- (1) The church was to begin in the "last days";
- (2) The church was established on Pentecost; hence, the "last days" (i.e., the Christian age) began on that occasion;
- (3) Thus, the "last days" continue to today and will not cease until Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

## ***Abel's Hermeneutic***

**WINFRED CLARK**

We are hearing a great deal these days about hermeneutics. This is a word that has to do with "the science of interpretation." It has to do with how one interprets the Bible or God's word.

It seems to me that Abel's hermeneutic, or method of interpretation, should be of interest to us. We are told "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he

obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). We would have to conclude from this passage a number of things. One, God's word was present in the matter. This has to be the case for it is said that Abel, "by faith offered . . .". We all know that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). We are not left to wonder then about whether or not Abel had known the word of God. He would not know to offer anything without God's word, nor would he know what to offer without God's word. Two, he could come to a conclusion as to what he was to offer by what God said. Three, he could also come to a conclusion as to what was excluded as a sacrifice to God.

### **His Hermeneutic Brought him God's Approval**

We note that "the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4). Then we also note, "by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). But why are these things said about Abel? Do they not grow out of the fact that he followed the instructions he had been given concerning the matter of sacrifice? His interpretation of God's word caused him to do that which would please God. We could say his *hermeneutic* enabled him to please God. By his faith in God's word he was pleasing to God. A man can properly interpret what God has to say to us and be well pleasing to him in the process.

This should be encouraging to those of us who live today. We are assured by this fact that we can indeed interpret God's word so we can faithfully do the things he would have us to do. Abel was a human being who was able to make a proper application of God's word and receive the approval of God in the process. That is indeed an encouraging fact.

### **His Hermeneutic Made him Distinctive**

In Abel we have one who would interpret the word of the Lord to mean what it says. When it says "sacrifice," he would take that to mean "sacrifice." When it says of the flock, he would take that to mean "of the flock." He would place no interpretation on it to make it mean any more or any less. But that sort of interpretation would mark him as different from Satan. Remember his dealings with the word of the Lord in the book of Genesis. One has but to move back a single chapter to find another kind of hermeneutic. We find Satan saying, "Yea hath God said, Ye shall not eat of the every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1). We later find Satan saying of God's word, "ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). His hermeneutic led him to say that God did not mean what he said.

This would have to be the case, for God had surely said, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). There is a marked difference in the hermeneutic of Satan and Abel.

We also find a difference between Abel and Cain. Remember that Cain offered a sacrifice that differed from the kind Abel offered (Genesis 4:3). This offering was not accepted by the Lord. It did not have God's approval. But Cain had access to the same word that Abel had. If that were not the case then God would be a respecter of persons! What makes the difference? There could be the difference in hermeneutic. Would Cain interpret God's silence as allowing a substitute for the right kind of sacrifice? You know he could do that. There are men who interpret the silence of God as allowing just about anything they want to introduce into the worship.

Since there is a difference in the hermeneutic of Abel and Satan, and a difference in his hermeneutic and that of Cain, what changes do you think ought to be made? Should Abel give up that which makes him distinctive so as to be like Satan and Cain? Should he adopt a new hermeneutic so as to be like those two? Should he make a change that would allow him to endorse the idea of eating the forbidden fruit or offering an unauthorized sacrifice to God? Should he adopt a method of interpretation that would allow him to be in fellowship with everybody, no matter what their hermeneutic might be? Stop and think a moment: If he adopted a hermeneutic that would allow him to endorse what Cain offered unto God, then he would be endorsing that which God would not accept. Remember, "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Genesis 4:5). Would we advise a person to adopt a hermeneutic that would place him in opposition to God?

Suppose there was going to be a unity meeting between Cain and Abel. Suppose the subject of interpretation came up. Suppose Cain were to say, "the thing that divides us is your hermeneutic." What would you propose that Abel do under the circumstances? Should he lay aside his method of interpretation because Cain has said such divides us? Should an interpretation that has God's endorsement be set aside because someone like Cain was not pleased with such? If Abel laid aside his hermeneutic, should he then adopt the hermeneutic of Cain? If he did would he be any better off than Cain? Would God approve a wrong hermeneutic just because Abel adopted such? But, how could you then have unity? Would it not grow out of Cain's changing his method of interpretation to that which would meet God's approval? If that happened, productive, unity would occur.

## **His Hermeneutic Will Lead To Proper Conclusion**

When Abel was told to offer an animal sacrifice, he had the word of the Lord. Now how would he handle the instructions that were given? How would he interpret these? Would he interpret them in such a way that would cause him to reach a wrong conclusion? It is obvious that one could reach a wrong conclusion, for Cain surely did.

