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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***"For whatever things were written before were
written for our learning"***

The apostle Paul said this, in Romans 15:4, concerning things written in the Old Testament which was written hundreds of years before the New Testament was written. Even though we do not live today under the Old Testament, yet those things written in the Old Testament of the Bible are for our learning, that is, we can learn today lessons for us from those things. In the Old Testament beginning with Adam and Eve we are introduced to many many people, such as, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and others and from their lives we can still learn many valuable lessons for us today. One such man was Naaman, about whom we read in the book of second Kings chapter 5. Naaman, the Bible says, was a great and honourable man in the eyes of his master whom he served in his army. But he was a leper. May be he had white patches all over his body. One day, we read, when he learned through his little servant girl, who was from Israel, that there was a man of God in Israel who could heal Naaman of his ugly disease, without wasting any time, he arrived in Israel with his horses and chariots to meet the man of God. As he stood at his door, the prophet in order to humble his pride and to teach him that he owed his cure not to man, but solely to the power of God, did not come out to meet him and neither did he call him inside, but sent out a message to him that he should go and dip himself seven times in

the river Jordan. Naaman didn't like that at all, he got upset and very angry. Feeling affronted and despising the means Naaman started to go back home in a passion saying, "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" But, on the way, as the story goes, his servants who were accompanying him soothed his temper, and urged him to dip in the Jordan, saying, "If the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?" So Naaman changed his mind, humbling himself, he came to river Jordan and dipped seven times, as the man of God had said, and he was cured immediately. The Bible says, "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

The most important lesson that Naaman learned that day was that when God specifies something, it cannot be substituted with another. When God through His prophet has said "Jordan," He did mean Jordan, not Abanah or Pharpar or any other. Just as in the case of the building of the great Ark, God had commanded Noah to use "gopherwood," (Genesis 6:14), and the Bible says, "thus Noah did, according to all that God had commanded him, so he did." (Gen. 6:22).

The same principle applies to us also today. We need to learn not to change or substitute or add or take away anything from what God had said in the New Testament of the Bible, as we are also warned in Revelation 22:18 & 19. For example, Christ taught, in Mark 16:16, that one who believes and is baptized will be saved. Christ is the Saviour, and therefore He has every right to specify what one must do to be saved from sin. And, when He says, "he who believes and is baptized will be saved," He means the very same thing. It cannot mean that one can be saved by belief or faith only, without being baptized. It cannot mean that one is already saved when one believes in Christ, and that one may be baptized later just to show what has already taken place inside by faith alone. This is absolutely different from what Christ had asked man to do to be saved. Some, like Naaman, today get upset, when they are taught to both believe and be baptized to be saved. Naaman had thought that Abanah and Pharpar can replace Jordan, as many think today that only believing in Christ can save them, and that baptism is not necessary. Also when Christ said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved," it cannot mean to baptize little babies, because infants are not capable of believing in Christ.

Baptism is not a command for little children who cannot believe. It is also worthy to note that Christ had commanded to be baptized, not sprinkled or poured. The Greek word "baptisma," Christ had used, means a burial or immersion, not sprinkle or pour. In Romans 6:3 and 4, the apostle Paul explained that by being baptized one is buried with Christ into His death. Colossians 2:12 says, "buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead." Baptism symbolizes or portrays Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

Like Naaman, who at first had rejected God's command of specifically going to Jordan to dip and be cleaned, many today have rejected God's specific command to believe and be baptized to be saved. But Naaman was persuaded to do exactly what God had asked through His prophet to do. Naaman repented and humbled himself and did according to the command of God and was healed. Should not those who want to be saved and go to heaven to live with God eternally do the same today? Please let us hear from you, if we could help you in any way in your obedience to God's will.

Salvation In The Name Of Christ

J.C. CHOATE

If we are aware of the fact that there is a God in heaven, and that we are sinners, then we recognize our need for salvation. At the same time, we want to see how salvation is related to the name of Christ.

