

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

### **What Does the Bible Teach?**

***"Man who is born of woman is of few days  
and full of trouble."***

Another year! And we have come a little more closer to the time of our departure from this planet. The new year should cause us all to be more serious about life. Because man's life on earth is not only short, but is also uncertain. Where are we going? Are we prepared to Go? "Come now," says one of the writers of the Bible at James 4:13&14, "you who say, 'today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit;' whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

The Bible also compares man's life with grass and as the flower of the grass and says as they wither and disappear so does man (1 Peter 1:24). In one of his prayers to God, Moses said, "You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up; in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; for it is

soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. **So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**" (Psalm 90:5-10).

As Job stated, in Job 14:1, not only man's life on earth is short or brief, but it is also full of trouble. Truly, there are burdens of life which we all face in many different ways, at different times. Many live in poverty and face hunger and lack shelter, etc. There are hatred and violence everywhere on earth which destroy lives and properties. There are diseases of all kinds which affects humanity everywhere. There are natural calamities which suddenly happen and kill and destroy millions. Then, there are problems in families and in society where we live. Man, indeed, is full of trouble, and who can deny this?

Man's biggest problem, however, is man himself, because he is in sin. Not only is sin destroying humanity worldwide in various different ways, but sin has separated every man and every woman from the Creator God, as says the Bible at Isaiah 59:1,2; Romans 3:23 & James 1:14,15.

Violence and diseases, accidents and calamities on earth may destroy man's body on earth, which in any way is destined to return to dust sooner or later. But sin keeps every man and every woman away and separated from God not only in this world but also after the life of this earth is over, in eternity for ever and ever. And the Bible calls it in Matthew 25:46, "everlasting punishment."

But God did not create man in the beginning for everlasting punishment. Rather God created man in the beginning for everlasting life with Him. Man is God's offspring (Acts 17:28). God is the creator of man. He loves man, and want to save every man and every woman from the punishment of sin. And this is so evident in the coming of Jesus Christ on earth from heaven. Whom God had sent to give His life to propitiate for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, said Jesus, before His propitiatory death on the cross, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

Man must realize that he is on this earth for a few days, and that he is full of problems; and his biggest destructive problem is

sin. He need salvation from sin. He cannot save himself. He need God to save him. God loves you, reader. Come to Him through His Son who is man's redeemer.

## **Man Needs God**

**J.C. CHOATE**

When we speak of God, we are talking about the God of heaven, the one who created the earth and all things therein. That means that God created us.

In Genesis, chapter 1, and verse 1, of the Bible, we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In Genesis, chapter 1, and verse 27, it says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

Now the first man and woman, like everything else, was created by a miracle. That is, God spoke them into existence. But then he set the law of nature into force. Ever since that time, then, all things have come into existence after their kind. That is, man, animals, and every living thing have been given the power to reproduce themselves.

Speaking of God's creation, David said in Psalm 19, and verses 1, 2, and 3, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

Of all of God's creation, man is the only one that often curses his maker instead of praising him. But man has a greater need of God, however, than all of the other creatures put together. Man is different. He is physical, but he is also spiritual. God made him in His own image or in His own likeness. That is, God gave him a spirit or a soul to dwell in his body. That means then that even though the body may die and return to the dust of the earth, that the spirit does not die. but that it lives on for all eternity. Speaking of man's death, we read in Ecclesiastes, chapter 12, and verse 7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The wise man recognizes and acknowledges his creator. It is the fool, or the unwise person, that says in his heart that "There is no God," according to Psalm, chapter 14, and verse 1.

Human beings possess intelligence. They are able to think, make decisions, and to choose what they will, or will not do. Because of man having this ability then he often becomes full of pride. He feels important. He thinks that he is as big as God himself. He fails to see his need for God. But this is his mistake. Even though he can think, and in spite of all that he is able to do, still, in comparisons to his maker, he is little.

Man is a sinner. He is lost. He needs help. He needs forgiveness. The only one who can do this, is God himself.

We were born into this world without sin. We did not inherit the sins of our forefathers, or even Adam and Eve, the first human beings to sin. Ezekiel, a prophet of God, said, "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. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezekiel, chapter 19, and verses 20 and 21).

It is when a child grows up and becomes knowledgeable of right and wrong, and understands the differences between right and wrong, that one becomes a sinner. That means then that all mature and adult people are sinners. As such, one is lost, condemned before God, and if one dies in that state then he or she will be lost for all eternity. Since we cannot save ourselves, obtain forgiveness of our sins through good works, or through some man-made religion, then it means that we must look to God for help. Only God, through his grace and mercy, in giving his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins, can save us. Paul said that even though we are sinners (Romans 3:23), "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Romans 5:6-9).

