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Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"He who rejects me, and does not receive my words has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"

Almost two thousand years ago when Christ lived and walked on this earth, he was rejected by many. He was rejected by His own people, the Jews, amongst whom he was born and lived. (John 1:11) Many of His disciples too had rejected him. (John 6:66). Of course, Pilate, the Roman governor had rejected Christ at the instance of the Jews and had sentenced Him to die on the cross to please the Jews, even though Pilate had not found anything wrong in Christ. (John 19). But even today many are rejecting Christ by not receiving His words and doing what He says. Christ said, in the statement cited above from John 12:48 that by not receiving His words one rejects Him and he who rejects Him will be judged in the last day by His very words that He has spoken.

There are those who reject Christ because of ignorance, like Paul (Saul) did in the beginning, before he had become a Christian himself. He had heard about Christ and His followers, His church. But he was ignorant of the fact that Christ was not a mere man, though He had come and lived on earth as a man. He did not believe that Christ was the Son of God; that He had been sent by God on earth to die instead of all humanity, because of

sin, and thus become the propitiation for the sins of the world. To Saul (Paul) Christ was just another teacher of a new religion, and His followers or His church was just another sect that he wanted to destroy. Later, though, Paul wrote, "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent (violently arrogant) man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief . . . This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:13 & 15). Many others have rejected Christ outright because of being prejudiced. They have never personally investigated about the life of Christ and about His church. They have just heard things from here or there; or have read some things written against Christ and His Christianity, and on the basis of such hearsay they have formed opinions in their minds about Christ, which are not true; Such people are bitter about Christ and His church. They say, Christ was just another god-man; that Christianity is a "foreign" religion or a religion of the west. Such people need to buy or obtain a copy of the Bible or the New Testament of the Bible, which are available in most all languages and at a very low price; and they need to read for themselves what the Bible or the New Testament of the Bible says about Christ, and about His Christianity, His church. I assure you, that no one has never rejected Christ after seriously and sincerely reading about Him from the Bible. Yet the fact is, that there are many who do not want to read the Bible seriously and sincerely, because they are afraid that they too would become believers in Christ and would convert themselves to Him.

But the saddest of all is the fact, however, that a great number of people who claim to believe in Christ have rejected Him too! They reject Christ because they profess to believe in Him; they believe He is the Son of God and the Saviour of man, but do not receive His words as He had taught and do not do what He has told them to do. Christ had said that by rejecting His words one rejects Him, and one who rejects Him, in the last day or in the day of judgment His word alone will judge him. He said, "But why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Didn't Christ teach that one must believe in him and repent of sins and be baptized to be saved from sin? (Read Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). Didn't Christ say that He would build His own church? and that He Himself

adds the saved to His church? (Read Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16). Then why do most people want to be saved in different ways and want to be members of different churches or denominations? Weren't the followers of Christ in the beginning, at Antioch, called Christians? (Acts 11:26). Why can't this be true today also? I can, in fact, go on and on listing things which are being believed and practiced by believers in Christ everywhere, which are not part of the doctrine of Christ. But, the Bible says thus: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." And, now, don't forget to read what he says next: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11). Remember, The Bible teaches that one can reject Christ by rejecting His teaching or His words.

Be Not Deceived

J.C. CHOATE

The Lord's word warns again and again that we be not deceived. To be deceived means that one has been misled, lied to, that he has been taught and has accepted false doctrine. Since we have the Scriptures to read and study, you wouldn't think that a person could easily be deceived, but he can be.

Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4,5). Just imagine people today being deceived by imposters claiming to be Christ or the Messiah! Who would think that there would be intelligent people who would fall for such lies, but there are many.

Paul warned, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Again, he said, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15: 33).

Writing to the Galatians, Paul said, "Be not deceived; God is

not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7,8).

The Ephesians were warned, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6).

Paul reminded the Thessalonians, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He wrote to Timothy, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

James wrote, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Then John was inspired to write, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

From these passages of Scripture, and others which could be given, we learn that it is possible to be deceived, misled, and for a person finally to be eternally lost because of the deception.

- ◆ One can deceive himself. He can want to do something, or to believe something, so much that he convinces himself it is right, whether it is or not. Many centuries ago the prophet Obadiah wrote in verse 3, "The pride of your heart has deceived you."
- ◆ One can allow himself to be deceived by others, as Paul warned in Romans 16:17,18: ". . . note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them, for they who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." Perhaps the listener has so much confidence in a preacher or teacher that he convinces himself he is being taught the truth, even though it contradicts what the Bible says.
- ◆ One may be deceived by a popular false doctrine. Often

the error goes back for many years, and it has been so widely taught and believed that it seems more true than the word of God itself, which it actually contradicts. The words of Paul in Romans 16:18, concerning the "smooth words and flattering speeches which deceive the hearts of the simple" should keep all on their guard.

