

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

***One is not saved by faith alone or by feeling saved***

Recently I was reading a religious magazine wherein a preacher recounted the story of his conversion to Christ many years ago. He said, as a young man he had heard another preacher speaking about glorious heaven for born-again Christians and eternal hell for the wicked, and how Jesus died to save us from hell. According to him, "I felt he was speaking to me, and I knew for sure I was going to hell. I happened to be sitting in front and could not escape. In the end, during the altar call, I stood with a few other young people and committed my life to Jesus. A great joy filled my life, and as the invitation song continued, everybody started to dance and here I was also jumping and dancing with them. As I returned home I felt I was still dancing through the air. The fear of death and hell were gone and a new joy filled my heart."

Now contrast this with what the Bible teaches about what must one do to be saved from sin or to begin a new life of a Christian in Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts in the New Testament of the Bible is generally called the Book of History of the church, as it tells us how the Gospel was preached in the beginning, how people became Christian, and how the church of Christ began and grew. In the second chapter of this book we read how the Good News of Christ was preached to a large audience of people for the first time on earth in the city of Jerusalem and

what the believers were told to do to be saved from sin and to become Christian. Reading from verse thirtyseven we observe: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:37, 38, 41).

Turn now to chapter eight, here we find Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, and verse twelve says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized." In the same chapter eight, a little later, we read of Philip preaching the gospel to a eunuch, and it says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:35-39). Then we also read about Saul (whom we know as the apostle Paul). He was grieving over his sins in the city of Damascus. God sent to him a preacher by the name of Ananias, who told Paul, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). In Acts 9:18 we read, "and he arose and was baptized."

Friends, nowhere, in the entire Bible you will ever read that people were saved from their sins as a result of their good feeling. Salvation from sin is not an experience that is felt. But one can surely know that he is saved from sin, when one believes in Christ after hearing about Him and by doing that which He has commanded man must do to be saved (Mark 16:16). My feeling cannot be the assurance of salvation.

Someone may feel all his life that he is a good Christian; that God is listening and answering his prayers; that when he will die he will surely go to heaven. And on the day of judgment there will be many such people, with such false assumptions. Listen to Christ, He said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, *but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them," said Christ "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Why were all those people, about whom we read in the Book of Acts, immediately, after hearing the Good News of Christ, baptized? Because Christ Himself had commanded that to be saved one must *both* believe and be baptized. Listen to Him again, what He had told His disciples, just before going back into heaven: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who *believes and is baptized* will be saved but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). God has not left man without His will. God doesn't want man to go by his own feelings or assumptions in religious or spiritual matters; and, if it was so, then why did He give us the Bible? In the Bible God has revealed to us what He has done for man's salvation from sin; and also He has told us what man must do to be saved. We cannot disregard God's written word and hope to be saved by what we imagine or feel or assume.

## *The Gospel Call*

J.C. CHOATE

In the religious world today there are many different ideas as to how God calls an individual to salvation. We will mention some of the major ones. First, there are those who teach that God speaks to them directly through a wee small voice. Second, others say that Christ comes to them in a dream or in a vision. And third, there are those who believe that the Lord calls them through some special experience. Now in all three of these, it is claimed that this is the Lord's way of saving them or that of imparting some

special message to them. But does the Bible teach this? Here is a warning. Be suspicious of those who are always hearing and seeing things.

The first thing we want to find out is this: Does God speak today? If so, how does He speak? This is easy when we turn to Hebrews 1:1,2: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."* So according to this, God speaks today and He speaks through His Son. This is also pointed out in Matthew 17:5 at the transfiguration of Christ. Listen to God: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

The next question is: Does God speak directly to man today or does Christ speak directly? This is cleared up when we read these verses: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name"* (John 20:30,31). Now why are these written? That we might believe. But where are these things written? In the New Testament. Therefore if we will read and study its contents we may know the Lord's will.

Again, we read: *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Question: Does faith come any other way? If it does, the Scriptures do not say so. It is true that there are those who talk about hearing this, seeing that, having an experience, etc., but God's word does not teach any such. Rather, it teaches that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Therefore, there is but one Bible and there is but one faith (Ephesians 4:5).

