

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

*"The Seed is the word of God"*

**W**HEN WE think about the nature of the seed, we realize that even though it may look small and ordinary, yet a seed has a great power and potential. When sown it turns into a beautiful plant or turns into a large tree; produces leaves, flowers and fruits; and more seeds of the same kind. A seed will never produce another kind. Tomato seed produces only tomatoes; and cucumber seed will produce only cucumbers. Tomato seed does not produce cucumber, and neither cucumber seed produces tomato.

In light of this profound natural truth let us look at the statement Christ made concerning the seed in His parable of the Sower of the seed. In Luke chapter 8 we read of a great multitude of people who had gathered around Christ to hear Him, as was usual. Christ spoke to them a parable, as was his practice. He taught them about a sower who had gone to sow his seed. After He had finished speaking, His disciples asked Him to explain the parable to them. In explaining the parable to them Christ said, "*The seed is the word of God.*" (Luke 8:11).

Now, what does this mean? First, it is worthy to note that in His teaching process Christ would take common earthly objects, with which ordinary people were familiar, to teach them a spiritual and heavenly lesson. Secondly, the word of God, like seed, whenever sown in the hearts of men and women anywhere will

produce the same fruit. Of course, there could be different kinds of soils or hearts, as Christ taught in His parable, such as, the way side kind, where all kinds of people are walking around and do not let the seed grow. Or the rocky one, which does not allow the seed to penetrate inside. And the kind where thorns are growing around and overcome the growth of the seed. But there are also good grounds where the seed go inside and germinate and come out of the ground and grows and become fruitful. There is no fault in the seed. But there could be fault in the soil. However, seed produces after its own kind, no matter where it is sown. If the seed will produce anything, it will produce after its own kind only.

This is seen in the preaching of the disciples of Christ in the first century, A.D. Wherever and whenever they preached the word of God it produced the same effect among the people who had heard and believed. When they first had heard in Jerusalem and asked, what should they do? They were told to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, which they promptly did, as we read from Acts 2:37-41. Then when the same word of God was preached in Samaria, both men and women came forward to be baptized (Acts 8:12). In the same chapter of Acts 8 we read of eunuch. Philip preached to him Jesus, and he said, "See here is water, what hinders me from being baptised?" And upon eunuch's confession of Christ as the Son of God, Philip baptized him immediately. (Acts 8:35-39). Later, when Paul and Silas went into Philippi and there preached God's word, Lydia and her family members were soon baptized. (Acts 16:14,15) Likewise, when they preached the same message of the word of God in the house of the Jailer, we read, he and his family members were immediately baptized. (Acts 16:25-33).

Like the seed produces the same result, no matter where it is sown, in the days of the apostles God's word produced Christians only in every place. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16 and Acts 4:12). Those who had heard God's word only; did not then become different kinds of Christians, and neither did they become Catholic or Protestant, they were simply Christians. They did not join different kinds of denominational groups or sects, in fact, there never existed one then. It was taught then and they believed that Christ has built only one church—His own church (Matt. 16:18), and He adds all the saved ones to His one church. (Acts 2:47). There

existed, therefore, then only churches of Christ, congregations of the same church of Christ in numerous places. Read Romans 16:16. They were all members of the same body or the Church. (1 Cor. 12:27).

Now, if this could be true in the first century, in the days of the apostles of Christ, why can't this be true today? We have the same word of God in the Bible, the same message which the apostles preached then. The fact of the matter is, the seed will still produce the same thing, even today, provided the same seed is sown in every place, without adulteration. I believe, there is a lot of weeding out needs to be done also, while sowing the pure seed of the word of God, because much tares have been sown in the name of the word of God in every place through the years. Through The Bible Teacher, we are, therefore, pleading for the restoration of the Pure New Testament Christianity.

## ***The Importance Of Obedience***

**J.C. CHOATE**

**W**E ARE living in a world today where there is a great deal of disobedience. This applies to both man's relationship to God and man's relationship to his fellowman. There is disrespect shown and a rebellious attitude demonstrated on the part of many. All of this leads to violence and suffering.

Actually, this comes back to those of us who are parents. We have not disciplined our children and taught them in many cases to be obedient to their fathers and mothers, to obey the laws of the land, and above all, to put God first in their lives. Had even a fair percentage of us done this then surely we would be living in a different world today. But we reap as we sow, and when we fail God, then we fail ourselves, our families, and all others.