To sum all of this up, it means that God made us, that we came into this world without sin, but when we became old enough to know what sin was, we became sinful. God knowing our need, then sent his own Son to die for us. As we become believers in God, and obey the teachings of Christ, then he saves us. This includes repenting of our sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized in water for the remission of our sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). When we do this, then the Lord saves us and adds us to his church. (Acts 2:47). Isn't that simple? And on being faithful to the Lord unto death, then we have the promise of eternal life. (Revelation 2:10).

## **Do We “Enlarge the Borders”**

**DILLARD THURMAN**

Our Lord didn't exhibit a great deal of tolerance for the cheap hypocrisy and vain glory of the religious leaders of His day! You find some of the most acrid and pungent rebukes given His audiences were directed to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. Their pompous pretensions and vain show of piety evoked this: *“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”*

This lengthy reading from Mt. 23:2-7 can serve as an object lesson for us! Jesus gave this warning: *“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* (Lk. 12:1). Maybe we have stretched our phylacteries a wee-bit, too!

### **THE LOVE OF BROAD PHYLACTERIES!**

Webster gives this definition of *phylactery*: **“Phylactery: A**

**Charm or amulet; a small leather case containing strips of vellum, inscribed with certain verses of the Law and worn on the forehead or left arm by male Jews during morning prayer."**

The scriptures found in Exo. 13:2-16; Deut. 6:4-9, and Deut. 11:13-21, were worn as frontlets by the Jews according to their understanding of Exo. 13:16. But Jesus found His contemporary pretenders were not content to do just that:

*"They made broad their phylacteries"* to give them greater distinction, and serve as a badge of their superior piety and devotion! Jesus could easily see through this pretense, and denounced their shallow, pompous display! He branded it for what it really was: *"All their works they do to be seen of men."* It didn't get His approval!

### **HIDING BEHIND BROAD PHYLACTERIES!**

The scribes and Pharisees knew the law, and were long on telling others how to observe it. But they didn't measure up to that standard in personal practice! They could tell others, but they couldn't follow their own instructions! They set forth rigid requirements, *"but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers!"* Their whole attitude was offensive to the Lord who saw through this sham and vain show of humility! False modesty was a cheap camouflage covering an arrogant pride and religious haughtiness! These self-righteous Pharisees also exerted an evil influence upon chief rulers who believed on Jesus: *"But because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."* (Jno. 12:42-43). These hypocrites really sought the praise of men; and therefore wore their broad phylacteries as a facade! There was little sincerity or character behind it! They merely "put up a front." For this cause Jesus said to them: *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* (Lk. 16:15).

### **WHAT DO OUR PHYLACTERIES REVEAL?**

Even to this day, there is the pernicious evil of hypocrisy, vain glory, and pretense of piety! This will not be shown in broad

phylacteries worn for display; nor in wide hems on the garments, and frontlets before our eyes. Rather, the fault will be revealed in glory-seeking in good works, whereby we seek to win acclaim and plaudits from men! Recently I heard a preacher speak at length on how he had built up great church attendance in different churches. His phylactery did not read, *"Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."* (Prov. 27:2). It is easy to enlarge phylacteries if one is introduced as "The Regional Director of Great Campaigns," or "The Educational Director of the Greatest Bible School!" When we seek out the "Big Name Preacher" to be our "Number One Evangelist," and give glowing titles to those who serve, we are seeking the notice and approval of the world, and not God!

But there is another fellow to be noticed: the man who is so **humble**, that he is **proud of it!**

This ingratiating brother just over-powers you with his *humility!* He is forever reminding you of how **humble** he is! When a fellow is puffed-up and proud of his humility, and mentions it to you quite often, you mark it down; he wants you to notice his broad phylacteries! In fact, he may have piety and humility to burn!

### **PHYLACTERIES TO IMPRESS OTHERS!**

The mail sacks are filled with urgent appeals for financial assistance! Someone got a bright idea of evangelizing the world, teaching our youth in "Christian" (?) schools, feeding all the hungry children on earth, reclaiming all the drug addicts, and caring for all of society's unwed mothers! But now, they must have our immediate help, for it's a reflection on the church Christ died for if we don't over-subscribe the outlay of funds they have generated! The "Head" of this new project must be aided, abetted and assisted at all cost — else the church will become a laughing-stock before the world! But why did he not warn me before he *made broad his phylacteries* ? When we boast of our "great projects" while begging for others to bail us out, our "good works" soon become moldy and tarnished!