Much has been said about a name, whether it is important or not. Those of the religious world often reason that the name doesn't matter, that one name is as good as another. They use this kind of logic because there are many religious names and titles, and they are trying to convince themselves, and others, that it really doesn't matter which name one wears, or uses, and that in the end, that all names are acceptable. But in the secular world, especially in the business world, we don't talk like that, do we? All such people recognize the importance of the name. Businesses spend world's of money in trying to popularize their name. As often pointed out, when we use a well known product, we usually have to pay more for

it, because we are having to help pay for all of the advertising that was done to make that product popular. When it comes to writing cheques, we must sign our name, for it to be cashed. Certainly the one receiving the cheque would not find it funny if you left your name off. Further, when we buy a house, property, a car, or whatever it may be, if there is much value attached to it, then we want to buy it in our name. No one would ever dare to do otherwise.

Most of us want our wives to wear our name. The same goes for our children. That denotes that our wives and our children belong to us, and that we are responsible for them. They also recognize that, and look to us for their needs.

Even with our own personal name, it is very important that we keep a good name. We are able to do that by being honest, always telling the truth, keeping our promises, paying our debts, and living a good life. When we do that, then those around us are able to believe in us, to trust us, and to have confidence in us. They are not afraid of us, not afraid to do business with us, or to be seen in our presence. They know that we'll always do them right, and that we are the kind of people that they can come to if they have some special need, or if they need someone to turn to for advice. Now having a good name like that does not come by accident. We have to protect our name and do whatever is necessary to keep a good name. There are many benefits that come to us when we have such a name. On the other hand, if we are liars, dishonest, won't pay our debts, and so on, then we also have a name, but a bad name. Now what kind of friends would we have with a name like that? People would shun us. It would be hard to get a job. No one would want to loan us any money if we had some special need. So you can see, that one's name is very important, and we would do well to try to keep a good name. Solomon said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1). How true that is!

Now, if the name is so important in our personal lives, in business, or whatever, then how could we fail to see the importance of the name when it comes to religion? We would have to be blind to fail to see that. But in this case, it is not a matter of human reasoning, either for it or against it, but it is a matter of what the Bible says about it. If we believe God's word then we are going to have to accept what He says. With that thought in mind, please listen to these words: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other

name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). According to the context here, Peter was speaking of Jesus Christ. Please notice that he said that salvation was in the name of Christ. No, salvation is not in the name of any man, religious or otherwise, but it is in the name of Christ.

Since salvation is in the name of Christ then we can understand the emphasis that is placed on his name in relation to obeying to gospel, the church, as individual followers of Christ, and the work we do for him.

For example, we are told that when we believe in Christ, repent of our sins, and are baptized for the remission of our sins, that we are to do that in the name of Christ. (Acts 2:38). Christ himself said that we should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Since Christ built the church, and it belongs to him, in as much as he gave his life for it, and he is the saviour of it (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23), then it should come as no surprise that it would bear his name. In Romans 16:16, in speaking of the various congregations of the church, then Paul wrote, "The churches of Christ salute you." In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Remember now that he is speaking to the church at Corinth, but he refers to the church there as being the body of Christ. What is the body? Paul said in Ephesians 4:4 that there is one body. So whatever it is, there is just one. Then when we turn to Colossians 1:18 we have Paul speaking of Christ, and he says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Also speaking of Christ, in Ephesians 1:22, 23, he declared, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Finally, in Ephesians 5:23. Paul wrote, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." Please notice that in all of these verses that the body is the church and the church is the body. Now, if Paul spoke of the body of Christ and the body is the church, then that means that he was speaking of the church of Christ. But how many churches are there? There is just one body, and the body is the church, so therefore there is but one church and it is the church of Christ. There may be many

congregations of that one church, but all of those congregations, regardless of where they are located, make up the Lord's church, so that means that there is but one church. If it is Christ's church, then what else could it be called? If it is not the Lord's church, then it is all right to use some other name. But remember, that if it does not wear the Lord's name then that means that it does not belong to Christ.

Next even the members of the church are to wear the name of Christ. In Acts 11:26 we are told that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. In Acts 26:28, after Paul had preached to King Agrippa, he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." And finally, Peter said, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16). In New Testament times those who followed Christ were known as Christians. In other words, they honoured their Lord by wearing his name. Should it be any different today? How can we honor the Lord if we do not wear his name or if we substitute his name with the names of men? Think about that.

And finally, whether we are meeting for worship, we are involved in secular work, or whatever we do, Paul exhorted, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Colossians 3:17). If we belong to the Lord then we should honour him in everything that we do and say.

Listen! It is the Lord!

THOMAS DOHLING

The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." [Jeremiah 31:3].