But to support what I have just said, Solomon said in the long ago, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs, chapter 22, and verse 6). When it comes to the children, Paul exhorted, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well

with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3). On turning to Romans 13:1-7, Paul says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

In order for us, or for anyone else, to be willing to be submissive to others whether parents, our teachers, those for whom we work, our government officials, or whoever, their authority must be established, and we must be brought to the point where we respect that authority. The same is likewise true when it comes to our relationship with God, and his Son, Jesus Christ. We must realize that God is the creator and that we are the creatures of God's creation. We must recognize then his great power and wisdom in the use of that power. We also must understand that he knows what is best for us, and that if we go against his wishes, that we will have to suffer the consequences. Then we must understand that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth and gave him authority to represent him. God speaks today, but he speaks through his Son, and what he has said has been recorded in the pages of the New Testament. (Hebrews 1:1,2). Christ himself said, "All power is given; unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18). Now based on that power or authority, he has the right to say what we should or should not do, and he has a right to expect that we obey him, provided we want to be saved and go to heaven.

Please remember that the Lord will never ask us to do anything that is bad or wrong. He will not be unfair with us. Rather, he loves us, gave his life for us, and whatever he asks us to do then that is for our good. We would then be wise to understand that, hear

what he has said, and then do what he wants us to do.

There are many statements in the Bible that emphasize the necessity of obedience and that of doing the Lord's will. Christ said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). Christ then went on to say, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." But look now at the foolish man. Christ said of him, "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27). Now what made the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? One obeyed the sayings of Christ and the other did not. Therefore, the one who obeyed the Lord was blessed, and the one who did not was punished.

James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22). Again, he said, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed," (James 1:25). Speaking even of Christ, the Hebrew writer said, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him:" (Hebrews 5:8,9). Yes, even Christ was obedient to his Father, even to the point of death, and through his death he made it possible for us to be saved, provided that we would in turn obey him. If Christ could do that, surely it is not asking too much that we obey him.

Christ, dying for us on the cross that we might be saved, has laid down several conditions that we must obey if we are to be saved. Christ said, for example, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). He has also said in his word that we must repent of our sins (Luke 13:3) and confess him before men that he is the Son of God.

(Matthew 10:32). Now when we go through the Book of Acts, we find that all who were saved were added to the Lord's church, as a result of their obeying these commands. What about those who refuse to comply with these conditions or who simply neglect to obey the Lord? Then they cannot be saved. It is just that simple. Christ has died for the lost, and God has provided his grace and mercy in making all of that possible, but those who fail to take advantage of it cannot expect to be saved. The apostle Paul said that the Lord will come back one day to take vengeance on all of those who know not God and obey not the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). But whether having to do with the gospel, worship, living the Christian life, abstaining from the works of the flesh, or whatever else the Lord may ask us to do, or not to do, we would be wise to obey him. It is only through obedience that we can have his blessings.

## ***What It Means to Be Lost***

**DAVID THURMAN**

**O**N A recent vacation I was reminded again of what it means to be lost. My wife and I rented a car and headed out, trying to read a map, handle rush hour traffic and escape the confines of the National Airport in Washington, D.C. Before long we were lost. Instead of going northwest, we were headed southwest. Each cross street seemed to lead the wrong way and when we found a connecting street the traffic prevented us from getting to our destination. We finally stopped, looked over the map, made our decisions and then proceeded. It took some extra time, it required, a return down some already traveled roads and it took a willingness on my part to admit I was lost! This experience took me back to some old feelings of what being lost feels like. Understanding what it means to be lost can help us in finding our way and in helping others to find theirs.

### **SPIRITUALLY, ALL ARE LOST**

*"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). Perhaps the most discouraging thing we can realize

is that all of us have experienced the reality of being lost. In place of being on the wrong highway, we have all found ourselves out of step and away from God. Because of our sins we find ourselves separated from God, following the wrong roads and going in the wrong direction: *"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, your sins have hid his face from you"* (Isa. 59:1-2). Then comes the worst news: we can't find the way back by ourselves. *"The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23). We search for a way back to God, a path that will take us in the direction we should go, but we can't find it on our own. Like I was on my vacation, we keep going in some direction, often laboring diligently to get somewhere, but nevertheless we remain lost. Being lost is inevitable for all of us, but brings with it some predictable effects.