I don't get too wrought up when told, "We have to show the world we can do it!" Get that bunch of people in there to hear a gospel sermon, not to impress the people, regardless of the man chosen! And Christ didn't ask us to! He said, "GO," and saints

must take it to them: not with "big campaigns" and "broad phylacteries," but by telling the old, old story in our own words as we manifest our love and concern for them!

### **CHRIST GAVE NO BROAD PHYLACTERIES!**

Jesus Christ did not die on the cross that we might make a "big splash" with a "giant rally" in a "city-wide campaign," or to out-do the world in an "eye-popping contest." While arranging these gigantic, colossal extravaganzas, we need to ask what really is the motivating factor behind them. Maybe Jesus touched a nerve in saying: *"All their works they do to be seen of men."* Let us face this question fairly: "Just who are we trying to please, anyway?" The right answer can keep our phylacteries down to proper size! Brethren, we need to ask with Paul: *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."* (Gal. 1:11). Think it over!

### **UPPERMOST ROOMS AND CHIEF SEATS**

Jesus derided those hypocrites for their love for uppermost rooms and chief seats in the synagogue! They delighted in the titles of *"Rabbi, Rabbi."* This same demeanor is yet seen among them as they assemble at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) in Jerusalem. Their assumed piety has impact! But one of our touring party asked how they made their living, and was informed that this robed gentry gets wealth by dealing in pornography and smuggling drugs! We must keep in mind the warning of Jesus: *"But do not ye after their works!"* Theirs is for show! It is little more than a religious facade! Pharisaism still rears its ugly head when we yearn to be "Bro. Big Preacher," who ramrods the "big program of the big church." Such can easily trip over their "broad phylacteries" as they climb the ecclesiastical ladder! Preachers are not the only ones who trip up here: Diotrophes can be found among the elders in many churches, and still loves to have the preeminence (3 Jno. 9). Making broad phylacteries in becoming a "big shot" may impress the world, but God is never impressed! "Playing to the grandstand" will sabotage any team effort! Jesus concluded His teaching with: *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."* (Mt. 23:11-12).



## **GOOD WORKS ARE TO BE SEEN!**

Jesus forcefully taught that we are not to do our alms to be seen of men (Mt. 6:1). But He never taught that we must hide the good we do! Rather He said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Mt. 5:16). Even when observed by men, our good works give glory to God, and not to self! Making broad your phylacteries is like polishing your halo; you come to realize that it would be far more becoming had you put it on the other fellow! Have you checked the width of your own phylacteries lately?

# ***The Righteousness of God***

**DON L. NORWOOD**

As we talk about the righteousness of God in this article, we are not referring to the personal righteousness of God. We are talking, instead, about the righteousness of a person who obeys the Gospel of Christ and becomes righteous as he is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

A sinner who is spiritually reborn (John 3:3,5; Titus 3:4-6) enjoys being righteous in God's sight. *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Colossians 1:13,14). This new righteousness in God is that acceptable spiritual state that one attains because he has entered into Christ (Galatians 3:26-29) and is now a citizen of the kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20).

The Jews believed in the true and living God, but when they rejected Christ and His teaching, they could not be acceptable to God (Romans 9:30-32; 10:1-4). They tried to obtain righteousness by doing the works of the Law of Moses, but that law was not given so that they could obtain righteousness before God through their own works. It was designed, rather, to show them that they were sinners and needed a Saviour, and then to lead them to the Messiah and to God's grace (Galatians 3:19-25).

Christ paid the redeeming price with His life, and sinners can obtain salvation and righteousness before God only by believing

that Christ died for man's sins, that He was buried and raised from the dead on the third day, and that He ascended to heaven to intercede for sinful mankind (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 7:25). Man's **faith** in Christ as Lord, followed by his **willingness to obey the doctrine of Christ** make it possible for him to be saved. *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

Are you one who is a partaker of the righteousness of God?

## ***The New Creature and the New Birth***

**JAMES W. FARRIS**

The concept of newness is an important theme in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul said, *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new."* It is a marvelous blessing to be clean, refreshed, new, and restored to God. The very idea that God can bring a person from a sinful and lost state into a reconciled position with Him is beyond human imagination. Those of the world who are not "new creatures" are still in their sins and do not have the eternal hope of Heaven. How then does one go about becoming a new creature?

