

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

***"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path"***

While man has been groping in darkness to know about his origin, from where did he come on earth, where he is going from here, what happens after death, and is there life after death? God gave man the Bible and has provided answers to all his questions. The Bible is the book of God's message to man. The Bible contains God's word, His will and His plan for man. The Bible is the only book from God for man. There is no other book like the Bible on earth. The Bible was written by forty men over the period of almost sixteen hundred years, as they were inspired to write by God Himself. Since they were inspired by God to write, therefore they wrote in the Bible only what God wanted them to write. (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21). One of the inspired writers of the Bible therefore correctly mentioned at Psalm 119:105 that God's word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Speaking of the origin of man, the Bible in its very beginning tells us that God Himself is the Creator of man. And not only this, but it also says that God had in the beginning created man in His own image and after His own likeness (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7). Man, therefore, is not only a physical being but like God man is also a spiritual being. Man has not descended from another form of life on earth, as is falsely thought by some, but man is God's offspring. (Acts 17:28). Therefore man is as intelligent as he is. Man can think, reason, create, and invent wonderful things. Also,

man is a worshipful being. He has an inborn knowledge and fear of God in himself. Not only in the spiritual image of God was man created, but God had also created man in His own likeness, that is, man was without sin like God. But this wonderful relationship of man with God did not last long. By disobeying God man sinned against God and thereby brought separation between God and himself. Being separated from God man died spiritually. (Genesis 2:17).

Since man has been created a spiritual being, his spirit or soul cannot be obliterated. Man's body is mortal and corruptible (Genesis 3:19), but his spirit or soul is immortal, like God man will exist forever. At Ecclesiastes 12:7, one of the writers of the Bible descriptively wrote about man's death and said, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." What does this mean? Does this mean that at death soul or spirit of an individual return to God to live with Him in heaven? No. But according to Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." The Bible very clearly teaches that one day God will judge each individual. Again, we read from the book of Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Eccl. 12:13,14).

Being in sin man cannot hope to return to God to live with Him in heaven. God, therefore, sent Jesus Christ from heaven on earth to help man to become worthy of heaven. The Bible brings to man the good news that God allowed His Word to become man (John 1:1,14). He allowed Him to be betrayed and to go through a mock trial and to be condemned to die as a criminal. According to the Bible Christ died on the cross by the will and foreknowledge of God for the propitiation of man's sin. (Acts 2:23; 1 John 4:10). It is written that God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

It is terrible for one to live in darkness and gloom, knowing nothing about what to do and where to go. After creating the heavens and the earth in the beginning, the first thing that God had created was light. (Genesis 1:1-5). God knew man cannot live without light. Likewise God gave man the Bible to be the lamp

for man's feet and a light to man's path. Man need to read the Bible or hear what the Bible says, as Jesus taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4 and Matthew 4:4).

## *Why We Meet On The First Day Of The Week*

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible teaches that we as Christians, members of the Lord's church, are to worship God in spirit and in truth. (John 4: 24). That means that We are to worship with the understanding and sincerity of what we are doing, and that we are to do that according to the teaching of the Lord's word. But the question is: When are we to do that and how often should we do it? Should it be on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or some other day of the week? Does it really matter, just so long as we meet for worship? When we read through the Old Testament we observe that God required his people, Israel, to remember the sabbath day and to keep it holy. This was one of the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20: 8-11). But when we come over to the days of Christ, we learn that when Christ died on the cross, that he took out of the way that old law, or the law that required God's people to observe the sabbath day. (John 1: 17; Colossians 2: 14; Hebrews 9: 15-17). Therefore, when the old law was removed, it was replaced with a new law. That being true, then the sabbath day ceased to be binding, and at that point, the Lord introduced a new day for his people to assemble on for the purpose of worship. That day was the first day of the week.

The New Testament portion of the Bible has a lot to say about the first day of the week. We will now take the time to mention some reasons why this day is so important, and why we are to meet on the first day of the week for worship.

First, Christ was resurrected on the first day of the week. If the sabbath day was still the day of the week on which God's people would still meet for worship, then why was Christ raised on the first day of the week or Sunday? Of course it might be

argued that the reason he was not resurrected on the Sabbath day, was because it was a holy day. But how much more holy would it have been, if the sabbath day was still binding, to have Christ to come forth from the grave on that day? Actually, Christ arose on the first day of the week to put emphasis on this day as being the new day of worship. When we turn to Matthew 28: 1, we read, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Reading on, we are told about the Lord being resurrected on this day. We read the same basic thing in Mark 16: 1,2 and likewise in Luke 24: 1,2, and finally again in John 20: 1.

