

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## Paul's Gospel

Paul had a lot to say about the gospel. The gospel he preached was not his in the sense that it originated with him or that it belonged to him. His gospel, that is, the gospel that he preached, was the gospel of Christ. He said in Romans 15:19 "...that from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." That gospel was the good news that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected from the grave (Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and because of that, it was "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16).

The gospel that Paul preached was the same gospel that Christ commanded the apostles to preach. He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16). Now let's turn to Paul's writings

and see what he preached. We have already read where he said that he had fully preached the gospel of Christ. He said to the Christians at Corinth, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:16). First, he preached the gospel or the word of God (2 Timothy 4:2) so that man might hear and become a believer in God and in Christ as being the Son of God. He said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). Second, he preached the necessity of repentance or that one must turn away from all of his past sins. He said to the idolatrous worshippers of Athens, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30). Third, he said that it was necessary for one to confess his faith in Christ. Again, in speaking to the Romans, he said, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10). Notice that with both belief and the confession, referring to that of confessing Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), that in both cases he said that this was to be done unto salvation. In other words, one is not saved by faith only or by confessing Christ only, but one is to both believe and confess unto salvation or in the direction of salvation. Fourth, he taught that one must be baptized. Let's notice a few scriptures that would indicate this. To begin with, he defines baptism as a burial. (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3,4). Next, he says that it portrays the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. But read the words of Paul, as he says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3,4). Now, what happened in the case of Christ? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 that he died, was buried, and that he arose from the grave. Now notice, what happens to the sinner when he obeys the gospel, and especially when he is baptized, which is the last act of obedience to the gospel. The sinner dies to his sins, he is buried in the waters of baptism, and finally he is brought up out of that watery grave to be a new creature in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore in

doing that then one pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

Now as we continue, we want to notice that this is what Paul did when he obeyed the Lord. According to Acts 9 and 22, he became a believer in Christ, he was penitent of his sins, he acknowledged the Lord, and was asked to be baptized. He himself said that when the gospel preacher, Ananias, came to him, he said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).

As Paul became a follower of Christ and a preacher of his gospel, he also taught that baptism puts one into Christ and into the church. He said, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26,27). On another occasion, he said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). The body that he says that one is baptized into is the church. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23).

On turning through the book of Acts you may not only read of the conversion of Saul or Paul, but you may also read of a number of cases of conversion where Paul was the preacher. For instance, in Acts 16 we read where he converted Lydia and her household and then later how he converted the Philippian Jailor and his household. In both cases they were taught the word of God, they became believers, they repented, acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and were baptized. The same pattern was followed in other conversions.

Paul and Peter preached the same gospel. Look at Acts 2 where Peter and the Apostles preached to the people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The record says that they preached to the people to make believers out of them. Once they became believers and wanted to know what else they should do, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). The record goes on to say, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:40,41). Finally, we are told, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). Now did Paul preach those things, and what Philip and others preached? Exactly.

There was a time when a problem came up at Corinth over who baptized who and the glorying in men. (1 Corinthians 1). Paul condemned their division and showed how Christ was the saviour, he had but one church, and that they should all be one in the Lord. But he went on to show how that he had not been sent to baptize but to preach the gospel. Some misunderstand this and conclude that Paul was saying that preaching the gospel was important but that it was not necessary to be baptized. Not at all. Rather, he was but showing the order of things. First, his job was to preach the gospel. Now, on preaching the gospel, and there were those who wanted to obey the gospel, which included the act of baptism, then he was ready to baptize them, and he did baptize some of them. Others had baptized some of them. So he was not saying that baptism was not necessary, but simply showing the order of things, and that baptism was meaningless unless the gospel had been preached, that they had heard it, and obeyed it from the heart, and in doing so they would be baptized at the proper time and for the right purpose.

Finally, Paul taught that there was but one gospel, that he had preached it, and woe be unto one, even though he be an angel from heaven, if he preached another gospel. He said to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than

that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9).

So what about us today? What gospel must we preach? That is easy. We are to preach the gospel of Christ. We are to preach the same gospel that Paul, Peter, and all other faithful gospel preachers preached in their day. As Paul said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:9).

As we know, there are many different gospels being preached today. That is, one preaches that you can be saved one way and another says that you can be saved in another way. Take warning, and believe not everything you hear, even though it is said to be from the Bible. It is obvious that many are preaching error. This emphasizes again our need to return to the gospel, to the one gospel, that we read of in the scriptures. Regardless of what man says, the Lord and his way is right.



## The Burning Book

These days we hear and read much about fire. Recently there have been several incidents of fire in which properties worth millions of rupees was destroyed, several thousand people were rendered homeless or shelterless, besides many people died or were seriously injured. In Delhi we remember the fire of Ansal Bhavan, Gopala Tower, and Sidhartha Hotel, some of the major fire incidents which took place in recent time. Of course, there have been other devastating fire incidents in all metropolitan cities of our country and around the world every where. Seems like such ravaging fires are becoming more frequent in our present time because more and more tall buildings with several storeys

are being built in all big cities for accomodating more offices and shops. I also remember the fire which had taken the toll of more than four hundred people in a cinema house in Iran. Then there have been horrid incidents of fire in various hotels and clubs and other such places in the past. It is always horrifying to hear or read about such calamities.