Jesus Christ said in John 3:5, *"Unless a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* This **new birth** is required for being a **new creature**! We know that the sins of man cause his division or separation from God (Isaiah 59:1,2). And seeing that *all* have sinned (Romans 3:23), it is necessary to have those sins taken away in order for spiritual newness to take place. Paul said that we are *"buried with Him by baptism into death... and raised to walk in newness of life."*

The contact point of *newness* always centers around a **new birth**, and the new birth takes place as one puts to death the old man of sin. Paul declares that those who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). And if anyone is *"in Christ Jesus"* he is a new creation. Simply, then, **one is baptized into**

**Christ.** It is in baptism that forgiveness and remission of sins is accomplished (Acts 2:38).

Why would anyone put off doing what is required to be a new creature in the eyes of God? Truly, *"Why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, washing away thy sins and calling on the name of the Lord."*

Let us remember that those *in Christ* are new creatures and are called to *"walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4). When we Christians fall, we have the promise that God hears our cries for forgiveness and salvation (1 John 1:9).

For this cause, let us live each day as though we are His people and His creatures. We live in newness. Surely this concept is a driving force in our lives of dedication toward God. May God help and bless us all as we live diligently for Him.

## ***Forgiveness Is Not Yours to Give***

**BOB PLUNKET**

A father sent his son, whom he loved more than anything, far away to work in the Peace Corps. While the son was in that distant country, he did so much good, helping the needy, teaching the ignorant, binding up the wounds of the sick. The father was so proud of him.

But a gang of jealous, hateful men took the son and shamefully killed him. The father's heart was broken. He had lost his only son, his boy who had given his life to help, heal, and save.

Later the men were found and brought to trial. The judge hearing the case forgave the men and turned them loose. They were of a prominent tribe and the judge wanted to appease them. But the father said to the judge, "It was not yours to forgive. I am the wounded party. Forgiveness lies with me."

There are too many today offering forgiveness and salvation arbitrarily on their own terms, but it is not theirs to offer. It is God who has been wounded. It is His Son who was crucified. Who are we to set the terms of pardon?

Jesus, after rising from the dead, gave His terms of pardon:  
*"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."*

***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*** (Mark 16:16). He had already told Nicodemus, ***Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven*** (John 3:5). His chosen apostles were authorized to remit sin in His name. After Peter's bold sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:37) the crowd said, ***What shall we do?*** -Peter said, ***Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins.*** "Saul was told by Annanias, ***Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins*** " (Acts 22:16). The Bible emphasizes that there is more than something to feel. There is something to do. This includes loving God and our neighbor.

**"Well," some might say, "We thought more would respond if we made it simple and convenient." It is not up to the church to decide the terms of pardon. Only God can pardon us, and only His terms are valid.**

## ***"A Way" in a Manger***

**MICHAEL L. KING**

There is a song traditionally sung during the "Christmas" season in recognition of the birth of Jesus, beginning with the words, ***Away in a manger, no crib for His bed.*** The use of the word "away" is to describe the distant city, Bethlehem, where the baby Jesus lay. By a simple manipulation of the word "away" an even more profound lesson is taught with the expression, ***"A way" in a manger.*** Truly, in that manger in Bethlehem lay ***"a way"*** for the entire world to find deliverance!

Almost eight hundred years before the Bethlehem occurrence, Isaiah prophesied, ***And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*** (Isaiah 35:8). The great spokesman of old was describing the joyful flourishing of Christ's kingdom. It was not just *an ordinary way*, but a ***"highway"***, a loftier thoroughfare than had ever before existed, that would lead people to a destination of holy living.

The forerunner of Jesus, John the baptizer, preached repentance in the wilderness *"for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 3:1,2). He was quoting Isaiah the prophet when he said, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"* (Matthew 3:3).

The superstructure for this holy way was laid *"before the foundation of the world,"* that is, *"that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ... in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:4-7).

Isaiah has warned that *"your iniquities have separated between you and your God"* (Isaiah 59:2). The sins of man caused enmity between God and man, as had been stated in the first prophecy in the Bible concerning Jesus (Genesis 3:15). *"The way of peace have they not known"* (Romans 3:17) because of that enmity caused by sin. Jesus became the way by which the enmity that prevailed between Jews and Gentiles, and also between God and the unrighteous, was abolished, (Ephesians 2:15). Those who *"were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ...for he is our peace"* (Ephesians 2:13,14).