Second, after Christ was resurrected from the grave on the first day of the week, he saw fit to meet with his disciples on two other occasions, both of which were said to be on the first day of the week. We read, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." (John 20: 19,20), Again, we read, "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29). Now if Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week, and appeared to the disciples that evening, and then appeared to the disciples eight days later, would that not mean that he met with them again on the first day of the week? Doesn't it seem strange that the scriptures emphasize that all of these things took place on the first day of the week, if the first day of the week has no significance? I suggest to you, however, that there is great significance attached to the fact that Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week, and then he, met with the disciples on two other occasions

on the first day of the week.

Third, Pentecost always came on the first day of the week, fifty days after the Passover. That means then, according to Acts 2, that the Lord chose this day to send the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, for the gospel to be preached for the first time in fact, telling men and women what they should do to be saved, and then on that day for the church to be established. Now if that doesn't place special emphasis on the first day of the week, then what would it take? And the very fact that this day was chosen above the other days of the week, then that means that there must have been some special reason for it. If the Sabbath day, for instance, was still binding, then why did the Lord not choose to use that day instead of the following day? Well, it is obvious as to why he did not use the sabbath day. The sabbath day was being replaced with the first day of the week, as being the day of worship, under the law of Christ and during the time of Christianity.

Fourth, we have an example of where the early Christians met on the first day of the week to worship God. We read, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20: 7). When we take a look at the context, we are told that Paul and others had arrived in Troas from Philippi by ship, and that they had stayed over seven days in order that they might meet with the church on the first day of the week. We can surely see by this, that had the sabbath day or some other day been the day of worship, then they could have proceeded with their assembly with the local Christians for worship, and could have continued their journey. Instead, they waited over to the first day of the week, so they could worship on the day that the Lord had appointed for his people to meet on for worship. Then what happened on that day? For one thing, the disciples came together on this day. And why did they come together? The record says that they came together to break bread, and this has reference to the fact that they assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11: 23-29). That means then, by scriptural example, we are taught that the first day of the week is the day on which Christians are to break bread. Which first day of the week? Every first day of the week, of course. Back in Old Testament times when the Sabbath day was the day

of worship, God didn't say that they should remember every sabbath day, but merely that they should remember the sabbath, day. For them to remember that day meant that they should remember all of them, or each sabbath day. The same is true with the first day of the week with regards to partaking of the Lord's Supper. Then they had some preaching during that meeting. The record says that Paul preached, and that he continued his speech until midnight. Although it does not say that they had prayers, or that they engaged in singing, and so on, but they no doubt did. But if Paul and the Christians of that day met on the first day of the week to break bread, and to worship God, then that means that if we are Christians, then we are to do the same today.

And fifth, we read where Paul commanded the Christians of his day to lay by in store, or to give of their means, on the first day of the week. We read, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Corinthians 16: 1,2). Note that Paul said that he had instructed both the churches in Galatia and the church there in Corinth to give or lay by in store on the first day of the week. A lot could be said about the attitude of giving, how much was to be given, the purpose of giving, and so on, but the main thing we want to see right now is the fact that the giving was to be done on the first day of the week. Wonder why it was to be done on the first day instead of some other day? Evidently because this was the scriptural day that Christians were to assemble for worship, and while they were together, then this should also be a good day to give of their means. The same is likewise true today.

To sum it all up then, the first day of the week is not a holy day, or a rest day as the Sabbath was, and certainly, it is not the Sabbath day, but it is a day that was honored with the Lord's resurrection, and the day chosen for the coming of the Holy Spirit, for the gospel to be preached for the first time in fact, and for the church to be established. Not only so, but it was the day that the Lord chose for his people to meet on to worship. It is therefore the scriptural day of worship. We will make no mistake to follow the example set forth in the New Testament, to assemble on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshipping God. The

mistake would be to neglect to meet on this day. The Hebrew writer even exhorts us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; (Hebrews 10: 25). How wonderful it is then, for we who are Christians, to be honored with the privilege of meeting on the first day of the week, to praise our Lord by worshipping him on the day that he has set aside for that purpose.

## ***Realize the Unlimited Love of God***

**SAMUEL OSEI YOUNG**

*"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19)*

The love of God is great and extensive in such a way that both the wicked and the righteous, in their troubles of perplexities and sickness, are being blessed and cared for by the living God, even with the sunshine and rain which come upon all men (Matthew 5:45).