### **I'VE MISSED MY PURPOSE**

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12:13). God made me and you and every person for a specific purpose. This purpose is found in honoring God as God and in keeping His commandments. My sole purpose in life is to bring glory to my Creator. Yet when I choose to sin (and all of us have chosen to sin), I wander from God and set out to find my own way. I have lost my way, I have lost my purpose and I am on my own. This leaves me with a sense of despair since I can never fulfill my destiny. Created to serve God I am lost and unfulfilled. *"God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us"* (Acts 17:26-27). In making us, God determined our lives, our habitations, our futures. God did all this so we might seek Him, might struggle to look for Him and know Him. In providing for our welfare God had only one goal in mind: to lead us to search for our Creator. All of God's blessings are given to instill in me the desire to serve God and to know Him better. Sin interrupts this process.

Having wandered from my God, having gotten lost by trying to find my own way, I have lost my purpose in life. Many people,

in losing God's direction for their lives begin looking in many wrong places for a means of personal fulfillment. Often these include the very things God blessed us with in order to lead us to Him. People try to find happiness in material things, in more possessions or in more money. But the richer they become the more they discover that wealth doesn't fulfill that deeper purpose. Others look for happiness in relationships with others. They seek fulfillment in a perfect marriage or in raising perfect children. No marriage or child can be perfect, so inevitably these, too, are unfulfilled. Others look for meaning in pleasure, seeking new sexual escapades, new physical experiences, new exciting events that will thrill them. But as with all other things, pleasure will not give meaning to life. People look and look for a way to rediscover their purpose in life, but separate from God they are destined to remain lost. Away from God no one can find meaning in life.

### **LOST IN DESPAIR AND FRUSTRATION**

Searching for meaning and coming up empty leads me to an ever deepening sense of frustration toward my life. I want to find God, I want to be happy and fulfilled, but I can't. I'm lost and can't find my way back to where I want to be and I can't find the path that will lead me in the right direction. This is not only true when I travel in a new city on strange roads, it is also true in my spiritual quest to know God better: *"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.....I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do"* (Rom. 7:15, 18-19, RSV).

Paul spoke of his frustration when he described the spiritual battle he felt within. What he wanted to do (serve God), he didn't do. The good he desired to accomplish was not done, the evil he hated was what he actually did. This is another way of describing how it feels to be lost. Try as hard as we can, we never find the right road. If we find the right road we often can't find the access ramp that leads to it. So we drive some more, trying to make the right turns, to make the good decisions, to get where we want to go. But the good goes undone and the evil jumps up to distract us from our goal.

As we each look at his or her own life, we must realize that we all feel like Paul at one time or another, frustrated at failing to



do what we know we should and what we really want to do (Rom. 7:18-19). We made such good resolutions at the beginning of the year. We had good intentions to do better in many areas, but our promises fell short of our actions. Others promised God they will never miss another service, or they will give more money this year, or they will minister to the needy. Many times those promises, like Paul's good intentions, go uncompleted.

On the other hand we make many promises of how we will change our ways. We promise God or others we will never curse again, or we will never take another drink, or we will stop listening to or spreading gossip. Then when the temptation rolls around we slip, and sin, just like always. We try to take the right road back to God, we make commitments and great promises, but we fail to do what is right and we wind up doing what is wrong. Seeing the unending failure in our efforts to be close to God, we feel a great sense of despair, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Rom. 7:24). Paul reflects that despair in this verse as he acknowledges man's plight in escaping sin and finding his way back to God. Being lost brings frustration and despair.

### **PRIDE TAKES OVER**

When I was lost on my vacation I did what many people do. I kept trying to fix the problem myself. My wife recommended that we stop to ask directions. But thinking of myself as a modern day Daniel Boone who can find his way out of any situation, I stubbornly pressed on. Even though I knew that I was lost, even though all my efforts were not changing my lost condition, my pride kept me from taking the steps that would rescue me from my plight.

The Lord said, "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*" (Luke 9:23-24). Jesus speaks of man's nature to attempt his own solutions to being lost. People still try to save their lives by going in their own directions. The tragedy in those choices is that instead of saving them from their despair, they become even more lost and more confused. Sadly, they continue to choose self direction, believing they will eventually find a way to make life purposeful if they just keep looking hard enough or trying enough

new things.

Jesus' solution to our problem is found not in working our way out of our lost condition, but in denying ourselves and giving up. Jesus says salvation is for those who choose to admit they are lost and cannot find their own way. Once we give up and accept the Lord's path, then (and only then) can we find the meaning we hunger for. This is not easy for those of us who believe we can do it our selves. We stubbornly keep going, refusing to turn back or ask for help. In our frustration we become more determined than ever to save ourselves. But that can't be done.