During Old Testament times the veil separated the portals of glory from those who could enter only the holy place. That veil was rent from top to the bottom upon the death of Jesus, by which a bold entrance was allowed into the "holiest" through the blood of Christ after sins were remitted (Hebrews 10:17-20).

As the preaching of the disciples of Jesus intensified *"concerning the kingdom of God"*, the result was that, *"some spake evil of that way..."* (Acts 19:9). His way had now become *their way*, which was holiness through His kingdom, the church.

Paul, while yet Saul, admitted, *"I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women "* (Acts 22:4). After learning the truth and being added to the Lord's kingdom, Paul fell under heavy accusations and charges by those who were enemies of Christ. He boldly declared, *"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall*

*be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:14,15).*

Following Paul's defense, Felix, *"having a more perfect knowledge of that way" concerning "Righteousness temperance, and judgment to come,* he [Felix] *"trembled" and granted Paul privileges (Acts 24:14,22).*

Solomon said, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).* In defining the perfect and only acceptable way, Jesus declared, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).*

Are you looking for salvation? You can find "a way in a manger"?

## ***Do You Believe In The Ten Commandments?***

**RANDY BAKER**

This is a relatively common question in religious discussions and can present somewhat of a dilemma for a person who understands the Biblical distinction between the Old and New Covenants. If one responds in the negative to the question, many would equate that with rejection of God and everything that is holy. However, one cannot answer in the affirmative and be true to Biblical teaching on this subject. One passage that deals directly with this subject is Romans 7:1-7. Here, the Apostle Paul speaks of being freed from the law that we might be joined to another, that is, Him who was raised from the dead. If there is any question about which law we are freed from, verse seven clearly identifies it as the law that said, "Thou shalt not covet." This was the tenth commandment that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Many of our sincere religious friends and neighbors have accepted the teaching that the "Ten Commandments" are God's laws for ALL PEOPLE for ALL TIME. Yet, when we turn to Scripture, that is not what we find. In Exodus 19:5-6, where the

covenant was about to be given, it is abundantly clear that this covenant was with the nation of Israel that had been delivered from Egyptian bondage. When Moses repeated the giving of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy, chapter five, he states that the fourth commandment - sabbath observance was given to the nation of Israel, verse 15. They were not given to all mankind, but were given to the nation of Israel as a part of their covenant with God.

That the influence of these teachings has been a great blessing to humanity, no thinking person would deny. They have had an impact beyond the nation of Israel upon the development of civil laws that prohibit theft and murder and made the world a better place for all mankind. Interpersonal relations will improve when individuals practice the last six commandments ... show respect to parents, practice marital fidelity, refuse to steal, tell the truth and do not covet.

The fact that the Ten Commandments were a part of the law that was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross, Colossians 2:14, does not mean that individuals are now free to do as they please. Violating the principles that were laid down in the Ten Commandments would cause one to violate the law of Christ, under which we now live. The exception would be the one with reference to sabbath observance. The other nine commandments are either restated or given in stronger form as a part of the law of Christ. One illustration of this point is the seventh commandment which prohibited adultery is strengthened by Jesus' teaching that not just the physical act of adultery is condemned, but also the looking upon a woman to lust after her. (Matthew 5:28.)

Here are a couple of closing observations. First, the giving of these laws demonstrates the need of the human family to have rules and regulations regarding how they should behave. Jeremiah correctly observed that 'it is not within man that walketh to direct his own footsteps.' (Jeremiah 10:23.) Chaos rules when every individual does what he thinks is right, rather than living by an objective standard. (Judges 17:6; 21:25.) Secondly, the Ten Commandments suggest individual responsibility. They were given to the nation of Israel, but they were to be applied by individuals.

Failure to observe the commandments carried specific penalties. (Exodus 21:17.) The new covenant, or law of Christ, likewise stresses individual accountability. (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

An appropriate response when someone asks if you believe *the* Ten Commandments might be, "I probably believe the same thing about them that you do." Most people who say they believe these were God's law for all people for all time, do not practice 'sabbath observance' and thereby demonstrate that they do not really believe they are binding today. In order to observe the fourth commandment, one would have to worship on Saturday and the overwhelming majority, by their actions, demonstrates that they do not believe it to be binding. Perhaps, it would not be inappropriate to ask why those who say they believe the Ten Commandments are universally binding for all time why they ignore the fourth of the ten.