In the Bible also we read much about fire. Through prophet Jeremiah God has warned His people "Is not my Word like a fire?" (Jeremiah 23:29). The Bible is the book of the Word of God, that is, it contains God's Word, and His Word is like a fire. Describing God, the writer of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament wrote, "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29). The point is that just as fire purges and purifies so will God's word purge and purify those who would try to live according to His will, but those who reject God's will, the fire of His Word will consume and destroy them. (1 Corinthians 3:11-13).

In Genesis chapter 19 we read about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The people of these two cities, the Bible says, had become so corrupt and sinful that God rained brimstone and fire on them to destroy them.

Then in Exodus chapter 3 we read about the burning bush. There the angel of the Lord had appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush, the bush there burned with fire, but it was not consumed. God there wanted to send Moses to Egypt for freeing His people from the slavery. But before Moses would do that it was necessary for him to see a miracle to be convinced that the one who was sending him was the Lord Himself.

When God's people came out of Egypt by His power, God "went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night." (Exodus 13:21). The fire was there, again, to lead them.

In the book of Leviticus chapter 10 and verses 1 & 2 we read about Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. In verse 2 there we

read: "So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." The reason was that they had offered profane fire which the Lord had not commanded them to offer to Him in His worship, according to the Old Testament Law. (Numbers 16:45). They had disobeyed God's command.

At I Kings 18 we read an interesting story about fire. During the reign of Ahab many people had become worshipper of Baal. Elijah was God's prophet at that time. One day he came to all the people and challenged them: "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." Then he suggested to the worshippers of Baal that you bring your offering and I will bring my offering and we will lay our offerings on the accumulated wood, but we will put no fire under it. Then he said, "You call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God". All people agreed to that. Elijah gave them the first opportunity to call on their gods. So they built an altar and put lots of wood on it then they laid their offering on the wood. Then they began to pray to Baal, saying, "O Baal, hear us." They began in the morning and until evening there was no answer. The record says, "They cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them." But there was no answer. Now it was Elijah's turn. He built the altar, put wood on it and laid his sacrifice on the wood. Then he asked people there to bring as much water as they could, and when they did, he had much water poured on his sacrifice and the wood. Then Elijah prayed to God and said, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are the Lord God, and that you have turned their hearts back to you again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

Now, we turn to the New Testament and there we read about John the Baptizer saying, to people, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier

than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3:11). He was speaking of Christ, who baptized the apostles with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4; John 14:25,26; 16:13,14; Acts 1:5), and who will come, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Christ said, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:41,42). He also said, "And if your hand and foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." (Matthew 18:8,9).

The Bible describes hell as the lake of fire which burns forever and ever. In the book of Revelation the apostle John wrote, "And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever . . . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:10,15). Again, he said, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8). Death means a separation. In physical death man's soul is separated from his body, but in hell souls will live separated from God forever and ever. Hell is therefore described as being the second death.

Finally, according to the Bible, the day will come when our world and all things that are in it will be destroyed by fire. We read, "But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment



and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." (2 Peter 3:7-11).

In these verses we are told that God has appointed a day when He will cause the earth and all that is in it and the sky and whatever is in it to be burned up by fire. How will this happen? We do not know. But Christ said that as the flood came in the days of Noah, so His coming will be, suddenly and unexpectedly. (Matthew 24:37). John said, after everything will be over, he who does the will of God shall abide for ever. (1 John 2:17).

## Facts in Regard to Alcoholic Beverages

W.D. Jeffcoat

One of the truly great needs of the present day is Christian homes. Nothing can take the place of the training and influence which comes from such homes. The tendencies of modern society, however, are to not build homes, but to destroy homes which now exist. The problem to some extent can be attributed to a lack of respect for the word of God in regard to the imbibing of alcoholic beverages. Indeed no society has escaped the multiple problems which have been presented by the consumption of ethyl alcohol.

In the present day of scientific technology and high-pressure living, those problems remain and perhaps are more complex than

ever before. Some of the immediate results of the use of alcoholic beverages are widely recognized, while many basic issues are hidden beneath prejudice, misunderstanding and ignorance. The modern world is rapidly casting aside all restraints and removing all righteous standards. If those who espouse the cause of Christ follow suit, they will surely reap terrible consequences.

God is the author of natural, moral and spiritual laws. The Bible provides ample proof that spiritual laws cannot be rejected without punishment from God. Persons do not break God's laws, but simply break themselves against God's laws by imbibing intoxicating beverages. If the matter is placed in its proper perspective and the Bible is allowed to be the source of authority, the issue will be settled correctly.