Let us examine some portions of John 21. The scene is the shore of the Sea of Tiberius. Jesus had just helped His disciples catch a boatful of fish. It is dawn. Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them: "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught. Come and eat breakfast." (verses 10, 12). Jesus then distributed the bread and fish among His disciples.

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." (v.15.)

He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." (v.16.)

He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." (v.17.)

Do we hear His Word? Does Jesus speak to us asking, "Do you love me more than these?" He says, "I delivered you when you were bound in sins tight grip. When you were bleeding, I healed your wound and gave you everlasting life." "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" [John 8:32]. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [John 14:6]. "But now having been set free from sin, and having become servants to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" [Romans 6:22]. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" [Romans 8:2].

I came searching for you when you were lost and wandering about without a Shepherd and having found you, I brought you into My fold so that you can be close to Me. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" [Luke 19:10]. "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" [1 Peter 2:25].

I turned your darkness into light. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" [Ephesians 5:8]. "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" [Colossians 1:12]. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" [1 Peter 2:9].

He says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." [Isaiah 49:15]

"I have loved you with an everlasting love" therefore, "with lovingkindness have I drawn you" [Jeremiah 31:3]. My love is

higher than the heights above, deeper than the depths below; it is free and faithful.

You see soon see My glory when my work of grace is complete. You will be ushered into eternal and you shall be inheritors of My possession. "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." [1 Peter 5:4]. "So, do you love Me?" He asks...

We can feebly complain to Him that our love for Him is weak and faint and yet we must tell Him from our hearts that we do love Him and adore Him for all that He is and has done for us and pray for grace to love Him more, from the depths of our beings.

So, how many times must He ask us if we love Him? If we do love Him then let us do what He says.

Jesus said: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father said to Me, so I speak" [John 12:48-50].

Moses—Died Too Soon, Grave Unmarked

JACK HARRIMAN

Moses was one of the greatest men the world has ever known, and he was Israel's greatest leader. Even God said so! In view of this, his premature death and unique burial are strange indeed (Deuteronomy 28-34)

Moses died just outside of the Promised Land because he failed to give God credit for providing water from a rock (Numbers 20). He had spoken and acted as if he had brought the water by his own power.

Now, just before Israel's entrance into her inheritance, God instructed Moses to go apart into the mountain overlooking the Promised Land. It would seem that this was done so that Moses could get a mental picture of the land and of Israel possessing it. Through his leadership, the people had been saved many times during the past forty years. Now, God wanted Moses to face death

knowing they would finally pass over the Jordan and receive all that He had promised. Through this preview, Moses could die in peace.

When the New Testament speaks of Old Testament events, it usually sheds more light on matters, but in the case of Moses' burial at the hands of angels, the mystery is deepened (Jude 6-9). The most logical explanation for the unmarked grave seems to be God's determination to prevent the burial place from becoming a religious shrine.

Today we can learn five important lessons from these last days in Moses' life.

LESSON NUMBER ONE

Before you die, speak clearly and earnestly to your people about being faithful to God after you are gone. Moses did! Too many go to their grave leaving too much unsaid.

LESSON NUMBER TWO

Willingly hand your work over to another before you are gone. Moses did! Even though there was not another man on earth who could have done the work that Moses did, the time came to hand it over to someone else. This is especially applicable to preachers, elders, and other church leaders.

LESSON NUMBER THREE

Don't get careless in your last years. Moses did! Thirty-eight years he avoided such sin, but got careless just two years short of the Promised Land.

LESSON NUMBER FOUR

Face death without murmur and complaint. Moses did! Neither his body nor his mind was worn out. He had not even lived as long as his father before him, but there is no hint that he tried to bargain with God for more time.

LESSON NUMBER FIVE

Go up to the mountain top and look at the Promised Land. Moses did! He saw its beauty and bountifulness, and he got a mental picture of Israel in it. Of course, I mean heaven. Paul and John were both provided a brief visit there and what they saw inspired them to endure to the end (2 Corinthians 12; Revelation 4). The Word of God provides information about that place, information which enables us to build a mental image of heaven and ourselves in it.

When Should Children Be Baptized?

DAVID R. PHARR

Children who are brought up under the influence of godly parents usually express the desire to be baptized at an early age. Parents are rightly concerned about giving their children proper guidance. They want to avoid anything that might appear to hinder the child's obedience to God, but on the other hand, they do not want the child to act prematurely.