The first step in being happy in life is in admitting that happiness is not something I can find. Only when I surrender to God in Jesus Christ can I begin to be happy. This is one reason Jesus stresses the concept of "*daily*" in Luke 9:23. He wants us to realize that our fulfillment in life comes from a constant awareness we cannot find our own way, fulfill our own destiny, or save ourselves. Only in accepting our lostness can we ever be found, only in admitting our weakness can we ever be strong. This paradox goes against the grain, so many keep on plugging away at life, convinced they will find happiness just around the next corner.

### **THERE IS A WAY OUT**

The good news in being lost is that there is a way out. "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me*" (John 14:6). Jesus offers a path out of the fear and dread that envelopes each of us. There is a way to go back to the original purpose of man, to "*fear God and keep His commandments,*" and that is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we can find a path back to God, back to our purpose, back to the life of happiness and fulfillment we have searched for. As Paul struggled over his failure to do right and his falling into sin, he asked the most important question any lost person can ask. In despair, in frustration, in anger at not being able to get back on track, he cried, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom. 7:24-25a). As Paul wrestled with sin and the feelings of helplessness that accompany sin, he found a solution—THE solution. Paul's emphatic answer to his despair at being lost? Jesus

Christ, the only way to God.

The way out for each of us is still open. Pride will tell you to keep seeking your solutions in other places. You might look in various philosophies, religions or practices. You might look at pleasure or wealth or even family and friends. But until you accept the only path to God and submit to his will you will go on feeling the despair of being lost, of missing your designed purpose in life.

Don't let your pride keep you from accepting the solution to your problems today. As Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). Don't argue with the way out, just turn around and come to God in the name of Jesus. "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). There it is. Trust in God's path, turn from your own self direction, be immersed in water in the name of Jesus. Then you can know the joy of being saved. Then you can experience the thrill of a life with meaning and purpose. Then you can know God as you were intended to all along. Today, "*deny self, take up your cross daily, follow.*"

## **Satan is Subtle**

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

**M**ILLIONS WILL be lost in torment because of the tenacity and brilliant argumentation of the great enemy of the soul. Satan is called a subtle "*serpent*" in 2 Cor. 11:3, where we are reminded that he deceived Eve in the Garden. In Rev. 12:9 and Rev. 20:10, "*the old serpent*" is called "*the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.*" He is called an active "*adversary*" in 1 Pet. 5:8 and Lk. 22:31, who constantly opposes Christ and His people. Satan hinders God's servants (1 Thes. 2:18), he tempts the saints (1 Thes. 3:5) and entraps the unwary with "*the snare of the devil*" (1 Tim. 3:7). To suggest that the Bible declares these things, but not to worry, because even if you surrender to him you will not be lost and live in eternity with him just makes the Bible a farce and salvation an empty word!

Satan has many classic doctrines (1 Tim. 2:1-2) that war against eternal bliss. But if there is no reality in hell, how can 2 Cor. 11:13-15 have any punch or power? *"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."* What difference would it make for the devil and his angels to transform themselves into *"angels of light"* if the darkness rewards us as much as the light?

The devil's best arguments can be summed up in these general categories:

1. *You are already better than most people.*
2. *Sin is not so bad.*
3. *You have to have some fun anyway.*
4. *God made you with propensity to sin.*
5. *You can begin living for Christ tomorrow!*

Not a one of the above points has any clever temptation back of them, if there is no hell or punishment involved for those who listen to the enemy of the soul. How can 1 Jno. 2:15-17 be utilized in the philosophy that eliminates punishment, conscious punishment, from the eternal state of the wicked. Why not succumb to the lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh and vanity and pride of life - if there is no hell? Paul stated in 1 Cor. 15 that the Epicurean philosophy of *"eat, drink and be merry"* would be natural, if there were no resurrection, and consequently, no eternal punishment.

## ***Things I Cannot Do***

**DAN R. OWEN**

**O**NE OF the great myths of the scientific age is the infinite ability of man. It is proclaimed that we "boldly go where no man has gone before." We believe there is no disease which cannot be conquered, no feat of engineering which cannot be accomplished, and no phenomenon which cannot be explained. That we control our own destinies is almost axiomatic in our society, never mind

the fact that it isn't true.