Love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as follows: *"Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy, does not parade itself is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*

Since the creation God has determined to give what is good to mankind. In Genesis 1:27-31 He gave man dominance over all things created in the world, and just after the fall of man He gave dominance to Noah in Genesis 9:1-3. Our living God is always concerned about mankind. David, in Psalm 8:4, inquired of God's glory and man's dominion when he said, *"What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man that you visit him?"*

God's expression of love for humanity is spoken in Christ Jesus. In return, His highest expectation demands that man should accept His love and surrender himself to be in Christ Jesus. The writer of the book of Romans said in chapter 2:4, *"Or do you*

*despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance?"*

Indeed *"the Lord is not slack (slow) concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). God wants to save us, giving us life eternal in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 3:36).

In Matthew 18:1-4 the disciples wanted to know *"who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* Jesus called a little child to Him and set him in the midst of them, and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* Children are fit for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:13,14), because they are innocent. When children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, the disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them: For of such is the Kingdom of heaven."*

The prophet Ezekiel made mention of the sinless state of children, that they do not inherit sin (Ezekiel 18:4). *"Behold, all souls are mine, the soul of the father, as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul who sins shall die."* Children are in a pure state until they are mature. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8). *"Be ye holy, as it is written, I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:16).

God could desire to adopt only children for His kingdom, but He did not do that. Rather, He wants the sinner to repent and be saved (Luke 24:47). In Matthew 3:8,9 John the Baptist declared, *"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."* Jesus said, *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Listen again to Jesus in John 10:10, where He says, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."*

Conclusion: My dear reader, embrace the love of God, which



caused the death of His only begotten Son, that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Those who are being saved through obedience to the Gospel are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

## ***Seeing With The Soul***

**BOBBY DOCKERY**

There is an Old Testament story which pointedly reminds us that there are different ways of seeing:

Saul was the king of Israel. But because of his disobedience, God had sent Samuel the prophet to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to replace Saul on the throne. Upon his arrival, Samuel sees Eliab, Jesse's firstborn. Eliab was a fine figure of a man. As soon as Samuel's eyes light upon him he was sure that this would be the man of God's choice. Eliab simply had the look of a king about him!

But God reminded Samuel that He does not see as man does: *"For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). Eliab was not the Lord's choice, but David, *"The man after God's own heart."*

The point is that there are different ways to see! Man sees the outside, but God gazes directly upon the soul! Think of the different ways we see.

**1. Sometimes we see with the eyes.** This is a natural sight. Walking in a meadow, I see a flower. An image is projected on the retina of my eye and carried to the optic nerve of my brain—a purely mechanical function which can be explained in scientific terms.

**2. Sometimes we see with the mind.** This is perception—understanding. A biologist sees the same flower and immediately catalogues it in his mind by phylum, genus, and species and recalls the proper Latin name for it. He can explain why the stem is green and the petals have their distinctive colour. He can tell us its life cycle and its possible commercial uses.

**3. Sometimes we see with the heart.** This is vision filtered through emotion. A man sees the flower in the meadow and

remembers it was his mother's favorite. He remembers how she grew them around the kitchen door of his boyhood home. He is flooded with tender memories of his mother and his youth. He is not really seeing the flower, but something which it evokes in his memory.

**4. It is also possible to see with the soul.** This is spiritual perception. We can look at the flower and see the God who conceived it, designed it, created it, and providentially sustains it! It may be taken as an eloquent argument for the existence and power of God (Psalm 19:1,2). That which is seen reveals to us that which does not appear.

God's people must cultivate this capacity to see with the soul. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7). We must learn to see the unseen. There are things we do not see at this present moment with our natural eyes; we must look at them with the soul (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Many people refuse to believe in anything they can't see with the eyes. But the Bible insists that it is the things we see with the soul which are really real! What we see with the eyes is transient and passing. Some day it will disappear and will never be seen again (2 Peter 3:10). What we see with the soul is eternal, enduring, and lasting! It is the unseen which is real!

J.C. Penney once remarked, "I am losing my vision. No, I take that back. My eyesight is failing, but my vision is better than ever." There's a lot of difference between the two! It is what we see with the soul that really matters!