A young person should not be baptized (1) until he or she has understanding and conviction about sin, (2) until he or she understands fundamental facts about God's plan of redemption, (3) and until he or she is ready to accept the responsibilities of the Christian life.

Understanding the plan of salvation is more than merely being able to recite that baptism is "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). There must be some understanding of grace, atonement, the Deity of Christ, and His death on our behalf. Certainly these things must be taught to young people on their level, but a person is not ready for baptism without a degree of knowledge and appreciation of such matters. In some cases we may have explained baptism to those who lack a sufficient foundation in other matters to really grasp it.

Baptism is not *the end*. It is *the beginning*. The commitment to Christian discipleship is not an easy commitment. Parents and teachers should be careful to explain this. Of course, it is vital that parents and teachers teach by the influence of their own consecrated lives. Some parents want their children to be baptized, but they do not seem to want them to attend faithfully. It sometimes appears that some are pleased for their children to be baptized, **but their ongoing influence gives more emphasis to their place in the world than to their place in the church.**

A youth's decision to be baptized should not be based on his or her having reached a certain age. The calendar has nothing to do with it. Neither should one be baptized simply because others have been. Genuine conviction, understanding, faith, and repentance are essential steps into baptism. Faithfulness and purity of life are essential afterwards. We love to see children give their lives to the Lord, but this requires more than just being baptized.

Did Jacob See God?

WAYNE JACKSON

How do we harmonize Jacob's claim that he saw God (Genesis 32:30) with the New Testament statement that no man has seen God at any time (John 1:18)?

First, it must be noted that as to His actual essence, God, our heavenly Father, is a spirit-being (Isaiah 31:3; John 4:24). As a spirit, He does not possess the nature of humanity. A spirit does not consist of **flesh** and bones (Luke 24:39). When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord observed that the apostle had not learned that truth from *"flesh and blood,"* but from the *"Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17). It is clear, therefore, that Jehovah is not physical. Contrary to the assertion of some cultists, He is not a man (Hosea 11:9). Thus, as a spirit, God dwells in light unapproachable (1 Timothy 6:16). He is invisible to the eye of humans (John 1:18; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 4:20).

While it is true that God cannot be observed as pure spirit-essence, it is also the case that Deity has, on special occasions during the historical period when His redemptive plan was being gradually unfolded, assumed temporary corporeal forms through which He communicated to select individuals. Three "men" visited Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, yet one of them was "Jehovah" who "appeared" to the patriarch (Genesis 18:1). Jacob struggled with a "man" who was really a divine being in temporary human form (Genesis 32:24,30). When Moses requested to see God's "glory", Jehovah suggested that He would make His *"goodness pass before"* the prophet (Exodus 33:18,19). The subsequent context suggests that the Lord's character was revealed to Moses, not the actual essence of Deity (34:5-7).

Too, there are other indirect ways in which God may be seen. His invisible traits (His power and wisdom, for example) are observed in the things which He has created (Romans 1:20). He is seen in the revelation of His Son (John 1:18; 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). He is "seen" representatively in the rich spiritual blessings which He bestows (Matthew 5:5 with John 3:3-5; 3:36).

Passages, therefore, that speak of seeing God, and not seeing God, do not conflict. They simply represent different vantage points.

Who Is the Angel of the Lord

T. PIERCE BROWN

The expression, "*The angel of the Lord*" appears in the King James Version of the Old Testament more than 50 times and in the New Testament about a dozen times. Our question is, "Does the expression signify an ordinary angelic being, or does it relate to a divine being — what is called a 'theophany'?"

I do not know that the answer to this question will be of any practical value to us in living the Christian life, and it surely does not need to be known for one to be saved. However, it is our judgment that any truth revealed in God's Word is of some value to us, even if at any given moment we may not see any value in it.

It seems evident that in Exodus:2ff, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, that he was the God who said, "*I AM*". When Jesus said in John 1:24, "*Except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins,*" and when He said in John 8:58, "*Before Abraham was, I am,*" He was affirming that He was Deity. He was God in the flesh—Emmanuel.