Because faith comes by hearing the word of God, that is why we are taught the importance of studying the word (2 Timothy 2:15), searching the Scriptures (John 5:39), etc. As a matter of fact, that is why there is so much emphasis on the scriptures themselves, indicating their inspiration and all-sufficiency (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Then the Scriptures tell us that the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels. Listen to the Apostle Paul: *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bond servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light*

*to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:5-7).* What is he saying here? He is simply saying that the Lord had chosen human beings, individuals like Paul, to take the gospel to their fellow men. Think now about the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Give one example of where the Lord ever told one individual what to do to be saved. You can't. For instance, in Acts 8, the angel of the Lord sent Philip to preach Christ to the eunuch. Question: Why didn't the angel go himself and leave Philip in Samaria to continue to preach to the people there? Simply because the Lord had put the gospel in earthen vessels and therefore it was up to man to deliver the gospel message. Again, in Acts 9 we have Saul asking the Lord what to do to be saved and the Lord told him to go into the city and there it would be told him what he should do. Later on Ananias came and told him (Acts 22:16). Question: Why didn't the Lord tell him? Because it was not His will to do so. And so with all of the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts. That is the reason we know that the Lord is not speaking directly to people today apart from the scriptures or appearing to them to tell them what to do to be saved. Even if the Lord were here He would not tell a person what to do (Acts 9), and should He do so it could not be different from the gospel already proclaimed (Galatians 1:6-9), so there would be no purpose in His coming to do that which He has already commanded man to do (Mark 16:15,16). In other words, the Lord will not do for man what man can do for himself.

The reason so much emphasis is placed upon the importance of the preacher taking the gospel to others is because the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels. Christ said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Again, we read, *"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written; 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good*

things!” (Romans 10:13-15). Then, finally, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2). You can see then that the Lord has chosen to reveal His will through this medium. It is all very simple.

That being true, Paul wrote his Thessalonian brethren: *“To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Paul says that the Lord called the Thessalonians by the gospel. That is, Paul preached the gospel to them; they heard it and obeyed it, and therefore they were called to Christ in this manner. Another way of putting it, Christ called them to salvation through the preaching of the gospel.

What about today? How are we called? We who are Christians have likewise been called by the same gospel. That is, the gospel was preached to us, we heard it, believed it, obeyed it, and the Lord saved us. As we take the gospel to others, the same thing happens again and again. The Lord is not calling one person one way and another person another way. Rather, He is calling one and all by and through the one gospel.

Yes, God speaks today but He speaks through Christ. Christ speaks but He speaks through the word. Those who obey Christ have the responsibility of preaching and teaching the gospel to others. By this means the Lord works through the gospel preacher or teacher to reveal His will and to invite the lost to come unto Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

Our first duty is to preach the gospel and our second duty is to assist those who want to obey the Lord (Matthew 28:19,20). This is why Paul made this statement: *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:17,18). So he is saying that he was not sent just to baptize people. His first duty was to preach the gospel and naturally he was ready to baptize those who wanted to obey the Lord.

Have you heard the gospel before? If not, then you are now receiving the gospel call—the call to come unto Christ. Obey Him and He will save you.

# Heaven

MARK T. TONKERY

**Are you going to Heaven?** There is a growing tendency to believe that all “good” people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their Savior, will live in that eternal home after they die on earth. In 2005 a survey found that 54% agree, 39% disagree that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during his life, he will earn, or be rewarded with, a mansion in Heaven.

Heaven, as described in the Bible, is certainly a wonderful place. It is not surprising that people want to go there. In Isaiah 66:1, the Bible describes that world as the eternal dwelling place of God, *“Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne....”* When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said that they should address God the Father, *“which art in heaven”* (Matthew 6:9), a statement that confirms that God dwells in Heaven. The Bible describes many wonderful characteristics of this Paradise.

Heaven is a place of eternal peace and happiness. Revelation 21:4 tells us, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

Hebrews 4:9-11 and Revelation 14:13 also describe Heaven as a place of glorious rest. This is a major contrast with Hell. Jesus points out that Hell is a place of continual pain and suffering where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), torment (Luke 16:23), and eternal fire (Matthew 25:41). Unlike Hell, Heaven is a place of eternal rest for the Christian’s weary soul.

The Bible also states that Heaven is a better dwelling place, a better country—far better—than any place or country on this earth because in that world there will be no more sin, no more death, no more sorrow, no more evil, and no more of the things that break our hearts. Hebrews 11:16 states that the faithful long for a better country. The idea, as described in this passage, is that Heaven is far superior to anything we can ever hope for or imagine on this earth.

Heaven will also be a place of fellowship. First, as we have already noted, Revelation 21:2 describes how the apostle John saw New Jerusalem—the church—come down as *a bride adorned for her husband, Christ*. The text also says that *"the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God."* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states, *"...so shall we ever be with the Lord."* What joy it will be to dwell with God!