We know that the hermeneutic of Abel led him to the right conclusions, for God approved of what he offered in sacrifice to Him. That is a comforting thought. We can know beyond all doubt that when we interpret God's word to mean what it says and then do what it says is to be done, we will have God's approval. We will know we have reached the right conclusion.

Do you think Abel should have encouraged Cain to adopt the same kind of hermeneutic? Would he really exercise the concern he should if he did not try to encourage Cain to do the same? I think all of us know the answer.

Cain was left without excuse in the matter of interpretation, for he had the example of Abel, and so do we. We have an account of Abel's hermeneutic that will show us how to reach the right conclusions, unify the people of God, and insure God's endorsement. You can't ask for more than this.

## ***Does "Unequally Yoked" Always Apply To Marriage?***

**GLENN COLLEY**

It has long been my view that II Corinthians 6:14 can, but doesn't necessarily, apply to the marriage of a Christian to an unbeliever. The verse says,

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

What is prohibited here? Does this teaching forbid a Christian from marrying an unbeliever? Would it further forbid a believer from *staying* married to an unbeliever? These are good questions.

First, examine key words. "Unequally yoked together" comes from

one Greek word, "HETEROZUGEO." This is the only time the word occurs in the New Testament. Thayer says of this word, "Yoked with a different yoke; used in Leviticus 19:19 of the union of beasts of different kinds, e.g. an ox and an ass . . . to have fellowship with one who is not an equal."

It is important to see that what Paul is forbidding is not being yoked together with unbelievers, but rather being *unequally* yoked together with unbelievers.

Consider then, this interpretation: Paul is teaching that while we naturally interact with unbelievers in a variety of ways, we must not give *any* unbeliever the authority to command us to do wrong. The Lord must *always* be our Master. The picture of being unequally yoked would be one in which the believer was yoked together with a larger, stronger unbeliever who could guide the union at will.

This interpretation makes good sense. If Paul was forbidding ALL relationships or covenants with unbelievers, not only would it be wrong to marry one, it would also be wrong to become a business partner with one or even DO business with one!

Having said this, let's raise this question: *Can* it be a sin for a Christian to marry an unbeliever? The answer, using this verse alone, would have to be *yes*. When the believing mate gives the unbelieving mate the permission to lead him or her into unrighteousness, the believer has sinned. He or she is unequally yoked to that unbeliever. Those of us who have been part of the church for many years have seen this scenario played over and over in the lives of Christians who married unbelievers and then soon forsook the Lord and His church. All Christians must be married to Christ first, and our allegiance belongs to Him.

This is the situation Paul had in mind in the first Corinthians letter, chapter seven. In verse 13 he penned, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

Is the believing wife to leave her unbelieving husband? No. Are they really married in the eyes of God, and therefore their children

legitimate? Yes. Suppose the unbelieving husband bitterly resents the believing wife's Christianity and decides he can't live with her and her righteousness. Is she under bondage to his wishes? Must she follow his ungodliness? The Apostle answers no. If he feels he must depart, let him. That believing wife must remain faithful to Christ even if it means her husband leaves. Incidentally, this situation would not free her to remarry (I Corinthians 7:10-11).

I do not consider the Christian's decision to marry a non-Christian a wise decision. Hard days will likely follow. However, if you are married to an unbelieving mate, I want to encourage you to commit to memory I Peter 3:1-2:

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation by the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation (Faithful Christian lifestyle, GC), coupled with fear."

Hold to the unchanging hand. Seek the conversion of your unbelieving mate, and never give up. Let your mate know that following Christ is the most important goal in your life. One day you may enjoy the warm embrace of that husband or wife as they leave the refreshing waters of baptism. That is my hope and prayer.

## ***We Need To Stay With The Pattern***

**DON WILLIAMS**

"Hold the pattern of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 1:13).

Among our brotherhood today, there are two divergent cries ringing through the land. One cry goes like this: "Enough of the *pattern mentality*." The Bible was not written to give us a "how to do" course in living the Christian life. The book of Acts was written for the *first* century church, but many factors enter into *today's* church that they did not have to deal with. The epistles of Paul were nothing but *love letters*, and they have *no contemporary applications* for the *twentieth century church*. We must *adapt* to our environment, regardless of what that may bring."

*Thankfully*, there is *another* cry that is also being heard. That is a cry of getting back to the "old paths" of doing things according to the

Bible. Those who cry this suggest that within holy writ one can find a *pattern*, a God-approved blueprint for doing those things that would meet with God's approval. Such a blueprint is seen in the early days of Israel, when Moses was instructed by God, "According to all that I shew thee, after the *pattern* of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus 25:9). When Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, used strange and unauthorized fire before God, they were destroyed by fire. God has set forth a prescribed way of offering the incense, and man was not to tamper or try to change this way. Although we do not live under the law of the Old Testament today, (Ephesians 2:15), the principle of doing things in God-prescribed manners carries over to us today. We must remember that the Old Testament was written for our admonition and learning (Romans 15:4).