- ◆ One may be deceived by following the majority. He reasons that it would not be possible for so many to be wrong, but he forgets what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13,14: "... wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."

There are so many ways to be deceived when it comes to the plan God has made for our salvation, the church, acceptable worship, the kind of life He wants us to live, the certainty of the return of Christ and the judgment that will follow, and even eternity itself. Man-made teachings are generally accepted as truth, while the actual truths as revealed in the Scriptures may be rejected as error—simply because so many have heard men's lies more than they have heard God's truths! We plead with one and all to follow only God's word in matters of the soul.

Especially For Women

Re-Baptism—Is It A Sin?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

The worship meetings continued Sunday after Sunday. In time it was decided to meet also on Sunday evenings for a period of informal Bible study and discussion. Andrew and Rachel were happy with the growing interest being shown in God's word.

Usually during lunch break at work, Andrew and John also studied together, with others frequently joining in. On this particular day John seemed unusually serious. "I agree with what we've studied, Andrew," he said, "but I don't know what is the right thing to do. I've already been baptized. I was sincere about that, and when you showed me in Ephesians 4:5 that there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, I became totally confused.

Wouldn't it be wrong for me to be baptized again?"

"What was the purpose of that baptism, John?" Andrew asked.

"I honestly don't know what the preacher said. He was a denominational preacher so he must have taught their doctrine, but I'm not clear on what that was. I remember that I was asked to make some statement, and that we all prayed before I was baptized. Whether they were saying that my sins were being washed away by the blood of Christ through the baptism, I don't know. I only know that I have thought of myself as a saved person from that time."

"In the Scriptures, as we've been seeing in our group discussions, John the Baptist, Jesus, and then the apostles were continually teaching about the coming of the kingdom—His church—so that after the beginning of the church in Acts 2, people could choose to come out of the world and be a part of that separate body of people who believed that Jesus was the Son of God. When Philip went to Samaria (in Acts 8), he preached things concerning the name of Christ and the kingdom.

"Can you imagine that God would forgive anyone of their sins, even though they might go through the form of baptism, if they had not heard of Christ and if they did not believe in Him, choosing Him as their one and only Lord?" Andrew asked.

"Of course not! it wouldn't be real baptism if a person didn't believe in Christ," John quickly answered.

"The church is a distinct body of people, separated in lifestyle and allegiance from the world around it. It is 'a kingdom' within itself. Can you imagine that God would add anyone to the church, separating him spiritually from the world around him, if he had never heard of the kingdom and if he did not choose to be a part of it?"

"No, it wouldn't seem fair if God did that, without people choosing it themselves," John admitted.

"At the time you were baptized, did you believe in Christ as your Savior?"

"Of course!" John laughed.

"Second question!" Andrew continued. "Just as Philip preached about the kingdom to the Samaritans, had you heard about the Lord's church when you were baptized? Were you choosing to leave everything else and to be baptized into the

body of Christ? Had anyone shown you I Corinthians 12:13? "*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .*"

"No," John answered, "I didn't know about any of those things, or about the church. I've only heard of it in these past few weeks of studying with you. But may be God added me to the church then, even though I hadn't heard of it."

"But then He would have been making the choice for you, to come out of the world and to be added to his body, wouldn't He?" asked Andrew.

"Yes—I couldn't choose, since I didn't know," agreed John.

"But suppose He had added you then, by HIS choice. And suppose that, now that you do know about the church, you said, 'No! I was born a —whatever—and I'll die the same! I don't want to be a part of that narrow little church!'

"Do you see, John, how unfair it would be for God to put *anybody* into something he didn't *choose* to be a part of?"

"Yes, I can see that point," John admitted.

"Here in Acts 19 you can read about a group of men who had been baptized but their understanding about Christ wasn't correct, so God didn't recognize what they'd done as being 'baptism'."

"Yes, here is verse 5 it says, '*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*' And it doesn't even say 'again!'

"So if *anything* about a person's obedience to God was not according to the Scriptures, he needs to make it right. There really is *only one baptism*—only one birth into the Lord's church! Often people have been taught wrongly, and they believe they are saved even though they are not, John. Now that you understand how we are saved, and that baptism is the new birth which puts us into Christ and into His church, you can be truly baptized according to the Scriptures," Andrew urged. "I want to do that," John answered. "Could you baptize me, Andrew?"

To be Continued . . .