Heaven will be a place of fellowship with the righteous of ages past and with the saints who have been found faithful in Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says,

*"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."*

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."*

*"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

*"Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

But the question remains: Are you going to Heaven? Will all "good" people go there, even if they were never believers in Christ and even if they were never washed in His blood? Since no human has the authority to give an answer to this question, we must let Jesus legislate concerning who will pass that final judgment, and on what basis a soul will be accepted into Heaven: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:21 -23).



# ***Faith Comes By Hearing God's Word***

**JERRY A. JENKINS**

It has been estimated that 3.1 billion people around the world have never heard the Gospel message of redemption. Half of the world's population has never learned what Jesus did for them at Calvary. Perhaps what is even worse, it has been noted that half of the members of any "Christian" religious group will never read the Bible. Sixty-five percent of those who believe the Bible have never read the entire New Testament.

If these statistics are accurate, one no longer needs to speculate why our world is becoming less and less godly. Some may be awaiting a special outpouring of the Spirit in some miraculous manner upon their lives. This will not happen. The age of spiritual gifts was to end when that which is perfect had come. Paul affirmed, *"Love never fails; but if [there are gifts of] prophecy, they will be done away; if [there are] tongues, they will cease; if [there is] knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away"* (1 Corinthians 13:8).

That which is perfect refers to the complete revelation from God. James states: *"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 KJV). The New Testament is described as the law of liberty, or freedom, because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts.

The New Testament is called the law of **liberty** partly because it calls us to a *state* of liberty, teaches us the way to true liberty, and offers us the *assistance* of a spirit of liberty. It is called the law of liberty partly because it exempts no one, but deals with all persons freely, without respect of persons. The Gospel, or Word of God, then, is truly the world's *law of liberty*.

Your life will be deeply enriched as your faith grows. This faith comes only by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We can change the world with the pure Gospel He has given to mankind.

# ***Presuppositions And The Bible***

**HOLLIS MILLER**

Jesus believed that men who willingly listened to Him were able to understand His teaching. On more than one occasion He said: *"He that has ears to hear, let him hear."* What else could Jesus have meant than that those who would listen to Him would be able to understand? Yet, many failed to understand because their minds were closed by presuppositions.

As was true during the earthly ministry of Jesus, so it is today. Presuppositions often keep individuals from understanding the Scriptures. One who approaches the Bible under the guidance of Calvinism will not be able to understand the biblical teaching that God would have all men to be saved. Such passages as 1 Timothy 2:4, Hebrews 2:9, and 2 Peter 3:9, which teach that God would have all men to be saved, will be given a different slant from what they "seem" to be saying.

The Jews crucified Jesus because their presuppositions about the nature of the Messiah to come were not met by the Messiah that came (John 1:11). The philosophers at Athens did not listen to Paul very long because of their presupposition that one cannot rise from the dead (Acts 17:32).

So long as one presupposes that salvation is by faith only, the biblical teaching about baptism will not be understood. Should the presupposition that *many faiths can save* reign dominant in one's thinking, the New Testament teaching that there is only one saving faith will not be comprehended (Ephesians 4:5; Acts 4:12). The presupposition that the New Testament is culturally affected will lead one into a more liberal view of its teaching than would otherwise be the case.

When one approaches the Bible, all presuppositions need to be laid aside. The Word of God, which is intended to lead mankind into truth, cannot instruct one as it should so long as one "knows" before investigating what the biblical text says.

Dear reader, let the Word of God, and not presuppositions, guide you.

# ***Understanding The Bible's Truth About Origins***

**DAVE EVERSON**

I have heard it said that "you must have help if you are going to misunderstand the Bible." Indeed, so plain are its teachings on the important points of God's goodness, mercy, and grace, His demand for obedience to the Gospel plan of salvation, that if we want to misunderstand it, we have to work hard or have help to do it.

The same is true for the Bible truths about the origin of everything in the universe. John reveals in Revelation 4:11, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* That seems like it is pretty plain! Yet, man, in his attempt to come up with a way to avoid the need to render obedience to the teachings in the Bible for pure living, has struggled to invent ways to explain everything without the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator, and many are those who would be happy to help you misunderstand the plain words of God, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and earth"* (Genesis 1:1).