### **Rational Thinking**

Society imposes certain restrictions on every person, and those who will be honorable must respect the rules. In civilized society persons cannot make progress without rules. Rules inhibit, but they also protect humanity. Rules make it possible to know what to expect of others, and from rules others learn what to expect of us. The imbibing of alcoholic beverages is sinful because alcohol assumes command of the brain, and persons are rendered incapable of having rational thoughts. Without rational thinking, there can be no respect for rules.

### **Stages of Wine**

Wine may exist in three states: (1) New, fresh; (2) fermented non-alcoholic; and (3) fermented alcoholic. Age and development determines which. The Bible mentions "new wine." It implies fermented wine—a state new wine would reach in old bottles. It also implies alcoholic state—when it would produce intoxication. Liquids may be fermented without being intoxicating. In fact, vinegar from wine, which has experienced acetous fermentation is not intoxicating. Zymase, an element of yeast, may produce (1) carbon dioxide and water, if with oxygen; (2) without oxygen, alcohol and carbon dioxide, or (3) simply lactic acid, as in sour milk. Thus, *oinos*, (the major Greek term for grape juice) is not necessarily alcoholic.

## **Methods of Preservation**

Persons in antiquity were very familiar with methods by which vinous fermentation could be prevented. Grape juice contains two leading ingredients: sugar and gluten. Chemical elements in sugar are carbon, hydrogen and oxygen; gluten is composed of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Nitrogen, an unstable element, constantly seeks union with other elements. In so doing, it hastens the decay of vital organisms and tends to the formation of new substances. The decay of the gluten in grape juice affords the necessary conditions for the reception and growth of yeast germs, which are constantly floating in the air. In the presence of yeast the sugar is gradually converted into alcohol, while carbonic acid escapes from the liquid.

There are a number of methods by which this process may be prevented and the grape juice preserved fresh and unfermented. Briefly stated, (1) the gluten may be separated from the other elements; (2) the moisture may be removed from the grapes; (3) air may be excluded from the juice; (4) the juice may be kept at a temperature below forty degrees fahrenheit; and (5) fermentation may be prevented by sulphur fumigation. Various ancient secular writers, who refer to each of these methods, include Pliny, Varro, Golumella, Cato, Horace, and Plutarch. Not only these writers, but many others, can be cited to testify regarding the fact that the ancients possessed the knowledge of preserving wines sweet throughout the year. If wines were alcoholic, they would preserve themselves. The peculiarity was in preserving them sweet since the juice loses its sweetness when, by fermentation, the sugar is converted into alcohol. Thus, to preserve wines sweet throughout the year meant that they were preserved unfermented.

That there was an intoxicating wine known to the ancients is not denied. The Bible and ancient secular writers are clear in their denunciation of such wines. The object has been to show that there was, as well, a wine which did not intoxicate. By looking at it in this light, the harmony of otherwise seemingly conflicting passages in the Bible can be seen. Some passages condemn wine as the cause of woe, sorrow and redness of eyes.

Others commend wine as one of the greatest blessings from God, the cause of joy and the cause of gladness.

### **Biblical Interpretation**

The common wine used in Palestine in the first century was the simple juice of the grape. The word *wine* is employed today to denote the kind of liquor which passes under that name—always containing a considerable portion of alcohol—not only the alcohol produced by fermentation, but alcohol added to increase its potency. Persons have absolutely no right to take the present usage of the word in interpreting the Bible. They should endeavor to place themselves in the exact circumstances of those times, determine what idea the word conveyed to those who used it then, and apply that definition to the word today.

### **Concluding Observations**

In light of the tremendous problem inherent in the consumption of alcoholic beverages, men should preach the word of Christ, equip themselves for its defense, and adorn the doctrine of God in their personal lives. Men should be afraid to be ashamed to teach what God would have them teach, and on the other hand, they should be ashamed to be afraid to suffer the possible ill consequences of such teaching!

It is indeed regrettable when persons are allowed to propagate theories and philosophies which are contrary to the eternal verities of God with scarcely a voice or pen raised in opposition! Those who persist in defending such activities, whether by so-called social drinking or otherwise, and those who sanction such sins by cowardly silence, along with those who stand wholeheartedly for the truth will one day appear before the author of truth. Then the judgment of God will prevail! Dedicated Christians are diametrically opposed to the imbibing of alcohol as a mere beverage in any form and to any degree! "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise." The Bible plainly teaches this. The issue therefore is settled for

all persons who respect and consequently accept the teaching of the Bible.

## Walking on Holy Ground

Roger Jackson

In Exodus 3:1-6 the account of Moses and the burning bush is recorded. As the prophet turned to see the wonder, God spoke to him and said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We do not know where that plot of ground is located, and it is just as well. In cases wherein men have supposedly found ground once covered by the steps of Deity they have worshipped it and built great edifices over it. The ground was holy because God was there.