Modern Miracle Workers

FRANCIS DAVID

In God's word, the Bible we read about many wonders and

miracles. These miracles were performed by Jesus our Lord and also by the apostles. The apostles were given the miraculous power to perform these miracles. These apostles were able to transfer this power to other disciples. But these disciples were unable to give this power to others.

Our Lord was great and that is why we see He never disappointed anyone. He healed all the people. The Bible tells us all the sick with all kinds of diseases came to Jesus and he healed them, all. The book of Mathews, Mark, Luke and John are full of his miracles. In John 20 verses 30 and 31 we read that truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. His miracles were genuine. These miracles were done instantly and there was not a big show to perform these wonders. Can you imagine a man dead for four days and was raised from the grave? (John 11). Another thing that I see in Jesus's miracles that He never said: "This is a hopeless case, come next time." When Jesus did these wonders we read that these were seen by big crowd and this itself is a solid proof that whatever He did, was genuine and nothing was questionable.

We come to the book of Mark and here we see that the apostles were given this miraculous power to perform the miracles so that people may believe in Jesus. The book of Acts is full of these miracles. In 16th chapter of Mark we read and it says that these apostles were given power to cast out demons, speak with new tongues (languages), which they had never learned, will take up serpents, drinking anything poisonous or deadly and it will not hurt them, they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. A lot of time it is taught that all the Christians or church leaders have been given this miraculous power and they can perform the miracles. This is a false teaching. These apostles who lived with Jesus, spent time with him but still at many occasions were doubting. Jesus had to rebuke them for their unbelief on certain occasions, To these apostles Jesus said "And these signs shall follow them those who believe." Prior to this we know and read in fourteen verse that Jesus appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen HIM after He had risen. So

we see that apostles were empowered with the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. Just turn to the book of Acts and here in chapter 3 we read Peter and John went up together to the temple and there at the gate a lame man was sitting asking for alms. This man was born lame from his mother's womb. He was fixing his eyes on Peter and John, expecting something, but you know what happened, Peter told him: "I don't have anything to give to you but one thing I can do for you **"IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST of NAZARETH, rise up and walk"** What happened then? Did he wait? No, the record says: "He took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and **IMMEDIATELY** his feet and ankle bones received strength" All the people saw him walking. This was a genuine miracle. We read, after this he was walking, leaping, and praising God.

The Bible tells us that God worked unusual miracles by the hands of the apostles. Just read verse 12 of Acts 5, it says "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people." Is there anyone in our country or all over the world who can give new sight, new legs, new hands? A lot of time we see the religious leaders fool the people and make many big claims but we know they just claim and they cannot do the kind of miracles which our Lord and apostles did.

A lot of people attend these big healing meetings. I am saying big, because worlds of people just go there blindly and most of them get disappointed and you know when they are disappointed they make fun of Christianity. We get many letters from different parts of the country where people attended these so called meetings and they were disappointed. Most of the people say that their headache, or tumor or stomach ache has gone and for them it was a miracle. When we talk about miracle, we talk something which is against the nature. If a man has twisted legs or hand and if he is healed and just gets into normal healthy body, this would be called a miracle. No eyes, completely blind, haven't seen anything since birth, and if he is given new sight, that would be called a genuine miracle. Just think, is there any person on the face of this earth who can do this type of genuine miracle? Just think, if a miracle is being performed today like Jesus and apostles did, How much publicity it would get, because we know how pretty strong media is today. All the channels on T.V. and also newspapers will flash the news

on this matter in bold letters.

Sometime people accuse us that we do not believe in miracles. Please do not misunderstand. We do believe in miracles but we don't believe that these are existing today. There was a purpose of miracles at one time but now that purpose is over. We need to go to the people with the word of God. Preach and teach from the Bible and those who believe will hear and would believe because faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom.10:17). Let us go to the people with the good news, the gospel. The good news is Jesus our Lord died for the sinners, was buried in the tomb but through the power of almighty was risen from the dead on the third day. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4).

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you confess him as the Son of God? if you do, then repent of your past sins and be baptised for the remission of sins if you do so, the Lord will add you to his church (Acts 8:36-38; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal 3:27 and Acts 2:47).

What If He Wanted You Hung There?

NEAL POLLARD

What would happen if God changed "the plan of salvation" in the following dramatic way? What if the voice of God cleaved the skies as under and spoke a new revelation to man, saying, "If you are only crucified on a cross for your sins, you will be eternally saved!" Would you do it? Assuming that His mighty voice was heard and understood by every human living, do you suppose countless millions would line up to fulfill this requirement?