Biblical theology sees man as much more impotent than does modern science. Man is **not** in complete or ultimate control. **God** is in control. Most of the Bible is about the will and the working of God, not the accomplishments of man. Man's role is to trust and obey God. To put all of this in perspective, it is helpful to reflect on some things man cannot do.

I cannot control life's circumstances. Though man may temporarily control an environment in a scientific experiment, there are too many variables in the universe for man to maintain control. Life can change completely in an instant. In spite of our best plans and preparations, we sometimes experience a flood, a fire, a tornado, a hurricane, a deadly disease, the loss or changing of a job, or the death of a loved one. Though I cannot control life's circumstances, I can depend on God to carry me through them.

I cannot control the behavior of other people. This is why God said, *"each one shall give an account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12). I cannot make another person live morally or obey the Gospel. I cannot control the way my husband, my wife, or my employer acts. I cannot control fellow church members. I can only make my own choices and trust God to judge me and others according to His truth.

I cannot alter the predetermined will of God. God has an eternal redemptive plan which is realized in Christ. Human choices do not alter God's plan for redemption, or His moral will, or His religious will. All I can do is seek to conform to God's will as He has revealed it, and then trust Him to keep His promises.

I cannot make myself acceptable in God's sight. This is true because I am sinful. I have sinned and I will sin again. Because of sin I deserve spiritual death. I am hopeless before God without Jesus. No amount of good works can satisfy the guilt of my sin or pay its penalty. All I can do is trust in Christ and obey the Gospel so that I can receive God's free grace. I must trust God's plan of salvation and trust Him to forgive.

I cannot avoid the inevitability of death and decay. There is, according to the wise man of old, a time to die. All the health food I may eat, the exercises I may do, and the medicines I may take will not change this. I cannot change my mortality, but I can trust God to carry me through death, to accept the payment of Christ's

blood for my soul, and to welcome me into His presence for all eternity.

Thinking about what we cannot do makes us feel helpless. But it also reminds us that we have a great Helper. If a person simply trusts God and His Word, and seeks to follow God's will, that person can depend on God to do all the things he/she cannot do. So, trust God, and don't worry about what you cannot do.

## ***This Is Our God Forever and Ever***

**CHARLES BOX**

***F***OR THIS is God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death" (Psalm 48:14). Each person must have a saving knowledge of God. An unknown God will never be loved, trusted, served, nor worshipped. The foundation of our faith is belief in Him *"...for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him "* (Hebrews 11:6).

Understanding some attributes of God should deepen our faith in Him. *"Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; Thereby good will come to you"* (Job 22:21).

### **GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT**

*"For as the Father has life in Himself so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself"* (John 5:26). God is not a created being. He is the Creator (Genesis 1:31). He has no beginning and no ending. He is the great *"I AM"* of Exodus 3:14.

### **GOD IS ETERNAL**

*"But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment"* (Psalm 9:7). God has always existed and always will exist. He is the everlasting Father and He offers to mankind eternal life (Hebrews 5:8-9).

## **GOD IS INFINITE**

God is the all-knowing, ever-present, all powerful ruler of heaven and earth! He is omnipresent (ever-present) (Psalm 139). He is omniscient (knows everything) (Daniel 2:22). He is omnipotent (all powerful) (Matthew 19:26). Serve Him!

## **GOD IS IMMUTABLE (UNCHANGEABLE)**

*"For I am the Lord, I do not change"* (Malachi 3:6). Neither God's essence, attributes nor His counsel is changeable. He remains forever the same true One, unchangeable in His goodness and truth.

"There is beyond the azure blue, a God, concealed from human sight, He tinted skies with heav'nly hue — and framed the worlds with His great might. There was, a long, long time ago, a God whose voice the prophets heard, He is the God that we should know, who speaks from His inspired word. Secure is life from mortal mind, God holds the germ within His hand, Tho' men may search, they cannot find, for God alone does understand. Our God, whose Son upon a tree, a life was willing there to give, That He from sin might set men free, and evermore with Him could live. There is a God, He is alive, in Him we live, and we survive; From dust our God created man, He is our God, the great I AM!"

Because God is God it makes sense to obey Him. To become a Christian you must hear His word, the Gospel in the New Testament (Romans 10:17); believe that Jesus is His Son (Hebrews 11:6); repent of your sins (Luke 13:3); confess your faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32); and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 22:16).

There is a God in heaven. Why not obey Him?

## **Quick to Forgive**

**JACK W. CARTER**

**B**EING GODLY means having godly qualities. We can never be all that God is, but we are expected to be like Him to the best of our ability. Godliness manifests itself in human conduct. This is

because He indwells us when we keep His commandments (see John 14:23).