What makes a piece of real estate valuable? A lot of things contribute to the value of land, but some include what it contains on it or in it, the location, its history or who owns or owned it. One could not purchase any part of the Shiloh battle ground in Tennessee because of its history. Cemeteries do not catch our eyes until we deposit the remains of a loved one in the silent city of the dead. For what amount would you sell the grave site of a loved one? A piece of land may contain a gold mine or oil. Most of us would mortgage all we own in order to purchase such a piece of real estate with its mineral rights (Matt. 13:44). The Graceland mansion is located on about five acres of land in Memphis. In the countryside just twenty miles south of it one might purchase land its size for no more than five or ten thousand dollars. If the Graceland mansion and land went up for sale how many millions would it take to purchase it? Its price is great because of the famous man who owned it.

The most sinister piece of real estate in the world is the "potter's field" purchased with the money Judas received for betraying the Lord (Matt. 27:1-8). It would seem that no one wanted to walk across land with such an infamous history. The

most expensive piece of real estate ever appraised is not the Graceland property, but an acreage whose size is undetermined. It was productive, but contained no gold mine or oil well. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully . . ." (Luke 12:16). What made the ground so expensive? It cost its owner his soul, the most valuable thing in the world (Matt. 16:26). Even in that text Jesus says you could use it to purchase the entire earth and still get a bad deal. The most worthless piece of real estate is described in Hebrews 6:7,8. It is the ground upon which God sends his sunshine and rain, and yet it produces thorns. It is ground fit for cursing (not profanity). It is located in the heart of every man (Luke 8:5-8). The most valuable land which men can possess is not even located on this mundane sphere. It is urban, perfectly planned, garnished with gems, paved with gold, ruled by God's presence, purchased in advance of possession, and transferred at the cost of one's sins (Rev. 21:1-4; Matt. 6:19).

Spiritually speaking, all men stand on some kind of ground. That figure is usually used to indicate our position on some issue of life. In the same manner all men are walking on some ground, and that figure is usually used to indicate the kind of life they are living. What kind of ground is under your feet?

### Neutral Ground

The vast majority of people today stand on neutral ground. They want the front seat at the ball game, the back seat of the worship assembly, and the middle of the road on every issue. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof . . ." But why? They did NOTHING! They were neutral when there was a battle to be fought (1 Tim. 6:12). Many in the church today want to enjoy the comforts of a serene assembly designed and patterned after the Bible (Heb. 8:5), and free from "molestation." But, they scream and condemn men today who fight the battles against innovations and threats mounted against that wonderful ship of Zion (Jude 3). Yes, we want a pure church and worship (Eph. 5:23-25), but we must often get off of neutral ground and fight for it. There is no such thing as neutral ground in God's service (Matt. 12:30). We cannot wash

our hands of the matter (Matt. 27:24). Neutral people make God sick (Rev. 3:15-17).

### **Unholy Ground**

The ground upon which the devil's servants walk is unholy ground (John 8:44; I John 2:15-17). The road to that ground is clearly marked. A man first walks toward it, finds himself in it, and sits down in contentment (Psa. 1:1). The progress is measured also in James 1:13-15. It is possible for a man to think he is progressing toward holy ground when, in reality, he is destined for unholy ground (Matt. 15:1-3). When we follow after the traditions of men instead of the will of God, excusing it on the basis that a lot of good is being done by unauthorized religions, it will not change the situation of sinfulness (Matt. 15:9). Even those who were once on holy ground may have left it (Luke 15:13). The progress toward this land of losers is slow, but sure, and the Bible warns all of us to be aware of it (2 Thess. 2:3,4; 2 John 9-11).

### **Pseudo—Holy Ground**

There is such a thing as "false" holy ground. The matter is one of literal earth. Many so-called "Christians" today think Palestine is holy ground. We even call it "The Holy Land." It is wonderful to have the opportunity to visit Palestine, but the land is no more holy than any other. Sectarians call their auditoriums "sanctuaries" implying they are holy. Many Christians have adopted this language of Ashdod and others equally untaught came to the marvelous conclusion that the entire building was so "sanctified" that it was a sin to eat therein. When we showed them that such is not the significance of 1 Corinthians 11:22 they changed their opposition to "social activities" opposition. Now they have added an "emergency" clause and an "evangelistic clause." The latter permits social meals in the building as long as it can be connected with evangelism. It is truly amazing to watch false doctrine go through its evolution process. Like lies, false doctrine must go from one extreme to another to cover its tracks across pseudo-holy ground.

## **True Holy Ground**

True holy ground is more than "God's Little Acre." It is real and plentiful. It flows with greater rewards than "milk and honey." It resists erosion, the baking rays of the sun and confusion of title. Truth is holy ground. Proverbs exalts it throughout its pages and Jesus said the word of God is truth (John 17:17). The truth is not found in philosophy or feelings, but in the Bible, which is all the truth (John 16:13). There is not a single truth essential to our salvation that is not in the Bible. It is holy ground and infidelic "scholars" of the higher criticism order should keep their hands off of it as well as those who produce false versions that claim to be the Bible. The Bible produced the church, and that makes the church holy ground (Matt. 16:18; 1 Tim. 3:15). Liberals who want to change its nature to social and its worship to confusion need to stand clear—that is holy ground. The destiny of the church is God's heaven. If all the mundane real estate we own were destroyed we would only go home to possess that which we acquired title to in our loving service to God, obedience to his word and dependence on his marvelous grace (2 Cor. 5:1).