The Bible affirms, with Divine credibility, that death on the cross was absolutely necessary for the saving of mankind. Though so many scoff, that truth must be believed. Yet no man could save himself by dying on a cross for his own sins. God would reject that sacrifice! Consider that such a sacrifice is blemished and flawed by the filth and disease of sin. The only spotless and unblemished sacrifice that could ever be offered was Jesus (1 Peter 1:18), who condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3), and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). He was "once offered to bear the sins of many

[read, "all mankind," NP]" (Hebrews 9:28) upon the cross.

If Christ had taken the mockers' challenge to come down from that cross to prove His deity (cf. Mark 15:32), man would have lost all hope of heaven. He endured the shame and pain of Calvary (Hebrews 12:2) to make heaven a possibility of those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

Now, consider. Through the Bible, the voice of God ring out, demanding that we figuratively crucify our desires and our lives on Jesus' cross through earnest obedience (Galatians 2:20). He tells us to obey the Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus, in order to have sins forgiven (cf. Romans 6:17). No one has to die the death of a thousand deaths, nailed to a literal cross. No one could! But, if we come to the One who did thus die, we shall avoid the only fate that is worse than crucifixion (see Revelation 14:10-11).

God does not call you to get up on a cross for your sins. He calls you to take up Christ's cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). In this way, crucify yourself (Galatians 2:20)!

"Three Key Words For Answered Prayer"

James 5:16 "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

JASON R. ROBERTS

Persistence is the key to unlocking the throne room of the Almighty. Our Heavenly Father, whose "eyes are over the righteous" (1 Pet. 3:12; cf. Psalm 34:15), who requests our cares and burdens to be cast upon him (1 Pet. 5:7, Psalm 55:22), who desires to be glorified when the righteous suffer (1 Pet. 4:16), who attends the funeral of every sparrow that falls to the ground (Matt. 10:29), is extremely interested in our well-being as well as our ability to pray correctly; so much that the Holy Spirit moved James to pen "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b). We will note specifically the three key words in this given text: (1) Effectual (2) Fervent and (3) Righteous, with an analysis of each one.

The word "effectual" energeo, (verb here) although not in the original text, means "to be operative, to be at work, to put

forth power" (Strong's). It literally means the "inworking supplication, suggesting a supplication consistent with inward conformity to God" (Vine's). There is power in prayer as suggested from the word "effectual" in this text. Too often, Christians underestimate the power of prayer. We live during a time when we need things immediately, without any delay whatsoever. In Luke 18 there is the parable of the unjust judge. The widow persistently plead with the evil judge to avenge her adversary until finally he granted her request. The point is, that if this calloused, unjust judge will grant one's petition, how much more then would an Almighty, Sovereign, Just, Judge answer one's prayer. Her persistence led to her petition being answered. This brings us to the second key word to effective prayer.

The word "fervent" (another verb) means "exhibited or marked by great intensity of feeling, to boil over with zeal" (Webster's). Do we feel this way when we pray? The word denotes a process, that is, it is going to take some persistence on our part. And right along with this persistence and this power comes our patience. In fact no less than seven times in the book of James the word patience is mentioned. Patient is found twice (5:7,8) and patience is found five times (1:3, 4, 5:7, 10, 11). Can we honestly say that we are effectively praying when our only approaches to the throne of God's grace in a rushed hurry? Paul admonished us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), but there is no indication of hurrying one's requests to God. The words "pray without ceasing" mean that the child of God is to be in the attitude of prayer and thanksgiving on a continual (effectual fervent) basis. The late brother Gus Nichols, I am told, would begin a prayer in the morning, and then he would say Amen that evening before pillowing his head for the night. That is praying without ceasing. Effective prayer is often going to take some time and effort on our part. This brings us to the third key word for effective prayer.

The word "righteous," *dikaios* (adjective here) means "one who is upright, virtuous, observing divine laws, keeping the commands of God" (Strong's). In fact, the apostle John in referring to the righteous man stated "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7, cf. 2:29). The man who lives a life of righteousness will have his requests answered by God. On the contrary, the man who lives a life of

unrighteousness, will not be heard. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31). Sometimes we hear people say that "God never answers my prayers." This reveals a lack of faith in God. His answer may not be the one we were requesting, but nevertheless he is faithful and just to his promises, and if he says he will answer prayer then he will.