I love John's revelation about love in the fourth chapter of his first epistle: *"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us"* (verse 12). Loving the way God loves is elevated much higher than we may realize. To capture the height and depth of God's love, we must study Him carefully as He is revealed through His word.

The prophet Micah was contemporary with Isaiah. Both prophesied about the inevitable punishment in store for God's people because they stubbornly refused to turn from their sins. In the final chapter of the book of Micah, we read about a renewal for God's people once the punishment had taken place. I find great comfort in the way Micah reveals God to us: *"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea"* (Micah 7:18,19).

I am glad that our God is so quick to forgive. Actually, that is our only hope. Then, to forgive in the way God forgives is an additional blessing to us. He doesn't partially forgive, hanging on to resentment and wallowing in residual hard feelings. He *"treads our sins underfoot"* and *"hurls all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."*

We have a lot to learn about loving and forgiving the way God does. Being godly is quite a challenge, isn't it?

## ***Does It Make Any Difference?***

**RALPH HUNTER**

**M**ANY ASK the question, "Does it make any difference?" about the length of the "days" spoken of in Genesis 1.

There are three distinct areas of thought that come to mind as we consider this question. The first is the thinking of the "Evolutionist" who simply says that there is no God. We will not



concern ourselves with this idea in our present study.

The next is the thinking of the "Theistic Evolutionist" who believes that, indeed, there is a God but that the days of Genesis 1 were extremely long periods of time which He used to accomplish creation through an evolutionary process. Unfortunately, we have some very well-known brethren who hold this idea.

The third group is called "Creationist" which holds strongly to the belief that the days of Genesis 1 were 24-hour periods of time.

**Does it really make any difference which view one takes, as long as one accepts that there is God?**

Consider the following thoughts carefully. First, both the Theistic Evolutionist and the Creationist believe that there is a Creator. This being the case, we would logically want to go to that Creator's message to learn about Him. The apostle Peter writes, *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:20,21). Just before this statement, Peter, in verse 3, made it plain that everything pertaining to life and Godliness has been given to mankind by the very power of the Divine. Was there something left out of the scriptures that would have to be filled in by man's thinking? If there was, Peter's statement in verse 3 is wrong, because he declared that we have all things that we need in order to be right before the Father in heaven.

The Apostle Paul (his writings are noted as being scripture in 2 Peter 3:15,16) states in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 *"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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* In chapter 2 and verse 15 of that same book he points out that "study" (giving diligence, NKJV) is the way we come to approval as a workman in the word. We dare not add to or subtract anything from God's word, or make any section of scripture contradict another section.

With these points in mind, consider the following: By the same inspiration from God, the prophet Moses wrote the creation story (Genesis 1:14,15); and it was by the same inspiration from God that the prophet Jeremiah declared that the promise of God for a new

covenant would be assured as long as the ordinances of days and nights existed (Jeremiah 31:31-36).

Jeremiah also called upon the same logic concerning the promise to King David: *"If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne: and with the Levites the priests, my ministers."* [KJV] *"If my covenant of day and night stand not, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth: then will I cast away the seed of Jacob and David my servant"* [ASV] Jeremiah 33:20-21,25,26a).

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 8, the writer says the promise of Jeremiah 31 was kept in Christ. In Luke 1:32,33, that promise (made in 2 Samuel 7:5-17) concerning the throne of David was kept in Christ. Did Jeremiah leave any doubt that the "day and night" was anything but that which you and I understand to be a 24-hour period? Did the writers of Hebrews and Luke not have the same concept of a day as the prophet Moses?

Let's turn our attention to some words of Christ as we consider the length of "day" as mentioned in Genesis 1. Jesus is quoted by Matthew in chapter 19:4 as saying, *"Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?"* Of course our Lord was calling His listeners back to Genesis 1:27. Was there a male for several thousand years without a female around? Was there a long period of time in which it was right to put away the wife or was the very "beginning" (mentioned in Matthew 19:8) the same beginning as in verse 4? Was the Word (that is, God made flesh) so confused as to leave His listeners with a false concept about the time it took for mankind to be made?

Again, in Matthew 12:40, our Lord is quoted as saying that as Jonah (Jonah 1:17) was in the belly of the fish for three days, so would the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for the same period of time. If the Savior was able to use the writings of old in an accurate way to teach about His time in the tomb, would He be so careless or uninformed as to mislead His followers about the time involved in creation?