In Genesis 21:17, when the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, he said in verse 18, "*I will make of him a great nation.*" It is evident that Deity was speaking. When Abraham was offering Isaac on the altar, the angel of the Lord said to him in Genesis 22:15ff that he would make of him a great nation and bless him.

It seems highly probable that since John 1:18 says, "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,*" and 1 Timothy 6:16 reveals the same truth, that these various appearances of Deity, in the burning bush, in the form of a heavenly or angelic Being, or in the similitude of a man or "the son of man", were actually manifestations of the Second Person of the Godhead, of the One (the Word) who was in the beginning *with* God and who was God (John 1:1), who *became flesh and dwelt among us*. Jesus Himself said in John 14:9, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" Of course He was not contradicting Himself when He said, "*No man*

hath seen the Father," for He simply meant that He was a manifestation of the Father.

So, since Jesus said in John 8:58, *"Before Abraham was, I AM,"* and since there were many occasions where persons saw *"the angel of the Lord,"* who was then identified in the same passage as "the Lord" or "God" and was worshipped as God, the only logical and scriptural conclusion we can reach is that in such instances the expression "the angel of the Lord" refers to Deity. A study of the passages shows that "the Lord" who was speaking was the one whom we know as Jesus, acting in His role as mediator between God and man.

We need to realize, however, that the word "angel" itself simply means messenger or one who is sent, and may refer to a human being, an angelic created being, or to a manifestation of Deity. The context will help us to determine which it is.

What Makes A Christian?

DAVID THURMAN

The religious world is full of confusion about what makes a Christian. Some claim it is the theology one teaches, another contends it is simply being a good person. Others hold the view that it is completely an act of God and man has nothing to do with it. Still others argue that being a Christian is all about man trying to find God on his own. Exactly what makes a Christian?

I don't think there has ever been a Christian quite like the apostle Paul. *"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me"* (1 Cor. 15:9-10). The apostle describes his life simply. He had been a staunch opponent of Jesus and His church. Then God's grace reached out to him and from that moment on there was no other servant of God who worked as diligently as he did. It would seem that once God's grace touched Paul, he became one of the very best Christians possible. What made Paul such a good Christian?

IN PAUL'S OWN WORDS

Listen to Paul's own words as he tells how he came to be a Christian. *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today. And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. And it came about that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And I answered, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name'" (Acts 22:3-16).*

In these verses Paul recounts the events that led to his becoming a Christian. In these words he will tell us what makes a Christian and where a Christian gets the power to live as God wants.

GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE

Paul gives the credit to whom it belongs. It was *"The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you*

will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:14-15). It was God who chose Paul. It was God who sent Jesus to appear to him. It was God and God alone who thought Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the church, would make a good Christian.

A REBEL IS CHOSEN

I don't think anyone else would have thought of Saul as a potential Christian, let alone an apostle. He had torn up the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3-4) and was on his way to Damascus to tear up the church there (22:5). Yet, God could see in Saul the kind of man he was looking for.

Everyone of us is like Saul to some degree or other. *"There is none righteous, not even one"* (Rom. 3:10). Everyone of us has gone off in our own direction and to some degree we have opposed God. We may not have persecuted the church or the name of Jesus, but *"All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way"* (Is. 53:6). In simple terms, we have all rebelled against God and opposed Him. Like Saul of Tarsus we are on the wrong side in the war with evil.

A REBEL IS BROKEN

Saul was knocked to the ground by the intense light. He was also startled to hear those words, *"I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting"* (22:8). For a long time Saul had been convinced that Christians were blasphemers. They had concocted the story of Jesus and His resurrection and needed to be eradicated. So, Saul had persecuted the church in Jerusalem and was looking to take his act on the road to attack Christians in other places.

But Jesus bowled him over. Suddenly, Saul was blind physically, but spiritually his eyes were opened. He realized that he had been fighting God all along. Instead of stamping out blasphemy, he had been blaspheming himself! No wonder he had to be led by the hand. His whole life fell apart in the few seconds Jesus spoke to him.

Everyone who will be a Christian must experience a brokenness like this. Sometimes it is an act of God like this, where a person's whole life crumbles and nothing makes sense. Other times it is just a series of choices that leads to despair and hopelessness, such as addiction or crime. Then, in the middle of

the crisis, a person sees clearly how empty life has become.