The man who has power (effectual) behind his prayer, who is persistent (fervent) yet patient, and who is righteous will be answered. What's the promise for a man like this? His prayer "availeth much" (v. 16b). "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The Babies In Sin

GLENN COLLEY

Are babies born in sin? That is, do babies come into this world carrying the guilt of sin which they have inherited from Adam? Some people think so. A multi-faceted doctrine carrying the name "Calvinism," after a man named John Calvin, (1509-1564), holds that all babies are born in sin. Although he never started his own church, a number of churches hold to his erroneous teachings. Among denominations today, probably Presbyterians are best known for Calvinism. Calvin's teaching includes "Hereditary Total Depravity," which simply means, "Inherited sin."

This doctrine has a companion called predestination, the belief that God pre-determined before we were born which of us would be saved and which would be lost. Calvinists believe this is irreversible. If you were born to be lost, you cannot come to Christ. If you were born to be saved, you cannot live in such a way as to be lost. Such teaching makes the verses of the Bible ridiculous which offers salvation to "all the world," or, "every creature," (Mark 16:15,16). Titus 2:11, 12 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men . . ."

But back to the baby. This doctrine crumbles beneath the weight of passages which teach where babies and their souls

come from. For example, if we say babies' souls come marred by sin, then we face this army of truth:

Acts 17:29—"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Ecclesiastes 12:7—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Hebrews 12:9—"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

The originator of your soul and mine is the Almighty God! For hereditary total depravity to be true, God would have had to create us in sin. Who can believe it? Jesus didn't. "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

"But," suppose someone objects, "It is not the spirit which is born with sin, but the flesh."

And yet, this too falls when scripture is allowed to stand. John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Who would be willing to say that Jesus our Lord was born in sin? He obviously was not, but he was born in human flesh.

We do not inherit the guilt of any part of the human race of the past. Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

John 5:28-29—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Christian Living

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There is no way to answer the riddle of our earthly sojourn apart from Christianity. We have all wondered, at times, as to why we are here and where we are going. James tells us that our life is but "a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Peter informs us that those who would live life and see good days must "refrain their tongues from evil." Paul clearly stated: "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). The real purpose of living is to live for Jesus. Our Saviour beautifully expressed this thought in John 10:10:

"I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

The word purpose suggests dedication, decision, conviction and planning. The religion of our Redeemer provides all of these items; it gives substance to living. Just as Daniel "purposed in his heart not to defile himself" (Daniel 1:8), so does Christianity cause us to cleave to the Lord "with purpose of heart" (Acts 11:23). A statement from Moses is appropriate at this point in our discussion: "It is your life to set your heart upon all my law and to teach your children to observe all my commandments" (Deuteronomy 32:46). We shall not take out of this life any of our accumulated wealth or fame out only the influence of a righteous life. When we stand before our Maker in the last day it will be of the highest importance how we lived while upon the earth. If you are not a Christian you lack real incentive for living!

"But they that would be rich fall into temptation and snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Christianity alone gives one true purpose in life. What a friend we have in Jesus! He is indeed "all the world to me!" We have a personal, powerful and precious Savior. Paul expressed our exact sentiments in 2 Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." If Christ lives within us (Galatians 2:20) we have the exuberant hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). The very One who bore our sins in His own

body upon the Cross is vitally interested in our every need. In times of sorrow, illness, bereavement and disappointment, He is our constant Shepherd. Are you a Christian?

What Life Is All About

There are many precious things about Christianity that would not be available if the Saviour had not left heaven and graced this earth with His presence! How empty and meaningless our daily existence would be apart from the richness and depth of the gospel era. We owe so very much to the resplendent beauty of New Testament Christianity. Whatever the world offers in its most glorious moment fades into nothingness when the radiant hues of the Messiah beam forth. For years faithful children of God have sung:

"Take the world but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same."

Mankind struggles in vain to find genuine purpose in life apart from Christ. When the Lord and heaven's message enter our thinking we are transformed from a dreary pursuit of merely existing to an exciting motivation and goal. Following our blessed Redeemer provides a destiny where God "will make all things new" (Revelation 21:1-5).

"Beyond the sunset's radiant glow,
there is a brighter world I know,
Beyond the sunset I may spend
Delightful days that never end."

Let us notice several key points that Jesus contributes to our sojourn upon the earth (1 Peter 2:11) that we would otherwise be bereft of Had he not come.

1. All Spiritual Blessings—Ephesians 1:3
2. The New And Living Way—Hebrews 10:20
3. Our Perfect Example—Hebrews 4:15
4. Sin Clearly Defined—John 15:22
5. Salvation Absolutely—Hebrews 7:25
6. Satan Defeated—John 12:31-33
7. Heaven Accessible—Hebrews 6:18-20
8. Sinners Made Saints—1 Timothy 1:15

9. God's Grace In Us—1 Corinthians 15:10

10. Someone Who Never Leaves Us—Hebrews 13:5-6

When we weave all of this into one fabric of truth we realize that we surely do have "life more abundantly" as the Master taught in John 10:10. The Psalmist makes a tremendous contribution to this life of thought in the cogent words of Psalms 124:

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side . . . our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth."