## *7 Scriptural Reasons for Opposing Abortion*

**BOBBY DOCKERY**

The word "abortion" is not specifically used in the Bible. However, there are many biblical principles which apply to the subject and which clearly preclude the acceptance of abortion as a moral act. Consider:

**1. Life is a gift from God.** *"He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things"* (Acts 17:25). Human life is

constructed in the image of God (Genesis 1.26). Because of its origin, human life is sacred.

**2. God forbids the willful taking of human life.** Romans 13.9 enjoins, "*You shall not murder.*" Mankind has always been forbidden to wantonly kill a fellow human because of the special character of human life. According to Genesis 9.6, the penalty for taking an innocent life was death.

**3. The Gospel emphasizes human worth and dignity.** Christianity was born into a world where human life was cheap. In the Roman Empire, 60 million people lived in degrading slavery; thousands flocked to the gladiatorial games to cheer the senseless butchery in the arena; it was the accepted thing to abandon or drown unwanted or sickly infants. Ninety-nine out of 100 families made it a practice to abandon ill female babies after the first; abortion was widespread. In such a world, the teaching of Jesus emphasized a radically different attitude toward life. He stressed the worth of the individual, insisting He had come to "*taste death for every man*" (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus taught that little children were precious (Matthew 19:14). Society was literally revolutionized! The influence of Christianity led to the end of slavery, gladiatorial contests, the murder of infants, and abortion!

**4. The Bible teaches that human life begins in the womb.** No distinction is made in Scripture between unborn and newly born babies. The same Greek word (*brephos*) is used in the Bible to refer to both (Luke 1:41; 2:12; 1 Peter 2:2). Thayer says that the Greek word refers equally to "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, newborn child, infant." The unborn possess all the qualities of personality. Each life is unique. God said to Jeremiah: "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you*" (Jeremiah 1:5).

**5. God condemns selfishness** (Philippians 2:4, etc.). Except in cases of dire medical necessity, where the actual life of the mother is at stake, abortion is always a selfish act!

**6. Those without natural affection are detestable to God.** Among the sins of the Gentiles which subjected them to the wrath of God was the charge that they were "*without natural affection*" (Romans 1:31). The Greek word (*astorgos*) refers to a lack of love on the part of parents for offspring. Surely the mother who chooses, merely for her own convenience, to destroy the innocent

life in her womb is lacking in natural affection.

**7. Abortion violates the "Golden Rule".** *"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you"* (Matthew 7:12). Application of this principle would close every abortion clinic in the world. What "pro-choice" advocate would wish to have his or her body dissected, as in a partial-birth abortion . . . or savagely ripped apart, as in a suction abortion . . . or immersed in corrosive liquid, as in a saline injection abortion? How can those who reject such treatment for themselves justify it for others?

The basic question reduces to this: How can any people claim to honor God's will while refusing to reverence all life created in His image?

## ***Becoming More Like Christ***

**JANE MCWHORTER**

As Christians, most of us want to develop Christ-like traits. We pray that God will help us become more knowledgeable of His Word, more compassionate, more joyful, forgiving, and meek. The problem is that we ask, and then we expect the gifts to be handed to us as beautifully-wrapped presents. We are so busy looking for elaborately-decorated packages that we frequently walk right by a tattered package wrapped in plain brown paper and tied with a string. If only we would bother to look, we could discover that the plain box by the roadside is the answer to our prayers. Upon turning the package over, we find that in tiny letters in one corner is the word "opportunity". We ask for a gift and God gives us the opportunity to develop that trait.

- We ask for more Bible knowledge and evidently think such wisdom should descend miraculously from on high. The only way to know more about God's Word is to take the time to study. The Father gives us a Bible and a clock and expects us to use them wisely.
- We want to be more compassionate, more loving, and gentle. However, we often walk past the gift because we find it in a nursing home, wrapped in a tattered bathrobe without family and friends as the elderly person cries to

go home and see about a little dog. If we have never experienced that same desire to return home, it may be difficult to step into another person's shoes and show compassion. God may give us the gifts of affliction, heartache, the loss of a loved one, or the loss of material possessions to help us understand and be able to identify with the problems of others.

- Forgiveness is a necessary Christian trait, but it has to be developed. We may ask for a forgiving nature, and God may send it in the form of a critical brother or sister. Learning to understand such people is the opportunity sent our way.
- We ask to be meek, but pride interferes. Far too often meekness is wrapped in a brown package with the opportunity called "degradation" written on the back. How often we must be broken before we can handle achievements, for it is only then that we realize we are nothing but the shells of human vessels through which God works.