## ***From What Source Do We Learn Christian Faith?***

**HOLLIS MILLER**

Were you given the choice of only one source from which to learn Christian faith, what source would you choose? Most people would likely choose the New Testament. They would do so because it was written by men who were either directly associated with Jesus or by men who were associates of those who did witness His work and teaching. The associates of Jesus heard Him teach, they witnessed His miracles, and were eye witnesses of many other of his deeds. They also saw him after His bodily resurrection from the dead.

The apostle John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1.) "And the Word became 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." (John 1:14.) The same apostle also wrote: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have



seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you...." (1 John 1:1-3.)

The apostle Matthew wrote concerning the birth of Jesus: "...and she shall bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21.)

Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, quoted Jesus as saying: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) And the writer of Hebrews declared that Jesus tasted death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9.) These, and many similar passages, establish the mission of Jesus to mankind.

Following His resurrection, Jesus commanded His apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things He had commanded them. (Matthew 28:19,20.) The book of Acts is a record of approximately the first thirty years of carrying out the Lord's command. Disciples were made, and churches were established in many lands.

The early disciples of Jesus were called Christians. (Acts 11:26.) However, the most common designation for them was saints. (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; and other texts.) The word saint means holy; holy because those who are so recognized are separated to God, having been delivered from the defilement of sin. The modern idea of saint is one who has been so designated because he/she lived an especially holy and righteous earthly life. Such a concept of saint is unknown in the New Testament.

Sadly, with the passing of the centuries since Jesus and His apostles lived and taught, their teaching has been altered by the philosophies and theologies of men. As a result there is great confusion in the general Christian world. That the confusion is not pleasing to God is made plain by the declaration of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. Reason requires that all of the various systems of belief which wear the name Christian cannot be derived from the teaching of Jesus and

His apostles. How, then, does one decide what to believe? A few questions will help.

**1. Did the writers of the New Testament understand Christianity?** If they did, it is certainly reasonable to turn to them for guidance in matters of faith.

**2. Were the first Christians true Christians?** If they were, then should it not follow that all today who believe as they believed are also true Christians? Does it not also follow that all who refuse to believe as the first Christians believed should at minimum hold their faith in suspect? It is important to recognize that the New Testament does not teach anyone to be a disciple of church doctrine(s). Rather, it teaches us to be disciples of what Jesus and inspired men taught.

**3. If one finds that a particular church doctrine(s) does not agree with the teaching of the new Testament should not the doctrine(s) be abandoned?** If not abandoned, then has the church doctrine not replaced Jesus as Lord? (See Luke 6:46.)

What are some of the basic teachings of the New Testament? (Note: space does not permit mentioning every teaching.) (1) All men must believe in Jesus. (John 3:16.) (2) All men must repent of their sins. (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30.) (3) All who believe in Jesus are to be baptized for/unto the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16.) (4) Worship of God is to be in keeping with the worship He seeks, not patterned after human preference. (John 4:23,24.) (5) Life is to be lived in harmony with Jesus' teaching. (Matthew 7:24,25; 1 John 2:4.) (6) Love is to live in the heart, mercy is to be rendered, and prayers are to be uttered.

Jesus did not come into the world to introduce a series of confusing and contradicting teachings. Rather, He came to draw all men to Himself, and to fashion unity among all who would follow Him. (John 17:20-23.) How sad it is that a faith that is meant to be united in oneness has become a tangle of factions, each of which is going its separate way. Such cannot possibly be harmonized with the Lord's prayer that all who would follow Him be one. What is the solution? Can it be other than a return to the New Testament, permitting it to be the sole guide in all matters pertaining to faith and practice?

# **An Analogy Of The Godhead**

**CHARLES WHITE**

In ancient Israel, the words of *shema* were recited twice daily; "The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deuteronomy 6:4.) And so Israel thought of God as one, although they certainly knew about the plural uses of Eiohim in Genesis and other places in the Bible. In Genesis 1:1,2, the Bible starts out by declaring the plural nature of our God with the words, "In the beginning God..." The Hebrew word translated "God" is Eiohim, and is plural. Then in verse 2, Moses continues the record of the creative activity of God with the words, "...and the Spirit of God..." In the first two verses of the Bible we have God telling us a profound truth about Himself, yet this truth has totally perplexed Bible students and scholars alike for centuries. In these verses God declares Himself to be multiple in form and then introduces us to one of those forms, "...the Spirit...." The multiple form of God is again implied in Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image....'" The two personal pronouns refer to multiple persons, thus God is referring to multiple forms in the Godhead.