How many of the greatest servants of God went through this process of being knocked down into brokenness? Peter *"went out and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:62) after denying Jesus. Moses fled to the desert where he spent forty years tending sheep. Jacob fled from his brother Esau and spent twenty years away from home. Over and over again we read that the men and women of God all went through trials and struggles that brought them to their knees.

This principle is still true. No one can come to Christ with head held high. We all approach on our knees acknowledging His holiness and our wickedness. A Christian is made only after a person admits their spiritual bankruptcy. Saul did this and never forgot it. Decades after his conversion he would still say, *"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all"* (1 Tim. 1:15).

A REBEL IS WASHED

When Ananias came to Saul, he gave him little to do. Ananias knew Saul had come to believe in Jesus. He probably could tell by his actions and demeanor that Saul was a broken man, willing and eager to repent. But Saul still needed to be cleaned. So Ananias tells him, *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name"* (Acts 22:16). Saul had come to believe in Jesus, was broken and willing to turn from his sin, but he still needed to have his sins removed. He was still in his sin. Ananias encourages him not to wait, but to be washed of his sin right then by being immersed in the name of Jesus. Then Saul would be on his way to becoming the great apostle Paul.

This process is still required for all who are broken and want to come to God. Your faith is vital, your repentance imperative. But you still need to be washed of your sins. Paul himself explains why. *"Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions"* (Col 2:12-13). Paul tells us we were dead and then made alive. This took place when we died and were buried in baptism, having our sins washed away. Then, and only after baptism, can you live the

new life God wants for you.

A SERVANT IS MADE

After all this, Saul was ready to serve God. He was now able to become the very best Christian possible. What about you and your life? You, too, need to see that God is reaching out to you in spite of your sin. God wants to make you a servant too, a servant who may do great things in His service. Face your sin, admit your need for God and His grace. Turn from sin and be washed in baptism. That is what made Paul a Christian. It will make you one too. Be washed - today.

Why We Believe The Bible

GEORGE W. DEHOFF

RECENTLY I asked a college friend if he believed the Bible. "Why should a fellow want to believe the Bible?" he answered. "What difference does it make anyway?" This, I am persuaded, is the attitude of many, so I give attention to his question.

1. I want to believe the Bible because it teaches that I will live after death.

With other books death is the end of man. With the Bible it is a beginning. Millions of books are in the great libraries of the world. None save the Bible teach that man as the same conscious personality — the same individual — lives after death. Others have said that man's goodness lives on, or that his spirit is reincarnated and becomes a dog, an insect, a cow or a donkey but the Bible alone advances the idea that the same individual lives again (Jno. 5:28-29).

Every sane individual wants to live beyond death. No man wants to go down into the darkness of the tomb to come up no more. Therefore, every normal individual should want to believe the Bible.

2. I want to believe the Bible because I want to go to a better home than this.

Many books have told of Utopias. Only one book has ever seriously told man that he might dwell at last in an ideal abode. That book is the Bible.

We live in a wonderful world. Its joys and friendships grow sweeter as the years go drifting by. Yet, who has not seen poverty, crime, sin, suffering and distress on every hand? Who has not wished that he might dwell where all such is banished?

The Bible teaches that in that fairest of summerlands there will be no death, no pain and no sorrow for "the former things are passed away."

Yes, I want to believe the Bible!

3. *I want to believe the Bible because I want to meet my friends who've gone before.*

I have known and loved some of earth's finest friends. Some have passed on. I would like to see them again. To me, seeing them again is no more unreasonable than meeting them the first time. I want to see again the friendly smile and clasp again the friendly hand. The Bible is the one book that teaches I may do this.

Ah yes, I want to believe the Bible. It does make a difference!

4. *I want to believe the Bible because I have always been taught that it is the truth.*

One should not believe something just because he has always been taught that it is the truth. Yet, when one has been taught something so long and so earnestly that it has become a part of his very being, he should not give it up without good and sufficient reason. I have always believed that the Bible is God's word. I have found neither good nor sufficient reason for giving up that faith.

5. *I want to believe the Bible because the greatest scientists, outstanding philosophers and best men of all ages past have accepted it as God's word.*

By the preponderance of evidence we determine the validity of questioned legal documents, settle disputed dates, and ascertain the facts of science. Should we use this method in dealing with the Bible, we would be driven to the irresistible conclusion that it is God's word.