Christ begged for a special gift: the salvation of mankind. Long before He ever set foot on this earth, He knew how that gift would be wrapped—in thorns and nails. This was the gift looming ahead as He prayed in Gethsemane. Although the divine nature of Christ accepted the inevitable, it was His human side that cried out in agony, *"Let this cup pass"* (Matthew 26:39). If He could accept the gift of our salvation wrapped in thorns and nails, dare we grumble and complain about the wrappings of some precious gifts sent from God?

## *"Show Thyself a Man"*

HUGO MCCORD

Apparently the words describing "man" in the Old Testament are not always used distinctively, but enough of the elemental meaning of those words remains to make them very informative.

1. *Adam*. The first word which God used to describe man is adam; *"let us make adam"* (Genesis 1:26), which means that which is red, ruddy, earthy. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:47, *"the*

*first man is of the earth, earthy.*" The word *adam*, then, reflects man's earthly origin, shaped by the great Potter from dust (dry earth, clay) of the ground (*adamah*). Finally, *adam* must return to the *adamah*, from which he was taken; the dust of the *adamah* he is, and to the dust he must return (Genesis 3:19). It is thus quite understandable that the first *adam* was given the name "Adam".

2. *Enosh*. A second word describing man is *enosh*, meaning that which is frail, feeble, mortal. Man's inability to keep himself alive is shown in Moses' saying to God, "*Thou turnest enosh to destruction*" (crushing) in Psalm 90:3. And just as *adam* became a proper name, Adam, so *enosh* became a proper name for Seth's son, Enosh (Genesis 5:6).

3. *Nephesh*. A third word describing man is *nephesh*, meaning that which breathes. Though the word *nephesh* is used to describe animals (Genesis 1:20,24), yet at times *nephesh* is used of human beings, as distinct from the lower creation (Numbers 31:35; 1 Chronicles 5:21). As *adam* pictures man's physical substance, and as *enosh* pictures man's mortal nature, so *nephesh* points him out as a breathing being.

4. *Gibbor*. A fourth word describing man is *gibbor*, depicting physical strength and courage. A *gibbor* is a might man of valor (1 Chronicles 12:8; 28:1), whose strength is compared to a lion's (1 Chronicles 12:13). A *gibbor* is valiant (2 Chronicles 13:3).

5. *Ish*. A fifth and the most significant word describing man is *ish*, used often to depict strong intellect and eminence of character. The title of Psalm 90 pictures Moses as the *ish* of God. Though Israel's leader was an *adam*, an *enosh*, a *nephesh*, and a *gibbor*, apparently much more is denoted when he is called the *ish* of God. Noah, a man—who walked with God, is called a righteous *ish* (Genesis 6:9) and perfect. The book of Job begins, "*There was an ish in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that ish was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil.*"

It does not appear accidental that the aged David would challenge his son Solomon, "*be strong therefore and show thyself an ish*" (1 Kings 2:2). An *ish* is not a boy; an *ish* shoulders responsibility. When Abner had gone to sleep while guarding the king, David taunted him, "*Are you not an ish?*" (1 Samuel 26:15).

Time was in Israel's history when one true *ish* would have saved the nation. God looked for an *ish* (Jeremiah 5:1; Ezekiel 22:30), and found none, and He let the heathen take over. The same God today cries out to all Christians, regardless of sex: "*Make men of yourselves*" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

## ***A Challenge from Paul's Greetings to the Brethren at Rome***

GARY C. HAMPTON

### **INTRODUCING PAUL**

Typical letters of the first century would begin, "X to Y, Greetings." In Romans 1:1, Paul takes that approach, but adds some things which make his beginning distinctly Christian. Among the unique features of his greeting is a special introduction of himself.

He calls himself a *servant*, from the Greek word meaning *bondservant* and *slave*. All Christians need to recognize Christ as their owner because He gave His blood to purchase them from the bondage of sin (1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). The words "to be" are supplied by the translators to help readers understand. Here, it would be better to leave them out, which would leave, "called an apostle". Apostle means "one sent" and this passage tells of one of thirteen commissioned specially by Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1,2; Acts 9:1-22, particularly 15). Paul was specifically called to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

### **INTRODUCING THE GOSPEL**

The promise of the good news is one that runs from man's fall through all of the Old Testament (Genesis 3:15; Malachi 3:1). One who believes the Old Testament should logically accept the New, since it reveals God's plan for helping man overcome the fall. So, it is natural for Paul to instantly turn to the Gospel and the Son who is its central theme (John 20:30,31). He is both God come down to earth and man, a descendant of David (John 1:1-14; Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 1:1-17). While all His miracles proclaim His Sonship, the resurrection declares Jesus is God's

Son beyond doubt (Acts 13:30-33).