As I begin writing for this publication, I hope to be able to share some of the truths from the creation that will help to strengthen our faith in the plain teachings of the Bible on the origin of the universe and everything in it. These truths many times will be plain teachings that are revealed by the Holy Spirit through the writers of the Bible. Sometimes these will be an effort to understand things about the world around us that are not revealed in divine writ and so will be speculation of what God has done. Other times the articles will attempt to explain man's twisting of the discoveries of science to disprove God's majesty and power and, indeed, His existence.

Science is a very rewarding and popular study for mankind. Indeed, the discoveries and advancements of science have improved human life here on earth. However, science is a human endeavor and is influenced by many non-scientific factors around us. Science is defined by the *Oxford University Press* dictionary

as the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment, and a systematically organized body of knowledge on any subject.

Science, then, is man's attempt to gain understanding about the universe that God created. Science does NOT prove there is no God; indeed it cannot prove that, since God is a Spirit and not observable by physical methods. Science makes no demand that there be no God. Science is God-neutral, neither proving nor disproving His existence. We can use observations from science evidences to support belief of His existence, and others can use [actually, misuse] evidences to conclude that He does not exist.

God has chosen to create us. He revealed Himself to us through His talking with Adam and Eve, and recorded those events for us in His Word, the Bible. When God reveals truth about the physical and natural world, we should take it as the truth! Yet, remember the Bible is NOT a science book! It was not given to reveal how processes in nature work, but since God is the Creator and He understands how the creation works, we should take heed to those teachings and not look for ways we, as fallible humans, might think it is wrong.

Acceptance of the truth of the creation of the world as given in the Bible is a philosophical position, not a scientific one. No one was present at the creation to observe God doing it. God is not, and will not, create something new just to prove His existence! So when it comes to past events, everyone is guessing, albeit some guesses have more evidence and logic that support them. Science, however, can see only what is here NOW and they make hypotheses, build models and speculate about what has happened in the past. If one chooses not to believe the plain truths as revealed in the Bible about God's existence and His creation, then he has taken the other philosophical position, that of Naturalism. Naturalism is the attempt to explain everything by purely natural processes, with no supernatural intervention at anytime or anywhere.

So, we can see the choices we have: that God has plainly revealed His truths, He created the world, He created the physical

laws by which nature operates, He created living things, and He created man in His image. Since that time, other than occasional times to prove His power and majesty, those laws have worked according to His design, and that is what science observes today. Or, we can believe that man is the product of natural processes that had no plan and no reason for having man here; we are just matter in motion.

Both of these positions are worldviews that are philosophical, NOT scientific. It is from this position of Naturalism that many today want to reject any evidence from science that supports the idea that there might be a God. When they do this, they reject the plain truth of the Bible and accept the guesses of fallible man who is trying to help them misunderstand these truths.

Let us always be open to God's Word and the truths it reveals about the world around us, and live by that. Then weigh the conclusions of fallible man as he studies science, in light of those plain truths! God has never been proved to be wrong in His Word; we cannot say the same for the scientific community at anytime in mankind's history.

However, when we look at the end result of each of these world-views, we can see the vast difference. If we accept the biblical and scientific evidence for God's existence and live faithfully for Him, living as good a life as we possibly can, and then die, what have we lost? Are there pleasures in sin we missed? Absolutely there are, or sin would not be so popular, but we have lived a productive, healthy, upright, just, and rewarding life and we know that God will accept us in heaven, because we have believed in Him and have lived as He wanted us to live. Yet, if we have lived like there is no God, doing whatever made us feel good because this life is all we have, and an instant after death we wake to realize it was NOT THE END, what have we lost? We have lost everything and are lost for eternity, separated from God with NO chance of an end to the suffering that the Bible tells will be the fate of those *"who obey not the gospel"* (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

The choice when put like this should be easy! Live for Him!

# Following In The Steps of Jesus

CLEM THURMAN

*"For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:21-24).*

When the Son of God came into this world, He had a definite purpose: *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). If we are to follow Him, that must also be our mission in life. Satan is constantly at work in the world, *"Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). And most of the world is still in bondage to sin and the devil (Heb. 2:14-15). We need to realize that, *"The whole world lieth in the evil one"* (1 John 5:19), and it must be our purpose to seek to bring freedom from sin to those who serve Satan.

Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:32-36).

An account in the life of Jesus shows us some of what we should do to help set people free from sin. *"And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and outwent them. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things"* (Mark 6:32-34). What Jesus felt on this occasion, we should feel. What he saw is what we should see.

And what He then did is what we should do.