A few notable examples will show us what others have thought of the Bible:

Dr. William Lyon Phelps, noted educator, "... I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college education is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

Sir Walter Scott, on his deathbed, "Bring me the Book!" When asked what book he replied, "There is but one Book!"

Dr. Schurman, President of Cornell University, "The Bible is the most valuable document in English literature. No man can be called an uneducated man who knows his Bible and no man can be called an educated man who does not know his Bible."

Andrew Jackson, "That Book is the rock on which this republic rests."

Thomas Jefferson, "I have always said, and will always say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better homes, better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands."

Abraham Lincoln, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can and the balance by faith and you will live and die a better man."

John Quincy Adams. "The first and almost the only book deserving of universal distinction is the Bible. I speak as a man of the world to the men of the world and I say to you, 'Search the Scriptures'."

Daniel Webster, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible our country will go on prospering, but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury us and our glory in profound obscurity."

Theodore Roosevelt, "Almost every man who has by his life work added to the sum of human achievements of which the race is proud, almost every such man has based his life work largely upon the teachings of the Bible."

Woodrow Wilson, "A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of a knowledge of the Bible."

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, "Behold it upon the table. I never fail to read it, and every day with the same pleasure. . . . Not only is one's mind absorbed, it is controlled and the same can never go astray with this book for its guide."

Lord Roberts, "You will find in this book guidance when you are in health, comfort when you are in sickness and strength when you are in adversity."

Isaac Walton, English author, "Every hour I read you it kills a sin or lets a virtue in to fight it."

Jean Jacques Rousseau, French philosopher and author, "I must confess to you that the majesty of the scriptures astonishes

me; ... if it had been the invention of man, the invention would have been greater than the greatest heroes."

Charles A. Dana, American journalist, "Of all books the most indispensable and the most useful, the one whose knowledge is the most effective is the Bible. There is no book like the Bible. In every controversy the Bible contains the right answer and pleads for the right policy."

John Ruskin, "Read your Bible. Make it your daily business to obey it in all you understand. To my early knowledge of the Bible I owe the best part of my tests for literature."

Immanuel Kant, German metaphysician, "The existence of the Bible as a book for the people is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced."

Thomas Henry Huxley, English biologist, "The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed; down to modern times no state has a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account; in which the duties so much more than the privileges of the rulers are insisted on. . . . Nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare of the state in the long run depends on the welfare of the citizens so strongly laid down."

Isaac Newton, "I account the scriptures of God the most sublime philosophy."

Patrick Henry, "There is a Book worth all other books in the world!"

I want to agree with the great and good men who have said, "The Bible is God's word." The human mind is so constituted that it believes only when sufficient evidence is brought to bear upon it. We must, therefore, have some reason for believing the Bible, some evidence upon which to base our faith. As we search for that evidence much will depend on whether we do it with a proreligious bias, an irreligious bias, or with an open mind. To be open-minded does not mean to open the doors and windows of your mind so that all of the trash in the country may blow in. It does mean to examine carefully the evidence found.

There is abundant reason why one should want to believe the Bible. Let us search, therefore, for evidence which will lead us to believe it.

The Teacher

JOHN GIPSON

There was no lack of religious teaching in the Palestine of the first century. The scribe was a familiar figure both in Galilee and Judea. He was met everywhere — in the synagogue, the marketplace, in the houses of the rich. He was known and greeted with respect wherever he went. With him were numerous attached followers and eager scholars who were expected to retain the material taught and to transmit it without variation. He was often referred to as a “lawyer” or a “teacher of the law”.

Among these various religious teachers came *The Teacher!* He was one who taught, not as the scribes and Pharisees, but as one having authority. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, addressed Jesus by saying, “*Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him*” (John 3:2).

Nicodemus was right. Jesus was a teacher come from God! Moreover, the Father gave Him commandment what to say and what to speak. For this reason you can understand why God would say of Jesus, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him*” (Matthew 17:5).

While the world has known many teachers, there is none like Jesus. He was in the beginning *with* God, and was God. In Him “*are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*,” and He cares for us. This Teacher alone holds the key to life — abundant and eternal.

How long has it been since you have sat at the feet of Jesus? Has He provided your continuing education? Why seek out those whose knowledge is partial when The Teacher is here?

We cannot afford to reject His instruction, as some did during His personal ministry. Of them He said, “*The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, someone greater than Solomon is here*” (Matthew 12:42).