The Christian's hope is living because he serves a resurrected Lord (Romans 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3)!

Jesus had bestowed God's grace, or unearned gift, upon the apostles so they might, in turn, tell others about it. Paul uses "we" either editorially, or to include all of the apostles. In either case, he was made an apostle to deliver the message of faith to be obeyed. The remainder of the Romans letter deals **only with obedient faith, not faith only**. Paul was to preach especially to the nations, or Gentiles, for Christ's name's sake, or so His name might be glorified (Romans 1:5).

### **EXTENDING GRACE AND PEACE**

The Roman Christians had received the gospel call by obeying it. They were a part of the Gentile group to whom Paul was specifically commissioned to preach. He addressed the letter to all Christians in Rome, Jew or Gentile. The Gospel is God's great expression of His love, as can be seen later in this letter. Again, the "to be" is supplied and would be better left out since all Christians are set apart in God's service (1 Corinthians 1:2). The Greek greeting was *charein*, or "greetings". Paul uses *charin*, which refers to the free gift of God. The Hebrew greeting is *shalom*, which means "peace". Certainly Christians are recipients of God's grace and that inner peace which passes understanding (Romans 1:6,7).

### **A CHALLENGE FOR THE CURRENT AGE**

Paul's words stand as a significant challenge to Christians living today. We must not forget Whose we are. Wherever we walk, whatever we do, we wear the name of Jesus. Though we are not specially called, as Paul was, we have been commissioned to carry the good news to all the world, and should take that commission just as seriously as he did (Matthew 28:18-20).

It is vitally important that we remember our Lord was raised from the dead! Therefore, Jesus was, and is, the Son of God! Through His grace, we find freedom from sin. Those who have experienced that grace are compelled, by it, to proclaim the means of every man's freedom from sin.

The gospel call is received by any who obey it, no matter what nationality. The Gospel is God's ultimate expression of love



for lost mankind. Because of it, our constant prayer for other faithful followers should be that they receive the grace of God and its accompanying inner peace!

## **Great Reasons to Believe**

**CLEM THURMAN**

*"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:36-41).*

What a response to the preaching of the gospel of Christ! Jesus had been crucified some seven weeks before, and undoubtedly the events of the final week before the cross were in the conversation of all those in Jerusalem. Some had thought He would deliver Israel from Roman rule and set up an earthly (military & political) kingdom. Some considered Him a blasphemer and a false prophet. But, seemingly, very few were neutral. Then, within a twelve hour period, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, deserted by the other apostles, arrested and tried by the Jewish council, then scourged and crucified by the Romans.

For the next seven weeks the apostles were silent, so far as public preaching goes. Then came the day of Pentecost, a feast day of the Jews that brought them to Jerusalem from many different parts of the world. The apostles had been told by Jesus to "wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4), when they were to receive "power" from God to speak His word (Acts 1:8). Then: *"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place . . . And they were all filled with the Holy*

*Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:1-4). That day's events closed with the words with which we began this article. What had happened? Why did 3,000 people become Christians that day? Obviously, the events preceding this day had prepared the people, but the preaching of the apostles on this day gave them great reasons to believe that Jesus is *"both Lord and Christ."* What were some of those reasons?

### **THE MIRACLES OF JESUS OF NAZARETH**

Very near the beginning of his sermon to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, Peter said of Jesus: *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know"* (Acts 2:22). What Jesus had done during His ministry among the Jews was not a secret! As Paul stated later, *"This thing was not done in a corner"* (Acts 26:26). And this is the point which Peter made: *"As ye yourselves know."*

When disciples of John came asking whether He was the Christ, Jesus replied, *"Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them"* (Matt. 11:4-5). Peter could have made reference to the healing of his mother-in-law, and the multitudes that were then brought to Him for miraculous healing (Mark 1:30-34). The apostles were with Him when He stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 8), when He raised the dead (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56). Many in Jerusalem knew of His raising of Lazarus, who had been dead for four days (John 11:17-57). Peter could have asked, *"Does anyone here know Lazarus? Were any of you there that day?"*

Why did Jesus do such miracles, anyway? Part of the answer is found in John 3:2, when a ruler of the Jews came to Jesus and said, *"We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* The Jews on Pentecost must have felt the force of that logic, for they could not deny the power which Jesus manifested. One time, they even watched to see if He would heal a man on the Sabbath day, so that they could accuse Him of violating the law.