### **"He Was Moved with Compassion"**

When we meet lost souls, what do we feel? As we deal with our relatives who are lost, with our neighbours, with our co-workers, etc., what are our feelings as we realize they are lost? Jesus felt compassion. Some dictionaries give as the meaning of "compassion" the terms, "pity" or "sympathy." But the root of this word shows a much deeper meaning; *com* (with) - *passion* (feeling, suffering). Jesus had the ability to feel what other people were feeling, to "feel with" those who were hurting. That is compassion.

The Bible says of Jesus, *"Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2:17-18). Depths of loneliness and despair, disappointment over false friends, sorrow for the ungodliness that surrounded Him, the pain of innocence suffering - all of these He knew, and he had compassion on those with like trials.

The Scriptures say pointedly, *"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24). That is what Jesus did. He put Himself in the other person's place, to see and feel life as he or she did. To "walk in his shoes" and feel what he feels, that is compassion. When we are moved with compassion, we will not be impatient, harsh, intolerant, prejudiced nor in any way unkind. We will truly follow the admonition, *"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them"* (Matt. 7:12).

### **"As Sheep not Having a Shepherd"**

Having lived eight years in the Rocky Mountains, I have watched the sheep ranching with intense interest. I suppose that nothing is more without purpose or direction than sheep without a shepherd. But this is the picture which Jesus viewed as He looked on the multitude. Man must have a sense of purpose and direction that results in achievement, for God created us that way: *"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13). There is that which God put into every

one of us, to *"seek after God"* (Acts 17:27).

In our society today, we see the evidence on every hand of the same conditions which Jesus saw. The so-called youth rebellion, the craze for a "cause" to which one can devote his life and the rabid interest in every kind of "underdog" social service - all these indicate a search for meaning to life that can only find its fulfillment in God. So many have "copped out" on society, because they can't find there what their souls hunger for. They are *"sheep without a shepherd,"* and cannot find their way.

The prophet wrote long ago, *"O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23). We cannot chart our own course, or guide ourselves by ourselves. We need a shepherd. In fact, we need *"the Good Shepherd"* (John 10:14). The real tragedy is that those who are *"sheep without a shepherd"* do not realize their need for the Shepherd, and it must be our mission to bring the Good Shepherd into their lives.

### ***"He Began to Teach Them"***

Jesus felt for these people. He saw their need, even when they did not. And then He did something about it. I'm sure that there were those who were ready to criticize the Lord: "Why don't you heal all the sick people?" and "Why don't you use your power to throw off the yoke of the Romans?" He must have heard such, and many more criticisms, many times. But His work was more important. And it still is.

Jesus told the people on another occasion, *"Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed"* (John 6:27). The emphasis of the Lord has always been on the spiritual, not the physical. He never came into this world to end physical illness, nor hunger, nor political tyranny. He had the power, He could have done all that. But that was not His mission. He came *"to seek and to save the lost."* That was, and is, His mission. And it must be ours, also.

Jesus once asked the question, *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36-37). No matter how much could be done for all the people around us in



this world in the social and physical realm, until we recognize and serve their spiritual needs, we have not really helped them.

The only course that will help lost souls with their spiritual needs is the one that Jesus took: *"He began to teach them."* The apostle wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 1:16). It is through the teaching of the word of God that we receive every spiritual blessing. As Paul said, *"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32). If we would meet the real needs of people, not just the temporary or imagined needs, we must do as Jesus did: *"teach them."*

Jesus told the apostles, and through them He tells us, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16). As the apostle Paul wrote later, *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph. 3:10). The only way to help people break the yoke of Satan is by teaching them of the freedom which Jesus Christ offers. If we really care about people, we won't just tell them how much we love them — we will tell them how much Jesus loves them and what He did for them.

Will we follow the Lord? Then let us learn the compassion which He demonstrated for us. Let us see the purposeless society as He sees it. Let us feel the loneliness, despair and lostness of those who are without Christ. And let us follow His example by teaching them the gospel of Christ, *"The power of God unto salvation unto all them that believe."*

## *Meek and Gentle*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Jesus was *"meek and gentle"* as the Bible states in 2 Cor. 10:1. Yet, our Savior was also bold and powerful in rebuking error. After

Jesus repeatedly said, *"Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,"* (Matt. 23). He then stated: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"* (v. 37-38). Jesus stated that He came to do the will of the Father, and that often included stern rebuke to false teachers (Mark 12:24). He could weep over the hypocrisy of the religious elite (Luke 12:1) and look upon cowardly folk with extreme displeasure: *"He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart"* (Mark 3:5).