And if the message of Jehovah as written by his "holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:5) was not accurate concerning those things of creation, how can we be certain of the events that are written about the end of the world? We need to remember that Jesus commanded his apostles to teach those things that He had taught them (Matthew 28:20). Are we sure of the writing of Peter and Paul when statements are made, such as, *"... day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements' shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10), and *"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump"* (1 Corinthians 1:51,52a)?

We must ask the question, "Did the Lord of heaven and earth give these apostles an accurate description about the end of the world, but not about the beginning?" Is it in the power of the Almighty to bring all the physical creation (heaven and earth) to an abrupt end, but not in His power to create it in the short time that is declared by Moses?

Beloved, the important question is not simply concerning the length of days of creation, but **the accuracy of all that has been made known to us by God!** We read in Genesis 1:26,27 of mankind being made in the image of the divine (*"let us make man in our image ... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them"*). We are told in 3:6 of the transgression of man (*"... she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also 'unto her husband with her; and he did eat'"*), and then in 3:15 of the hope (*"... it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"*) to overcome the result of that sin. If all that is written is not accurately inspired, recorded and understood, how can we have any assurance about our salvation?

If I cannot be sure of the great story of redemption and the salvation from my sins, can I be sure of the consequences of coming before the Divine in judgment. Paul stated by inspiration, *"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"* (Romans 14:10b) and *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body,*

*according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

Another thought that must be considered: if one cannot accept that the Lord accomplished His creation in six-24 hour periods, how do we understand His description of the destruction of His creation. Do the passages that deal with the end of the world really mean a **sudden destruction, as the words say**, (1 Corinthians 15:51,52 and 2 Peter 3:10-12), or will the Lord use billions of years to complete this?

Indeed it does make a difference how we understand the scheme of redemption, and how the Lord carried it out and how this old world will end. In the same way, what we believe concerning the Biblical record of God's creation of the world makes a tremendous difference.

The ultimate question is: Do I accept the Lord's revelation, or do I not?

## ***With What Body?***

**T. PIERCE BROWN**

**S**OME ARE still raising the question that was raised in Paul's day as suggested in 1 Corinthians 15:35, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" In our opinion, the same answer that Paul gave should still be given, but it seems apparent that Paul's answer still needs some explanation. Some very astute scholars have, in my judgment, assumed some things that are not so about the answer and related matters.

We may want to note that when Paul said, as in the KJV, "Thou fool" he was not using the word that Jesus used in Matthew 5:22, when he said a person who calls his brother a fool shall be in danger of hell fire. But he does use a word that indicates that a person is not reasoning properly who assumes that the resurrection of the body means that the same body that was put in the grave would come out. If a body were put in with a leg missing, the leg would be missing throughout eternity. If the body had been nailed

to the cross and had the prints of the nails in its wrists, we would see those prints in eternity. This is clearly not the case, even if the song says, "We shall know him by the prints of the nails in his hands."

He specifically says in verse 37, "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain." It is clear that the body that comes out is not the body that was put in, but it is identified with the same person. If you sow wheat, it is proper to say that wheat comes up, yet it is not in the same form as it was put in the ground. A person is certainly "foolish" if he does not know that much.

Sometimes it is assumed that the resurrected body of Jesus proves that our resurrected bodies will look like the body that was buried, eaten by the fish, burned, or otherwise destroyed. This is a false assumption. The resurrected body of Jesus was the same body that was put in the grave. Paul specifically says that ours will not be. Not only is that so, but 1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Note carefully that John indicates that we do not know what we shall be like, although we shall be like him. They knew what Christ's body was like when he was raised from the dead, but they do not know what it is like now, for John says so. It must be that his body was not yet glorified as John 7:39 says. Romans 8:17 indicates that we will be glorified with him, which agrees with John's statement that we shall be like him. The logical conclusion is that while he was on the earth, with flesh and bones, able to eat and digest fish (Luke 24:42), he had the same body with which he was buried and raised. But since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50) he was changed when he ascended to heaven out of their sight (Acts 1:9), much like Enoch (Hebrews 11:5) or Elijah. (2 Kings 2:11.)

So it is certain that we will be the same individuals when our bodies are raised, but it is also equally certain that the body will not be the same structure any more than a stalk of corn is the same structure as the grain of corn that is put in the earth. But it is still proper to say, "We put corn in the earth, and corn came up."