Living with, for and in Christ Jesus is truly what life is all about. How vain would the struggles be if our Saviour had not come.

Two centuries ago Thomas Gray wrote of folk with "obscure destiny in the short and simple annals of the poor." Millions live and die that way—outside of the Savior—without hope in this world or the one to come. (Ephesians 2:11-12).

Christians should praise God every single day for purpose, depth, richness and meaning in lives that bask in the sunlight found in the shadow of the Cross!

"What Is Man, That Thou Art Mindful Of Him?"

W.A. HOLLEY

The caption of this article is taken from Psalm 8:1-8. The Hebrew writer quotes this psalm and applies it to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:5-10).

In the beginning, when God made man, He assigned him a place of honor, of dominion, of leadership, and responsibility over all nature (Genesis 1:27-28). Hence, man is far more than a cat or a dog. Man is a single species (Acts 17:26). In the New Testament the Greek *aner* is used to distinguish between a man and a woman (1 Corinthians 11:7; Mark 10:2). *Anthropos* is the Greek term which refers to both man and woman (Matthew 4:4; Luke 6:22; John 2:25).

God has placed "eternity" in man's heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11, ASV). This means, unlike animals, man can contemplate, plan, look into the future, and think about the consequences of his

acts. No mere animal can do this, although there are some similar features. In the Bible the word *eternity* refers the endless past, and to the unending future.

Man is the offspring of God (Acts 17:29). God is the Father of man's spirit (Hebrews 12:9). man is not all flesh. Man has a body and a spirit. The spirit can live apart from the body (II Corinthians 12:1-10; Matthew 10:28). Man's spirit is not his breath, as some materialists assert. In Luke 11:24-26, Jesus cast an evil spirit out of a man, who then goes and finds seven other evil spirits worse than himself to dwell with him. Was this a case of halitosis? (See Matthew 12:43-45). James 2:26 should be read.

At death the body returns to the ground, but the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 1:6-7). Man possesses an incorruptible spirit which dwells within his body (I Peter 3:4; Matthew 10:28; Daniel 7:15; Zechariah 12:1). Hereditary total depravity is false (Ezekiel 28:15). There is an "inward man" that never grows old (II Corinthians 4:16-18). One's body dies but His spirit or soul lives forever either in hell or heaven (Matthew 10:28; James 2:26).

Does the spirit or soul of the righteous go to heaven? Yes, indeed. Jesus came down from heaven (John 6:38). At his ascension. He went back to the place where He was before he came into the world (John 6:62; Acts 1:9-11).

Paul wrote about "being with Christ" when death came to him (Philippians 1:23). Stephen saw Christ seated at God's right hand (Acts 7:55-56). One can be absent from the body and present with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:6-8).

Those who "sleep in Jesus" will be brought back with Him, at His second coming (Hebrews 9:28; I Thessalonians 4:13-17). the righteous living will have their fleshly bodies changed so as to be like Jesus' glorious body—body and soul will be reunited and meet the Lord in the air, and so ever be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-17; I Corinthians 15:51-52). We need not ask "how?", but simply accept this fact by faith (Hebrews 11:3; II Corinthians 5:7).

Will the spirit be conscious between death and the resurrection? Well the spirit is conscious now. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" (I Corinthians 2:11). Simply read Luke 16:19-31 and see

that the Rich man and Lazarus were conscious after death. Moses and Elijah appeared with the Jesus on the mount of transfiguration talking about Jesus' impending death (Matthew 17:1-5; Luke 9:28-36).

Furthermore, God is a Spirit, but He knows, is conscious, understands, and rewards our deeds (2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Moreover, the Holy Spirit makes intercessions for the saints, yet He has never had a body of flesh (Romans 8:26-27). Even though Jesus Christ gave up his body of flesh, He is now conscious, possessing all authority (Matthew 28:18-20).

When will the body be raised? It will be raised at the general resurrection when the good and the bad are raised in the same hour (John 5:28-29). The resurrection of the dead will take place at "the last trump" (I Corinthians 15:51-52), but there cannot be a 1,000 years after "the last trump." Again, the resurrection occurs at "the last day," (John 6:39,40,44,54); but the "last day" is the Judgment Day. How do we know? Listen, "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). Thus, the Judgment Day is the "last day." The finest commentary ever written concerning this matter is in Matthew 25:31-46. Read it and learn. One cannot have a 1,000 years after the last day as the Premillennialists affirm . . .