What form God is really in we have no way of knowing, nor is it important; it is totally moot. What is important is how God has chosen to reveal Himself, and that is in a plural form. Maybe He did this to facilitate man's understanding Him, since man is the limiting entity and not God. We know God by the self-revelation that He has given us. Idle speculations as to what His real form might be only invite men to postulate various forms and images of God that may be, and probably are, quite foreign to His real Self. One thing for sure; we are not capable in this earthly tabernacle to comprehend His Majesty, so let us be content with comprehending His revelation of Himself to us as best we can.

But when questioned about God's plural form, and especially by those who claim Christians are polytheistic, we find it difficult to explain that although God is one, which we totally accept, that He still is multiple in persons, beings, entities, whatever the form of the Godhead. There are others who like Christians say God is one. But the difference is in the definitions of the "one." They mean by it, uno, single, one, a unit. We mean by it, "a unity."

To answer these questions, I use a very simple illustration that comes out of my many years as an engineer and structural analyst using computers to analyze structures for the loads imposed on them during their service life. I have used this illustration in my own teaching, both in the U.S. and in foreign schools where I have taught and it is usually well understood even by the poorly educated. These computer analysis, using the finite element method, have been performed on space structures, jet aircraft engine and commercial turbine engine components and other equipment used in the mostly military arena. The analogy comes from the computer resources that I have used over the years.

In many large companies, an area, or even a separate building, is reserved for just the large mainframe computers. There are usually several of them hooked together to form a "cluster" of computers, all performing different functions, but called by users, "The computer." For our analogy, let us assume that our computer is composed of three large mainframes that are hooked together in a cluster. In the centre of these computers, assuming they are arranged in a triangular arrangement, sits a printer. Lets assign to computer A the task of doing the I/O, that is, the input/output. This computer takes input from users, translates it into machine language and assigns it to the other computers as needed to complete the task. This computer also serves to digest the output from the other two computers, translates it back into a user readable language and formats it so that it can be output to the user in a form he can understand.

Let us then say that computer B handles all the logical operations; that is, the If-Then's, Go To's, And's, Nan's, Or's, Nor's etc. Then let us say that computer C handles all the mathematical operations, that is, add, subtract, multiply, divide, exponentials, roots, etc. After the task is completed, the printer in the center of the cluster will print out the results.

Now, what one would not see in our cluster of computers we call "The computer," is the hundreds of miles of wire under the floor that connect the three computers together. This is why computer rooms are specially designed; so they can accommodate all the wiring with a space under the floor. This space can be as deep as required, but in my experience were

generally about two feet deep. For the faster, more powerful supercomputers, the actual processor chips and wiring interconnecting them may be submerged in a supercooled environment, such as liquid nitrogen, so as to reduce the electrical resistance in the copper wires. The closer the temperature of the wires approach absolute zero, -459.6 degrees F, the closer the resistance gets to zero, greatly enhancing computer speed and reducing power consumption. This labyrinth of wires under the "floor connects the three computers together so that they operate as one, in complete unity and harmony, as long as the wires are properly connected. That is done when the computer installation is done. The maze of wires under the floor that link the three computers allows them to work as a seamless entity. This is how I think of the Godhead; the three being so intimately connected together that they work as a seamless entity. We might think of this wiring under the floor as that part of the Godhead that has not been revealed because mortal man could not understand it.

If then a user inputs data to "The computer," the I/O computer receives it, translates it, and assigns it proper locations and identifying codes, and sends the data to computers B and C, depending upon the task at hand. All three computers work together on the same input, performing operations as necessary and relaying data back and forth between all three mainframes at the speed of light. The speeds involved in handling the huge amounts of input and output data are dizzying. But the computers handle their respective pieces of it in total unity. Once the task is completed, the results are sent to the printer, or an electronic output file, for the user to access.

So it is with our God. We won't attempt to define which person of the Godhead a particular computer might represent, that would be pushing the illustration beyond its intended limits. We don't want to "allegorize" it. But the point is to show that the three persons of the Godhead act in such close "association," or "cluster," that they indeed are one, and truly Moses could say of our God, that "...our Lord is one Lord," for He is. But the key to really understanding this analogy is the printer. There are not three printers giving three different outputs, nor is there one printer giving three outputs. There is one printer .... and it only gives one output, and that output is God's will for man.

# **Why Should We Study About Miraculous Spiritual Gifts?**

**MIKE BENSON**

Question: "Why should we study 1 Corinthians 12-14 today? Since miraculous spiritual gifts are no longer available (1 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 4:11-13), how are these chapters applicable to the church in the 21st century?"