However, the "bottom line" (if there is one) should be, "What difference does it make? If we are to be like him why should we even bother wondering and speculating about the exact details?" Are you satisfied to know that it will be glorious beyond our ability to understand?

## ***Homosexuality: Alternate Lifestyle Or Sin?***

**KEVIN RANGLES**

**R**ECENT STATISTICS show that the number of homosexuals is growing rapidly all over the world, and America is being told to be tolerant of their "alternative lifestyles." It is said, "They are not hurting other people, and people should simply accept them." However, God is not tolerant when it comes to homosexuality. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, sets forth God's stance: "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in there lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." (Romans 1:27.) Notice the five key words that have been italicized in the preceding passage. These five key words written by Paul set forth five truths concerning homosexuality:

### **1. HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT NATURAL**

Paul said that homosexuality is "leaving the natural use of the woman." Natural is from the Greek word *phusikos*, which means that which is produced by nature, inborn, and according to nature. Many claim that they were born homosexual. However, Paul disproves this false belief. Therefore, one can conclude from Paul's teaching here that every man is inborn with a natural heterosexual preference. When God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, he then created woman and gave man and woman the following instruction: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one

flesh." (Genesis 2:24.) It is clear that God's plan since the beginning of time has been for men to be with and marry women, neither men with men nor women with women. Therefore, it is impossible for one to be born homosexual, because it is not natural or inborn from God.

## **2. HOMOSEXUALITY IS LUST**

Paul said that the homosexuals in Rome "burned in their lust one toward another." Lust is from the Greek word orexis, which literally means "a reaching" or "stretching after." Therefore, lust is a general term that Paul uses here to represent every kind of lustful desire. Lust is an evil act that Christians are told to avoid. For example, in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul said, "We should not lust after evil things." (1 Corinthians 10:6.) Therefore, Paul states that homosexuality is a lustful thing and therefore sinful desire where men burn for other men and women burn for other women. The apostle John states that the world is full of lust. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:16.) Therefore, the apostle John says one that commits such a lustful act as homosexuality "is not of the Father," and "the love of the Father is not in him."

## **3. HOMOSEXUALITY IS UNSEEMLY (SHAMEFUL)**

Paul refers to homosexuality as "working that which is unseemly." "Unseemly" is from the Greek word aschemosune, which means unseemly or unseemliness. Paul says that homosexuality is shameful and unseemly. It is ironic that homosexuals have taken the word "gay," which means happy, to represent their wicked lifestyle. However, Paul clearly sets forth that homosexuals are not happy, joyous, and proud as they would lead one to believe, but are shameful, unseemly, and embarrassed. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Task Force on Youth Suicide issued a report in January of 1989 concluding that lesbian and gay youth may constitute "up to the thirty percent of committed suicides annually" and that "homosexuals of both sexes are two to six times more likely to attempt suicide than are heterosexuals." An important question

must then be asked, "If homosexuality is such a 'gay' activity and sexual preference, then why are so many homosexuals committing suicide?" Paul says the reason is that it is an unseemly and shameful act. Homosexuals are not "gay."

#### **4. HOMOSEXUALITY WILL BRING A RECOMPENSE**

Recompense is from the Greek word antimisthia, which literally means "a reward, requital" and can be used in a good or bad sense. Paul uses it in a bad sense in Romans 1:27. Paul is saying that homosexuals will get their just recompense (reward) for their wicked and sinful lifestyle, which is eternal damnation. Paul said, "God gave them up unto vile affections." (Romans 1:26.) These people were so wicked that God literally gave them up unto their own wickedness and sin. These "vile affections" that one partakes in will certainly be punished by God. Paul said, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18.) Paul clearly states that no one who is wicked will be able to avoid or escape God's wrath. His wrath will be revealed upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Therefore, the just recompense from God for homosexuals will be eternal damnation. For example, Sodom and Gomorrah were filled with homosexuality and many other kinds of wickedness. They received their just recompense because of their homosexuality and other "grievous sins." "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 7.)

#### **5. HOMOSEXUALITY IS AN ERROR**

Error is from the Greek word plane, which means "a wandering, a forsaking of the right path, whether in doctrine or in morals." Therefore, Paul says that homosexuality is the error of man. Unfortunately, many people are committing the error of homosexuality. It is an error that is punishable by eternal death and the loss of a precious soul. Homosexuality is not a right alternative lifestyle and has never been authorized or approved by God. The Bible clearly states that homosexuality is a sin that will lead to death.