Great privileges entail great responsibilities. Listen to The Teacher!

Prayer... Is Powerful And Effective

DAYTON KEESEE

What a concept! In a world of individuals burdened with multiple needs, there is the sublime and divine decree, *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective"* (James 5:16).

Under the title, "Why Prayer Could Be Good Medicine," Dianne Hales in the March 12, 2003 issue of *Parade Magazine*, makes reference to "hundreds of scientific investigations into faith and healing" (page 4). This is referred to as "a new frontier for medical research." This identifies another dramatic example of where science is trying to catch up with Scripture! Two thousand years ago Paul exhorted, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6,7).

CLEARING THE AIR

It needs to be clearly understood that human utterances to an unseen ear are no magical panacea for human problems. Prayer must be by someone, to someone, about something. Paul wrote, *"...present your requests to God."* The success of prayer is not just saying a prayer, but confidence in the Source to whom it is said. Therefore, James wrote, *"...when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord"* (James 1:6,7). Therefore, the key is not in man or in a prayer expressed by man, but rather through man's faith in the One to whom the prayer is expressed. Paul stated it well: *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God"* (2 Corinthians 3:5).

GOD'S SUFFICIENCY MAKES PRAYER POWERFUL

Prayer is powerful because it addresses God, who *"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"* (Ephesians 3:20). God's power can relate to us, for us, and in us. Science may still be researching this

matter, but David through Scriptures assured us of this potential some 3,000 years ago. Note the wide range of emotional, physical, and spiritual needs in just the 6th Psalm, verses 2-9:

"Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish... Turn, O Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love... I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fall because of all my foes... The Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer."

There are so many human needs, and in so many ways God is sufficient! Even death is swallowed up in victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, or as Paul put it, *"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:21; see also 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 5:8,9; Romans 6:3-5).

These grand, Biblical facts should lead each reader to say with the Psalmist: *"I love the Lord, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live"* (Psalm 116:1,2).

It is vital for us to note that throughout the Scriptures, those who were urged to pray, and those whose prayers were heard and answered, were those in a praying relationship with God. David was God's anointed; those addressed in the letters to the churches and individuals in the New Testament were all a part of the church. God's promises of succor and help, in answer to prayers, are to His children who have the right of children to petition their Father. If we have this relationship with God, we must *be faithful* children. If we have not yet been born into His family, we must first *obey* Him before His promises apply to us (John 9:31).

Don't forget to pray! Prayer is powerful.

A Perfect World

WAYNE BARRIER

The present world is far from perfect. We sometimes dream of a perfect world, a place free from the troubles we face every day. Great effort is made to make this world a better place. Many people are overcome by the never-ending failure of life in this world to

reach a state of perfection.

We are created by God, who is perfect (Matthew 5:48), and are promised that we can be made perfect (Colossians 1:28), and can go to a new and perfect world (Revelation 21:1) when our short time in this present world is over. Our life here is simply a time to prepare for eternal life.

What a wonderful way to live! We can live our life on earth and enjoy the greatest gifts possible, provided by God to His children (1 Corinthians 13:13) and look forward to heaven. We can put our faith in God, obey His word and enjoy the hope of eternal life.

Consider Romans 5:1-5 which states, *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character and character hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

We enjoy the gift of love. God's love is incomparable (John 3:16) to any other. **His love is perfect** and is the rule of life for His children (Matthew 22:34-40). Christians succeed based on the principle and law of love. It is not necessary to have the things often associated with success in this world — power, wealth, intelligence, possessions, etc.

God's plan is perfect. His children enjoy all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). These blessings are available, if one is in Christ. God has given Christ all authority (Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 1:22,23; Hebrews 1:1). As His followers, we enjoy the privilege to pray and receive help from God (Matthew 7:7-12). We can know that God will bless us with His hand of providence (Romans 8:28), care and keeping. We can have wisdom (James 1:5) and be strengthened within (Ephesians 3:10) as we live in this world. When our time is finished here, we are ready for heaven. Heaven is perfect—a place with no sin, fear, disappointment, evil, sickness, death or sorrow.

Are you preparing for life in heaven, the perfect world? Jesus went to prepare a home for all of us there (John 14:1-4). We can follow Him if we are prepared (Mark 8:34, John 12:26).

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