## **Why Study the Old Testament?**

**Garry K. Brantley**

It has been the experience of this particular writer to observe a growing lack of appreciation for the Old Testament and its proper place with regard to its study by the New Testament Christian. Those that have the attitude that the Old Testament is of no benefit to the soul salvation of man today, thus, greatly neglecting to examine it, are restricting themselves from a proper balance of spiritual food that is vital to the growth and development of every Christian (2 Pet. 2:2). The Old Law was nailed to the cross, having been taken away (Col. 2:14) for the express purpose that the New Law should be established (Heb. 10:9). Yet, the Old Testament has a proper place with regard to the New Testament Christian even as the Holy Spirit through Paul affirmed when he wrote: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime



were written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Therefore, though *all* men today are amenable to the law of Christ (Mark 16:15-16), there are pertinent principles revealed in the Old Testament which are there recorded for *our* learning and thus, should not be neglected. It is the purpose of this article to set forth certain matters pertaining to the Christian, having been furnished by the Old Testament with the desire that, when such matters are contemplated, a deeper appreciation and meditation of the Old Testament will be gained by all.

### **A Proper Knowledge of the Old Testament is Imperative for A Proper Understanding of the New**

It is often accurately observed that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. This principle is stated in the Hebrews writer's declaration that the law was a shadow (*SKIAN*) of good things to come and not the very image (*EIKON*) of the things (Heb. 10:1). The contrast between the "shadow" wherein only a "rude outline or adumbration" is made and the "very image" or "ideal pattern" is here made (*Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament, Vol. IV*, pg. 495). Thus, the Old Law, though only a reflection of the gospel dispensation, contributed a great deal to the revelation of God pertaining to the redemption of fallen man and should be given proper meditation.

Those who are serious students of God's word realize the great importance of a background of the Old Testament for there are manifold references in the New Testament thereto. Many passages, chapters, and even books cannot properly be understood nor expounded without a suitable background of the Old Testament. To illustrate: the book of Hebrews, being a treatise of exhortation to faithfulness to certain Jews that were inclined to forsake the new Covenant and revert back to the Law of Moses with its imperfect sacrifices (Heb. 10), makes references to the Old Law that truly could be called legion, for they are many. How could a New Testament Christian properly understand and appreciate heroic Hebrews without a background of the Old Law? The

answer necessarily obligates the Christian to a thorough study of the ancient admonitions.

### **Great Principles Are Illustrated in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament reveals certain truths and appropriately illustrates pertinent principles that are imperative to the development of a Christian. The age old question as to the origin of man is answered in the historical book of Genesis, the great book of beginnings. As Moses recorded the creation of the world and all that in them is in six literal days, it is revealed that on the sixth day God made man in his own image, thus, being the crowning apex of creation (Gen. 1:26; 2) and thus, setting to rest all questions with regard to the origin of the species. The Old Testament supplies a gold mine of precious precepts that each Christian, living in an age of atheism with its destructive averments of organic evolution, should mine regarding this subject.

The awful consequences of sin, which all would do well to observe, in this life and the one to come, is vividly portrayed therein with the origin of sin revealed in Genesis 3, and its subsequent ruin of mankind. Because of sin, which necessarily implies a law (Rom. 4:15; Gen.2:15-17), Adam and Eve were driven from the splendor of Eden. They were separated from the life sustaining tree of life, thus bringing death, both physical and spiritual, into the world (Gen. 3:22-24). On that gloomy day, as Adam and Eve cast their wishful eye to the splendor of Eden in despair, truly the awfulness of transgressing God's law became a reality. Having an understanding of the aforementioned principle, the New Testament Christian would endeavor not to transgress the Law of God, realizing its terrible consequences.

While we may observe the awfulness of sin during this darkened history of man, we may also observe the love and mercy of God exhibited in the hope-producing promise of a saviour (Gen. 3:15) and the institution of a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin (Gen. 2:21, 4:4). The protective providence of God is seen throughout the Old Testament in the raising up of the nation of Israel from the seed of Abraham, culminating in the fulness of time when Jesus the Christ was born of a woman made under the

law (Gal. 4:4), the ultimate fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:16).

The principle of obedience to God's law is illustrated continuously in the Law of Moses, which principle all would do well to heed! The simple law of obedience may be observed in the specific command to Noah to build an ark out of gopher wood. In following specifically what God said, his family was saved from the flood (Gen. 6-9). God's disdain for violating his law is vividly portrayed in the consumption of Nadab and Abihu with fire from heaven (Lev. 10:2). The justice of God is revealed in his rewarding the obedient and his punishment of the defiant (Deut. 30). All Christians would do well to delight in the Old Testament and meditate thereupon. Important truths and great principles are revealed therein which are beneficial to living the Christian life (1 Cor. 10:11-13).