In the New Testament, we find the *pattern* for the organization of the church: elders, deacons, servants or ministers, and saints or Christians (Philippians 1:1). In God's Word, we find the pattern for worship that the early church used and which is still *useful and binding on us today*—Singing (Colossians 3:16), The Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-29), Prayer (I Timothy 2:1,2), Preaching (Acts 20:7), and Giving (I Corinthians 16:1,2).

The pattern found in the New Testament for a person to become a Christian is just as relevant and *necessary today as it was in the first century*. One must hear and believe the gospel (Romans 10:17). He must be willing to repent of his sins (Luke 13:3). He must be willing to confess his faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:9, 10); and he must be immersed into water for the forgiveness of sins (I Peter 3:21). If one will hold true to the teachings of God, trying not to add to or take away from His word (Galatians 1:6-9), then he can have the assurance of living with God one day in that home of heaven (Titus 1:2).

May we hold to the pattern that God has set for us. "Trust and obey—for there's no other way—to be happy in Jesus—but to trust and obey."

## ***Five Points To Ponder***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

There are several Bible truths that tower above the rest. In fact these extraordinary points sum up the major areas of Scripture. To overlook these epochal matters will cause us to be unbalanced.

spiritually. When we get these monumental landmarks in their proper place we are well on the road to heaven. It is sad to contemplate that millions of people go through life missing out on the majestic themes of godliness. The five points to ponder are these:

God's Sovereignty

Man's Sinfulness

Christ's Death

Our Freedom of Choice

Responsibility of Christians

When we come to realize that our Creator has sublime and absolute authority we cease to be overly concerned with popularity among mankind. We desire to please our Maker above all else (James 4:4-10) and to rescue the perishing lest their sins overwhelm them and the events at Calvary be in vain. When we use our ability to exercise our volition in heaven's direction we realize the deep responsibility we possess as servants of the Savior.

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,

Pilgrim through this barren land

I am weak but Thou art mighty

Hold me with Thy powerful hand."

Several notable passages definitely stress the omnipotence of the Almighty.

Psalm 66:7—He rules by His power forever.

Psalm 93:1—He is clothed with majesty.

Psalm 90:1—He has always been!

Psalm 24:1—The earth belongs to Him.

Romans 13:1—There is no real power but His!

Daniel 3:17—He is able to deliver us.

Proverbs 3:5—We should rely upon Him always.

When we fight against God we shall never prosper (II Chronicles 13:12 and 26:5). Conversely, walking in the glorious light of heaven's sacred counsel guarantees us joyful existence now and abundant life in the world to come (Mark 10:30). A great hymn tells us:

"All the way my Savior leads me

Cheers each winding path I tread

Gives me grace for every trial  
Feeds me with the living bread."

Submission to the Father's will is the wisest decision earthly pilgrims could ever make.

Sadly, rebellious hearts continue in sin when grace could abound. Shameful opposition to the Redeemer's plan brings sorrow incapable of full description. The peace that righteous living provides escapes many folk who choose to wallow in the mire of wickedness (John 5:40).

"Souls in danger, look above Jesus completely saves  
He will lift you by His love Out of the angry waves."

We are exceedingly unwise to allow the wages of sin to oppress and dominate us when we could be free to enjoy the benefits of salvation through Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24; 6:23). Man's sinfulness drove the Savior to the Cross and our stubborn will crucifies the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 6). In the very shadow of Golgotha every sinner should stand, in deepest gratitude, for the gracious gift of cleansing that flowed from the wounded side of our Lord (Zechariah 13:1).

"All to Jesus, I surrender  
Humbly at His feet I bow  
Worldly pleasure all forsaken  
Take me, Jesus, take me now."

Using our freedom of choice (Joshua 24:15) we should rush to the dearest Friend we shall ever know and take a stand for matters divine and eternal. He is our refuge and strength and our help and deliverer as we struggle through this vale of tears and press on to higher ground (Psalm 70:5; Philippians 3:14). We realize our need for heaven's help (Psalm 124:8) and the vanity of pursuing earth's fleeting and shallow treasures. The responsibility of pointing men to God is not a grievous burden but, actually, becomes the quintessence of life for us (John 1:29; Mark 16:15). Let us, therefore, be busily engaged in the glorious work of Jehovah (II Corinthians 6:1) as we march irrevocably toward that final hour. For, after all, our eternal destiny is in the hands of the sovereign God who made the heavens and the earth! Kipling wisely wrote.

"Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

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