As strong as it may seem, the word rapture is never mentioned in the Holy Bible. Many use Romans 8:17-26 to teach that this earth is to be renovated when Jesus comes but such teachers are in error. When He comes, the earth, the elements thereof, and the works therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:9-13). All will be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:11-15).

Will the saints know each other in heaven? Yes, indeed! The rich man and Lazarus had not lost their identity, even though a great gulf separated them (Luke 16:19-31). Although Moses and Elijah had been dead for centuries they were still themselves when they appeared with Christ (Matthew 17:1-5). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be themselves (Matthew 8:11).

Jesus taught that fleshly relationships will not obtain in heaven. The Sadducees tried to entrap Jesus by telling Him a story about a woman who had been married to seven brothers (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-39). This is the

law of levirate marriage (Genesis 38:6-11; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5-6). The purpose of this law was for the preservation of the family. Jesus charged the Sadducees with ignorance of the scriptures and of the power of God. Jesus cited Moses and the burning bush as evidence of the resurrection (Exodus 3:1 ff). God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him! Hence Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living somewhere.

Dear readers, if our memories perish and our identity is lost, how can we be judged for the works done in our bodies? In such an instance, we would not be ourselves. If you are not you, how can God reward you, in the Great Judgment, according to your works?? (II Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:11-15).

A great reunion awaits the redeemed saints of all ages. There we shall see our Savior, the saved, the apostles and the prophets, and countless millions more. Get ready, make all necessary preparation (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38).

How awful it will be to see the damned cast into eternal punishment. Hear the word of the Lord. "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:27-28). These words are written for those honest and sincere souls who desire the truth of God.

What If . . .

JERRI MANASCO

"What if . . . ?" How many times have you made this remark as a prefix to some grand declaration? In the spiritual realm we can ask this question over and over.

"What if" every preacher preached only the Bible and left off his denominational dogma? The result would be that all who heard and obeyed the teaching would be simply New Testament Christians! The word of God is the seed (Luke 8:11). "They . . . went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Philip preached

Jesus (Acts 8:35): Paul preached the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:12-16). I have heard various men in the varied religious organizations make the statement, "I don't preach denomination; I preach the Bible." This remark is more critical of such a person's denominational affiliation than he might realize! If one can preach the Bible and not preach denomination, then it follows that if one preaches only the Bible there will be no denominations! There are no denominational dogmas or denominations in the Bible.

"What if" every Bible class were devoted to Bible study and not foolish playing? I am not suggesting that teachers of young children in a Bible class should not make the class interesting or that they should not use all available methods of adequate instruction. I am, however, reminding such teachers that their class time is not their time!! It is the time set aside by the local elders for further instruction of the children and young people who attend. It is time for the older classes to think seriously and reflect soberly on the grand eternal truths of God. It is a time to search the scriptures (Acts 17:11). It is not the time for cantankerous members with foolish ideas to utter their "remarkable" observations by taking scriptures out of context in order to tie the class up in a never ending discussion over trifles. What if every class would heed this?

"What if" every Bible class teacher were prepared for the class when class time arrives? Have you ever sat in a class and had the distinct impression that the teacher had not prepared his lesson? Have you ever been in a class in which the teacher spouted out like a parrot some things he has heard others say but he obviously has not done his own study to have real personal conviction on the issue at hand? It seems to me that Paul instructed Timothy to instruct the church to prepare men to be real teachers, not just lecturn ornaments (2 Timothy 2:2).

"What if" every member who is present Sunday morning would be present Sunday evening and Wednesday evening when possible? Of course "possible" to some means only if their favorite T.V. show isn't airing or the game isn't being shown or uncle Joe isn't coming for a visit, etc. What if every church member showed true concern for the church by insisting that they should want to be present, not because you have to show them a scripture proving their presence is essential, but because

they really have the right attitude toward God and the church?

"What if" every member of the church were really different from the world? I don't mean by this that we need fanatics or extremists. Jesus was no fanatic and the apostles were not extremists. They were not anti-social. They were not holier-than-thou in their demeanor. But they lived what they believed! God's grace teaches us to deny the worldly things and live for righteousness (Titus 2:11-15). Jesus teaches us to be lights in the world (Matthew 5:13-16), as does Paul by inspiration (Philippians 2:15-16; Ephesians 5:9-13). It is rather disappointing to hear some good brother make excellent statements in Bible class Sunday morning only to see him living the remainder of the week inconsistently with those remarks!