### **Old Testament—Proper Place to Begin Teaching Jesus as the Christ**

To further answer our interrogation, "Why study the Old Testament", we should observe that the Old Testament is an appropriate point of commencement in instructing one about Jesus as the Messiah. It has been observed that there are at least 333 specific prophecies in the Old Testament that are fastidiously fulfilled in Jesus. With such a wealth of attestation to the messiahship of Christ, we ask, "What better place to begin a study of Jesus than the Old Testament?"

Our Lord realized the force of the Hebrew scriptures regarding his identity as he instructed the Pharisees to "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). The Ethiopian eunuch was returning from Jerusalem, reading Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 53). Having asked Philip to aid him in the understanding of this sacrificial section of prophecy, Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. (Acts 8:26-38). Consider also the manner of the apostle Paul as he would reason with the Jews in the cities wherein he travelled "out of the scriptures (that is, the

Old Testament scriptures) opening and alleging that this Jesus . . . is Christ" (Acts 17:2-3).

The heresy of an accidental death of the Christ held by the highly imaginative Premillennialists, is gallantly refuted in the Old Testament. From the Old Testament scriptures the need of the suffering of Christ is reverently revealed (Isa. 53; Luke 24:46-47). Indeed the Old Testament, when properly handled, sets forth Jesus as the Christ even as a lamp shining in a dark place. We, as Christians, must study the Old Testament in order to properly portray Jesus the Christ as "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

### Misuse of the Old Testament

Though the Old Testament is a vital element to the understanding of the redemption of mankind from sin, we must properly divide or handle aright the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and not be guilty of misusing God's word.

There are many abuses and misuses of the Old Testament prevalent in the religious world today. There are numerous imaginative exegetes that wrest the precious prophecies of the Old Testament to their own destruction. Many preachers, so called, endeavor to predict world events and to identify the fulfillment of prophecy with contemporary occurrences. Such is a flagrant violation of a proper interpretation of prophecy. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 2:21-22). When the word of God makes a statement regarding an event that occurred, and that event is said to fulfill a particular prophecy, then we can rest assured that the fulfillment thereof occurred on the basis that the Holy Spirit, who gave the prophecy, so revealed! Without this proper principle employed to interpret prophecy, such ridiculous interpretations as the rationing of tires during World War II as supposedly predicted by Isaiah (3:18) to the bombing of Libya by America as fulfillment of prophecy, would be warranted. We realize that this does not exhaust the subject regarding guidelines to interpret prophecy, but the above is one that must be observed.

Other abuses of the Old Testament is exhibited by those who attempt to use the Ancient Oracles as authority for sinful practices. To illustrate: When confronted with the subject of adultery, many will use the example of David and Solomon as their authority (right to act) to live in such a sinful relationship with the delusion that if David and Solomon had more than one wife, we can too. Our Lord, however, answered such unwarranted quibbles once and for all as he stated the universal principle from the beginning was that God intended *one* man for *one* woman for life (Matt. 19:1-9) with the *only* exception for scriptural divorce and subsequent remarriage on the part of the innocent being fornication. We, having the complete revelation of God (1 Cor. 13:10; Jude 3) and having all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:2) including the above principle given, are in error when we attempt to support adultery by examples in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is misused as well when it is employed to support the erroneous practice of mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship. One of the main arguments is based upon the actions of David as he used instruments of music in his worship to God with the conclusion that because of such, so can we. Who would affirm as a major premise that "all things that David did in worship to God are things that we may acceptably engage in while worshipping God?" No one, with an ounce of reasoning would dare affirm such a proposition. As noted earlier, the Old Testament sets forth the principle of obedience to God's law. We are to sing, which is a specific type of music, therefore all else is excluded because there is no authority for such (viz. guitars, organs, pianos, etc.) I have often wondered, if Nadab and Abihu could address an assembly wherein the discussion of obedience to God's law was the topic, would they not exclaim, "Offering strange fire to Jehovah is not acceptable!"

### Conclusion

The Old Testament, when appropriately applied, supplies a wealth of beneficial principles that the Christian cannot afford to neglect while striving to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11). Why not begin now and search the pages of God's revelation in the Old Testament? Strive for the

godly life of Enoch, the humble obedience of Noah, the fruitful faith of Abraham and the persistent patience of Job with the realization that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

## Eternal Punishment

Leon Crouch

Eternal punishment is not a pleasant subject, but it is a part of biblical teaching. It is also a subject which has been the cause of strong arguments among professed Christians.

Modern discussions of the topic are easily divided into three main forms: universalism, annihilationism and the traditional view of actual eternal conscious punishment. Let us note each briefly.