(Mark 3:1-5). But note this: they did not doubt He had the power to do that miracle!

John wrote later, *"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name"* (John 20:30-31). That is the point made in Acts 2:22. If you admit the miracles, then you have to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. And that is one reason so many believed and were baptized that day.

### **FULFILLMENT OF THE MANY PROPHECIES**

The Jews had long anticipated the coming of the *"Messiah"* or *"Christ."* So Peter used those prophecies to show that Jesus is the Christ. He first uses the prophecy of Joel about the day when salvation would begin to be preached (Joel 2:28-32), and then states: *"This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel"* (Acts 2:16). He goes on then to a prophecy from Psa. 16:8-10 and shows Jesus is the fulfillment (Acts 2:25-28). And if Jesus fulfilled these prophecies—and He did—then He is the long-awaited Christ.

How many prophecies Peter could have used in this sermon. The Messiah was to be born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) of the seed of David (Psa. 89:2-3; Luke 2:4). He was to be a King (Psa. 89:3-4) and Saviour (Jer. 23:5; Matt. 1:21). His life was foretold, *"He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised . . . All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death"* (Isa. 53:3,6,9).

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas was foretold, and even the price was given: *"They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver"* (Zech. 11:12). Peter could have used Psa. 22, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . All they that see me laugh me to scorn . . . I may tell all my bones . . . They pierced my hands and my feet. . . They parted my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture."* Peter could have asked, "Were you there when He was crucified? Did you see that prophecy being fulfilled? Weren't all of those prophecies fulfilled exactly?"

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The psalmist had prophesied, *"I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall dwell in safety. For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption"* (Psa. 16:8-10). The apostle Peter used this prophecy, then added: *"Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses"* (Acts 2:29-32). Even the Jews knew that Jesus foretold His own resurrection, so they asked Pilate to set a special guard on the tomb (Matt. 27:62-63). The governor replied, *"Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can."* And they did.

Peter and the other apostles stood before that crowd of Jews, including their rulers, and spoke with boldness: *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"* (Acts 2:32). There were other witnesses, though, besides just the twelve apostles. Paul wrote later of the resurrection of Jesus, *"He hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep"* (1 Cor. 15:4-6).

Peter and the others could have asked some pointed questions; *"You put a guard on the tomb; where is the body? If He was not raised from the dead, what happened to His body?"* Or they could have asked, *"Hundreds saw Jesus after He came forth from the tomb. Will some of you speak up and tell this crowd that you saw Him?"* That Jesus rose from the dead is basic to the gospel. As Paul wrote: *"For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep"*.

(1 Cor. 15:16-20). But with the kind of evidence available, why didn't even more than 3,000 believe?

### **THE MESSAGE OF "THE PROMISE"**

In the Scriptures, when the term, *"the promise"* is used, it nearly always refers to the *"Christ"* that was to come. When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, a promise was made of the Saviour who was to come. God said to Satan, *"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"* (Gen. 3:15). God elaborated on this later when He said to Abraham, *"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). And Paul explained, *"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ"* (Gal. 3:16).

The Jews had long looked for the fulfillment of what they called simply, *"The Promise."* But now Peter preaches that it is now fulfilled on this day of Pentecost! When He told them that God *"made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified"* (Acts 2:36), they asked, *"What shall we do?"* The answer was: *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him"* (Acts 2:38-39). In the context of Peter's sermon, with the many prophecies used, speaking here of *"the promise"* would convey to the minds of all the Jews the promise of the Messiah, or *"Christ."*

When the apostle Paul preached the gospel of Christ to the Jews in Antioch, he used the same theme as the apostles did on Pentecost. *"He raised up David to be their king; to whom also he bare witness and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who shall do all My will. Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus"* (Acts 13:22-23). Jesus is the Christ, the *"seed of the promise,"* which is the central theme of the Old Testament prophecies.

The Jews had long been told that the Messiah (Christ) would come. The prophecy of the Christ was constantly used by the Jewish teachers. *"The Promise"* was a continual subject of their study and meditation. And now it all comes together for them.

Peter gives the strongest of reasons for them to believe, and they did: *"As many as received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"* (v. 41).