Answer: There is a number of reasons why we need to investigate these inspired chapters. 1. To help us distinguish between the temporary and permanent.

Some insist that miraculous gifts continue to be exercised today. While sincere in their convictions, they fail to recognize that the special "corroborating" measures (Hebrews 2:3,4) of the Spirit were intended to sustain the church only until such time as the written New Testament was completed. These gifts were never meant to be employed as an on-going or age-lasting means of producing faith.

2. To help reinforce the fact that miraculous gifts were actually present in the first-century. It is not uncommon to find those who deny the reality of the Holy Spirit's work and power in Scripture. In his book *Deceptions and Myths of the Bible*, Lloyd Graham states: "It takes a lot of ignorance to believe this literally, yet, literally, millions do. And then we wonder what's wrong with our world. What better world would you expect of such, ignorance?" The *Humanist Manifesto II* [Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973, p. 16] claims to "find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of the supernatural." Thomas Jefferson, one-time president of the United States, scissored from his Bible all references to the miraculous.

David Hume, the nineteenth-century English skeptic, categorically denied the possibility of all such wonders and signs. William Barclay, famous Church of Scotland scholar and author often attempted to "explain away" supernatural phenomena recorded in Scripture.

3. To help us differentiate between genuine miraculous gifts of the first-century and pseudo "miracles" of the present age. First-century supernatural endeavors were performed independent of any secondary causes. They were not the result of any natural phenomena. By contrast, modern-day "miracles" are fraudulent and devoid of any divine element. (Compare Matthew 24:24.) For instance, we need to study all the Scriptures, including those which deal with miraculous spiritual gifts. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

As Christians, we must not only guard against all such forms of unbelief, but we must be ready to defend the integrity of the Word of God. (1 Peter 3:15; compare John 20:30-31.) To fail to study what the New Testament says about miraculous gifts is, in effect, to surrender one of the pillars of our faith to infidelity.

"... Peter Popoff, 'miracle-working' cleric of Upland, California. Popoff, who claimed the supernatural ability to give revealed information about people in his audiences (in conjunction with 'healing' them) was receiving such information through a tiny hearing aid, messages being transmitted by his wife from backstage. Prominent magician, James Randi, exposed the entire affair on nationwide T.V. Randi also demonstrated that Popoff was providing rented wheel-chairs for people who could actually walk, then, at his services, he was pronouncing them 'healed.'" [Wayne Jackson, "The Miracles of Christ vs. Modern Miracles," Reason & Revelation, February, 1990, Vol. X, No. 2, p. 11.] As people who wish to adhere to the Scriptures, we have an obligation to expose this kind of duplicity and to show sincere seekers of truth the difference between the false pageantry of high-profile charlatans and that which was done by humble first-century devotees of Christ (1 John 4:1.)

"Charismatics try to identify 'that which is perfect' as Jesus, and draw an erroneous conclusion that miracles are to continue until the second advent of Christ. However, the language will not allow for such an interpretation. The word so translated is the Greek word 'teleios', meaning 'complete, of full age, mature.' It

appears 19 times in 17 verses and never refers to Jesus Christ. In addition, the word is neuter in its gender; that is, it refers to neither male nor female, but to an object without gender, in this case the scriptures."

[Todd Clippard, "Do Miracles Still Happen Today?", Words of Truth, March 2001, p. 4.]

"In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 nine spiritual gifts are mentioned, including prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (supernatural). In the next chapter, verse 8, the writer says, '...but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.' Paul maintains in this passage that miracles would be done away. In the statement to follow, verse 9 and 10, he tells us when this would happen: 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.' At the time Paul wrote the foregoing, the New Testament was in the process of being written. No one inspired man among the Christians to whom Paul is referring was endowed with all knowledge; but when the written New Testament (called by the apostle "that which is perfect" and designated in James 1:25 as 'the perfect law of liberty') was completed, then that which was in part (the various spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, including supernatural knowledge) was done away... In the concluding verse of 1 Corinthians 13 Paul says, 'But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.' After the nine spiritual gifts enumerated by the apostle were done away at the completion of the written New Testament, only faith, hope and love-were to abide, 'These three.' Were miracles to be perpetual during the New Testament dispensation, Paul would have said, 'But now abideth...these twelve' (the nine spiritual gifts plus faith, hope, and love.)" [James M. Tolle, "Spiritual Gifts," Have Miracles Ceased?, p. 10.)

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