Universalism: the idea that everyone will eventually be saved is at least as old as Origen, who died about A.D. 254. Since Origen's time, this idea has been presented in various forms. It is the official teaching of the Unitarian Universalist Association, which was formed in 1961. However, there is no scripture which must be interpreted to mean all will be saved nor one which naturally teaches this idea taken in its context.

Annihilationism is sometimes called "conditional immortality." This view argues that since God only gives immortality to those who are His at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50ff.), all others are mortal and at death are annihilated. Since the mid-19th century this teaching has had some degree of popularity. It has recently been given new emphasis by Edward Fudge in his book, *The Fire That Consumes*, and in some articles in respected periodicals.

The biblical teaching is clear that sin will be punished (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 10:15; John 5:28,29; Romans 2:5-11), and the duration of that punishment is often expressed in the New

Testament by the word *aion* or one of its derivatives (e.g., Matthew 18:8; 25:41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). *Aion* means "an age." Its use for the never-ending "age to come" gave the meaning "eternal" or "everlasting" to the corresponding adjective *aionion*.

These words are used to refer to "the King of the ages" (1 Timothy 1:17), of "the eternal God" (Romans 16:26), and to ascribe glory to God "forever" (2 Corinthians 11:31). It would be almost impossible to convey the concept of endless duration more strongly. The use of these terms to express the eternity of God shows conclusively that they do not mean limited duration necessarily. It is important to notice that the same adjective is used of eternal punishment as is used of eternal life (Matthew 25:46). The punishment is as eternal as the life. One is no more limited than the other.

The suggestion that "eternal punishment" simply means that the punishment is irreversible does not seem to harmonize with the above statements from Scripture. Of course, the punishment is irreversible, but the Scriptures indicate that it is also continuous, conscious existence.

Jesus described hell as "unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43) and as a place "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47,48). He also spoke about fearing God because He has power to cast into hell after He has killed (Luke 12:5). Jesus spoke of a sin that will not be forgiven "either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:32).

John wrote, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Jesus spoke of the door being shut (Matthew 25:10), of some being cast out into the outer darkness; in that place "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12), and of an impassable gulf after this life (Luke 16:26). To those who are on His left at the judgment, the Lord said, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

The punishment for the devil and his agents is described as torment day and night forever and ever (Revelation 12:10). All of these verses, especially the last, signify "not extinction in opposition to existence, but torturous existence in the society of evil in opposition to life in the society of God" (G.R. Beasley-Murray).

It is true that the descriptive terms for hell are figurative. It is also true that the figures impart information that must be taken in harmony with the context and given the most natural meaning unless there is good reason not to do so. There is no good reason to deny the clear indication of Jesus' teaching.

The mention of "fire" in connection with eternal punishment does not necessitate the idea that "fire consumes", therefore, the wicked are annihilated. Was the bush seen by Moses consumed by the fire (Exodus 3:2)? Certainly not! We cannot allow human experience and wisdom to limit our understanding of God.

The claim that eternal torment serves no useful purpose but exhibits a vindictiveness incompatible with the love of God in Christ also assumes that man can know and understand God fully. Such is not the case (Isaiah 55:8,9). Such claims tend to make man more loving and kind than God.

We do not fully understand a number of things in God's Word. Concerning the matter under discussion, our feelings influence us and on occasion may affect our thinking. We rejoice at the prospects of heaven and tend to shrink from the pains of hell. Yet, the one mystery is as much within the range of our intellect as the other. Both express something of the immeasurable expression of His infinite holiness. Let us remember that the question is not how men respond to a biblical teaching, but what Jesus and the New Testament writers actually say about it.

It is true that the Bible never says, "The soul is immortal." However, the idea of continual existence is indicated, and that is not necessarily the same as immortality.

Immortality has to do with a kind of existence which is in fellowship with God. The eternal part of man is inherent in his



makeup. He is created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26,27). That likeness has not been lost (James 3:9).

When Scripture speaks of the wicked being destroyed or perishing, the meaning is not that they cease to exist. The destruction spoken of is the loss of well-being, not the loss of being itself. No word used to describe the final state of the wicked must indicate annihilation. Neither is that the natural meaning of any such word in its context.

The very nature of God demands that the wicked be punished. That punishment is spoken of in Scripture consistently in terms which show it to be terrible, conscious and non-ending. This warning is one motive for being what God wants us to be (Acts 17:30, 31; Romans 2:4-11).

## Four Things Missing in Heaven

Andrew M. Connally

In Revelation chapters twenty-one and twenty-two we read a lengthy and lovely description of heaven. The language is designed to stir our hearts, arouse our interest and to cause us to desire to go there no matter what the cost. But in studying these two chapters it is evident that at least four things are missing in heaven and it is evident they are missing by God's design. God does *not* want them there! God will not allow them to be there! In fact, by their very nature it is *impossible* for them to be in heaven.