But that wasn't the end. Others were baptized later: *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved"* (Acts 2:47). And when one hears the gospel today, confesses Christ and is baptized into Christ, the story is repeated. And I thrill anew when I observe another being *"baptized into Christ,"* just as those 3,000 were baptized 2,000 years ago. The same gospel today produces the same result as then.

## *Parables of Jesus*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There are thirty major parables of our Lord in the four accounts of His gospel. These masterful lessons thrill our souls and challenge our intellect. Knowing *"what is in man"* (John 2:25), Christ was able to convey grand truths in special and memorable ways never to be forgotten. These earthly stories with heavenly meanings have warmed the hearts of millions for 2,000 years. They stand as a tribute to the genius of the communication skills of Jesus, the Master Teacher. They are ever fresh and new, even though they are the heart of the legend that caused Nicodemus to exclaim, *"Thou art a teacher come from God!"* (John 3:2).

In the first seven parables that launched His epochal journey in this form of teaching technique, the Saviour captured the heart and core of the nature of His kingdom. Matt. 13 is a unique journey into the mind of Deity. We learn major points about the cause of Christ. In reflecting upon the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9; 13:18-23), we can see the power of truth hindered by hard and indifferent hearts. Only a few with good and honest hearts accept the challenge of God's truth. Jesus taught us to sow the seed and not be discouraged when only a minority obey. In the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), we learn that Satan tries desperately to confuse the world with counterfeit religion and careless endeavor. We may have to wait until the Judgment Day to see the result of this battle between good and evil that fills us with consternation now.

In two parables concerning leaven and mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-33), we are given valuable points that enlighten and challenge us. It is very important for us to allow God to give the increase and take charge of keeping the roll book. The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), and He keeps the record accurately. Read also Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 3:6-7 and Rev. 3:1-5! From a very small beginning, Christianity grew to a wonderful power in the midst of an unbelieving world, and it did so without the pomp and clever tactics used by false religions. May God help us to be content with the simple sowing of the seed and never engage in the gimmicks and gadgets of carnality.

The next two parables in Matt. 13 are truly marvelous reminders of the incomparable value of God's kingdom. The **pearl of great price** and the **hidden treasure** (Matt. 13:44-46) form a magnificent tribute to the blessings that attend salvation. Worth far more than the wealth of secular enterprise is the depth of truth and redemption in Christ Jesus. The enduring quality of the gospel transcends all the charming and fleeting vanity of Satan's enchanting and devious schemes.

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

In the seventh parable of this chapter, about the net cast into the sea (Matt. 13:47-50), our blessed Redeemer makes it very clear that no evil or error, however well-disguised, will slip through the net when the final curtain falls. Even if sinners can bluff their way through this world and deceive their friends in this brief life, they will face eternity without hope.

*You can fool the hapless public,  
You can be a subtle fraud,  
You can advertise your virtues,  
But you cannot fool God!*

When Jesus began to teach in parables, He left a legacy that reaches the hearts and minds of men. We must preach the word but allow God to take care of the harvest. We must be patient and allow the leaven time to produce growth. The tremendous

value of the kingdom deserves our very best endeavor. And, ultimately, the righteous will not have to put up with sinners. Praise.

## **NASA and Evolution**

**BILL DILLON**

NASA's latest interplanetary probe was to Mars, and a host of pictures showing us the red planet close up was the result. The name of the unmanned lander was Beagle II. For those who do not know, the original Beagle was the name of Charles Darwin's ship which carried him to the Galapagos Islands in search of a way to explain the origin of the world without using the Bible version of creation. After Darwin's journey he wrote **Origin of the Species** (1859), which suggested "natural selection" as the explanation for earth's life forms, instead of God.

The point is, modern day NASA is going to Mars with the same motive that Charles Darwin had in sailing to the Galapagos Islands. NASA is trying to confirm evolution! Why else call the Mars lander Beagle II? It is unfortunate that NASA is using multiplied millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to try and prove the unprovable.

The dilemma for NASA evolutionists is obvious. If they accept the Bible account of creation, they must also accept the moral code found in the same Bible! It seems NASA evolutionists are willing to go to extreme lengths to avoid accepting the truth of Holy Scripture; that truth was stated long ago:

*"By the word of the Lord  
were the heavens made;  
and all the host of them  
by the breath of his mouth.  
For he spake, and it was  
done; he commanded,  
and it stood fast"  
(Psalm 33:6,9).*