"What if" parents quit blaming the preacher, the elders, and the church for the failure of the young people in the congregation to be "interested in the church"? Brethren, it is not the preacher's job to stay on top of every new entertainment to keep people—including your children—interested in the church! It is the duty of the home (yours and mine) to train our own children! What if parents, both fathers and mothers, took seriously the charge given in Ephesians 6:4 and Titus 2:4-5?

"What if" the church generally took seriously the fact that souls are dying in sin? What if the local church would be busy saving souls in the community? What if the church would be busy striving to restore the backslider? What if the sick were noticed and the elderly were attended to by every member of the church? What if the church would pay attention to the needs of the members, whether the need is spiritual or physical? What if the elders would stand in the pulpits more frequently to exhort the church to serve Jesus the following week and give public notice that they stand behind the preacher one hundred percent as he preaches the word of God?

"What if we should exhort one another more frequently? What if we told other members more often without blushing that we are praying for them? What if we used the phone more to call the invalids or sent more cards to cheer up the down-hearted?

"What if" the Lord were to come today? Where would we stand in the judgment?!

Falling From Grace

ALLEN WEBSTER

The subject of falling from grace comes up often in religious discussions. Some think that once one becomes a child of God that there is nothing he could ever do that would cause him to fall away so as to be lost. Others who might have argued at one time against the "once-saved always-saved" doctrine, have now let it happen to them.

Is It Possible To Fall From Grace?

On almost every page of the Bible it is implied that a Christian can fall from God's grace. There are constant warnings to live righteously and faithfully (e.g., 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Matthew 13:41; Hebrews 3:12; Revelations 2:10). Apostasy is the constant battle which all saints face (2 Corinthians 13:5). The solemn words of Jesus remind us, "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37).

God's Word shows that nations (1 Kings 12:26-33), angels (2 Peter 2:4), Satan (Revelation 12:7-9), and individuals have fallen (Acts 8:9-24). The entire book of Hebrews was written to stem the tide of Christians who were drifting from Christ back to the out-dated Jewish religion. Saul (1 Samuel 15:11), Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-10, though he seems to have returned at the end of his life, Ecclesiastes 12:14), Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:14-16), Judas (Matthew 26:14-16), Hymaneus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17-18) and Demas (2 Timothy 4:10) all fell from grace. Paul wrote to some in Galatia who had just fallen, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are [would be ASV] justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

Peter wrote, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20-21).

What Causes One To Fall From Grace?

Obviously, Satan is behind every lost soul (Luke 23:31), but other specific factors are involved. False teachers destroy the

faith of some (Acts 20:29-30), while others pervert (2 Timothy 4:3-4) and wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Persecution gets some quickly (Matthew 13:21), while unbelief slowly creeps in on others (Hebrews 4:9-11). Some allow a love for the world, physical enjoyments, and personal comforts to lure them away from the cross (2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15-16). Some suffer from a sin-sick hardened heart (Acts 7:54-57) and/or spiritual eyes that cannot see (Acts 28:25-27). They thus leave the Great Physician.

How Can One Keep From Falling?

With feet firmly planted upon the strong foundation of God's Word, one will never fall (John 10:28-29). The Bible is our complete spiritual guide (2 Peter 1:3) and is able to make us spiritually perfect (complete) (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It serves as our armour against the fiery darts of the wicked (Ephesians 6:16), helps us grow strong (Acts 20:32), and gives us faith (Romans 10:17). By being grounded in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), indoctrinated in righteousness (Acts 20:29-31), and spiritually perceptive (Hebrews 5:12-14), we need never fall.

While we abide in Christ, the vine (John 15:6), we will not fall. The Lord's Supper is given in part to help keep us close to Christ and His cross (1 Corinthians 10:16). We must keep our bodies in subjection with its fleshly lusts and desires (1 Corinthians 9:27), add the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-8), and trust in the Lord as our Protector (Psalm 121:1-4). Practically speaking, attending all Bible classes and worship services, communing daily with God in prayer, study, and song will keep the fires burning. We should also cultivate Christian friendships which will help us keep our mind on heaven and its glory (Heb 10:25).

If you are presently drifting, why not resolve to return? Once you start slipping, the longer you wait the harder it will be to set things right. If you have completely quit running the Christian race, we plead with you to return to our loving God (Luke 15:20). The cure for backsliding is making a decision to change (Acts 17:30), repenting and praying for forgiveness (Acts 8:22), and confession of public wrong in a public way (1 John 1:9; Joshua 5:16).

Yes, it is possible for one to fall from grace and be eternally lost, but please don't go out and prove the proposition by your own actions. ● ● ●

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