### NO SIN THERE

First, there is no sin there. Sin has been left for hell. "Nothing unclean or that is an abomination or a lie" is allowed in heaven. Sin has been a curse to the entire human race since Adam and Eve were in the garden. It resulted in the first disobedience to God (Gen. 3), and caused the first murder (Gen. 4), and has been found in the life of every accountable being ever since, except in the life of Jesus Christ, the Sinless One. Sin has cursed our

world with all the immoralities man has ever devised. Sin is responsible for all the wars, crimes, abortions, child abuse, pornography, wife-swapping, tax evasion, and religious error found in our world. Sin is a cruel task master (John 8:44; Rom. 6:16-18), and keeps the whole world in bondage (1 John 5:19). Thank God sin will be missing in heaven!

### NO SICKNESS THERE

Secondly, there will be no sickness there Because of the sin of Adam and Eve they were driven from the garden and their bodies began to degenerate and all manner of sickness became endemic to man. The "halt, the maimed, the lame and the blind" are found in all societies of the world. Periodically, one epidemic after another sweeps our land and untold millions die. Some death are horribly painful and ugly. Men constantly battle the germs, viruses and illnesses of his world, but ultimately most of us die from one sickness or another. But, thank God no sickness will enter heaven!

### NO SORROW THERE

Thirdly, there will be no sorrow there. Just as sin and sickness are common to man, so is sorrow. Happiness, in our lives, is like a few, scattered raindrops on a dusty street, while sorrows, of a hundred kinds, plague our days. We cry over so much in our world! There are world conditions, personal problems and mental anxieties that wreak their havoc on our lives bringing sorrow to our heart. Quite often, to no avail, we simply have to suffer. Thank God there will be no sorrow in heaven!

### NO SEPARATION THERE

And finally, there will be no separation ever again. All separations are reserved for life and the judgment. After that, once heaven is entered there will be no separation ever again. One of the most disappointing things about life is the constant separations that take place. Some are temporary, some are permanent. Jobs, families, wars and death constantly separate us and are a burden to be borne. But once heaven is entered no further separations shall ever be known. We do not propose to know how

total and complete happiness can be realized in heaven after being separated from family and friends at the judgment, but we trust God who will make it all right, but thank God there will be no separations in heaven!

That heaven is a prepared place for prepared people is taught by God (Cf., John 14:1-3; Matt. 25:31-46). Our task is to get ready by obeying the gospel (John 8:24; Luke 13:3-5; John 3:3-5), and living faithful till death (Rev. 2:10). When eternity is ushered in all the joys and happiness an infinite God can provide will be ours. And thank God four things will be missing in heaven! There will be no sin, sickness, sorrow or separation there.

## Sin in the Camp

**Richard Kirkland**

When the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and entered into the land of promise they were ready to do the will of the Lord. Led by Joshua and assisted by God they marched against the great city of Jericho. God commanded them to encompass the city daily for six days and seven times on the seventh day. When they completed their march on the seventh day the priests gave a blast in the rams horns, the people gave a shout, the walls of the city fell, and Israel gained a victory!

Fired up by the victory at Jericho they quickly moved on to Ai. Since Ai was a small place only three thousand men went against the city. But they were surprised! The men of Ai sent Israel's soldiers packing and killed thirty-six of their best men along the way. Joshua fell prostrate before the Lord and petitioned him for a reason. The reason as revealed by the Lord was "sin in the camp" (Josh. 7:10-12).

The church is the Lord's army (Eph. 6:11-17), and Christ is the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). The church engages in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12), but sometimes falls before her enemies. Why? Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). The problem that brought failure to the army of Israel signals defeat for the church of God. Our greatest enemy is "sin in the camp."

If the church of our Lord is to march from victory unto victory we must rid ourselves of sin. Christians are to be dead unto sin, no longer living therein (Rom. 6:2). Christians have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24). The Lord cannot use that which is defiled. The right battle plan, with unfit soldiers, is doomed to failure. "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

## **"If I Am Lost"**

**Richard Amey**

Life is uncertain but death is sure. I must prepare for eternity. It is irrational to live not recognizing God's great salvation. Amos beseeched Israel to return to God. They were as a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet they had not returned to the Lord. (Amos 4). I constantly think about the Lord's church, and its salvation and the privileges of being a Christian. I have been snatched from the fire.

If I am lost, I will not be alone. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." My doctrine and manner of life must be an example of the believers. Paul instructed Timothy to "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 5:16). Timothy's shortcomings could have caused others to come short of the glory of God.

If I am lost, I will be lost forever. Hell is eternal. Coffee break's are not allowed in this eternal night-mare! I will have no opportunity for better habitat. There will be no chance after death. The concept of purgatory is a false doctrine. Jesus said "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:46).

If I am lost, it will be my fault. I cannot blame God because he sent his Son. (John 3:16). Jesus cannot be blamed, because he died for all men. (Hebrews 2:9). The Holy Spirit is sinless. He grieves at our sins. (Revelation 22:17). If I am lost. I cannot blame the angels because they are in heaven. (Luke 15:10). The church has the best people on earth. (Revelation 22:17). If I am lost, I alone will be responsible.