Christ surrendered to His death on the cross while praying for those men who put him there: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). The Redeemer has deep compassion for lost mankind and could even love the rich young ruler who rejected Him (Mark 10). However, Jesus did not change the commands addressed to sinners who looked for some "easy street." Meek and gentle - yes - but never a compromiser of the truth of God! F. W. Faber blessed us with these words in the gospel song:

*Father of mercies, God of love,  
Whose gentle gifts all creatures share,  
The rolling seasons as they move,  
Proclaim to all Thy constant care.*

The pattern of the way of life of Jesus Christ should compel our sojourn here below. God offers a challenge to us: *"The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace"* (Num. 6:25-26). The more we know the Jesus of the Bible, and courageously follow His steps, the more 2 Pet. 1:2 will flow into our lives: *"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:2-3).

Meekness is based on sheep who do not run ahead of the shepherd, but who go where He gently leads them into verdant pastures. Too many today try to make God their image, rather

than follow the guidance of One much wiser than they will ever be! *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

The apostle Paul reminds us of how he dealt with others, and how we should: *"But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children"* (1 Thes. 2:7). But that same nurse who is so gentle will hit hard on the back of a child who is choking, so as to save the life of one who is dear to her. We must boldly preach the gospel in order to save those we love. Our pattern is demonstrated for us by the Father: *"Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"* (Rom. 11:22). Jesus called those religious leaders hypocrites, but then died to save them. With a tear in our eye and a lump in our throat, we rebuke sin in order to save sinners.

Shepherds search for lost sheep with uncanny zeal. Thy knock scabs off sores and gently rub soothing oil to relieve disease and pain. The whole process is essential. Christ mentioned in Rev. 3:19 that He chastens and rebukes those near and dear to Him. An old song shows this perfect blend:

*Out of the depths of ruin untold,  
Into the peace of thy sheltering fold  
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

The meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ calls us home!

## *Forgiveness In The Old and New Testament Dispensations*

**CLYDE M. MILLER**

In literature, the noun "parallel" means "something equal or similar in all essential particulars." *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* says the noun "paradox" means something that is "seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true."

This article is based on a legitimate syllogism: all Scripture is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the Old Testament is part of Scripture (John 5:39-40); therefore, the Old Testament, as well as the New, is inspired of God.

That being true, we can expect that the Old and New Testaments will be in harmony with each other and that passages within each testament will be in harmony with each other. We must never pit one scripture against another; rather, we must search for the harmony that exists between them.

## **PARALLELS**

### **God's Constant Characteristics**

- **Exodus 34:6-7, God's Self-Revelation:** God reveals Himself as a-God of compassion, grace, loyalty, love and faithfulness, attributes that cause Him to be a forgiving God. Some or all of these attributes of God are cited seven other times in the Old Testament (Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2).

God is also a just God, an attribute that causes Him to punish the guilty. Because God forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, the word "guilty" describes one who is persistently impenitent. The Old Testament teaches that repentance is a condition of forgiveness (Job 36:10; Jeremiah 5:3; 15:19; Ezekiel 18:30, 32), and so does the New (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 6:12; Luke 3:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 26:20).

- **Malachi 3:6-7, God's Unchanging Nature:** This passage declares that God's nature does not change. The New Testament declares the unchangeable nature of Christ (Hebrews 13:8). Furthermore, the promise is given in Malachi, "Return to Me, and I will return to you" (v. 7b NKJV). *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* states, "The verb [used here] is the twelfth most frequently used verb in the OT, appearing just over 1050 times .... The Bible is rich in idioms describing man's responsibility in the process of repentance." The Hebrew verb, when applied to man, nearly always involves repentance or relenting. God's unchangeable nature allows Him to forgive and restore the penitent sinner.

### **Past Pardon of Sins**

- **Numbers 14:17-20, A Done Deal:** Moses pleads with God

to forgive Israel as He had been characteristically doing (v. 19). God replied, "I have forgiven them" (v. 20 NIV).

- **Second Samuel 12:13, Confession and Compliance:** David confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord," and the prophet Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin."

- **Psalms 51 and 32, Confidence and Completeness:** In Psalm 51, David pleads earnestly for mercy manifested in forgiveness based on his deep penitence and outright confession (vv. 1-3). He confidently prays for restoration of joy and gladness based on complete forgiveness (vv. 7-9). As a result, he promises to teach transgressors God's ways and to sing of God's righteousness and praiseworthiness (vv. 13-15). In Psalm 32, David keeps his promise. He teaches us that when God forgives a person, his sins are no longer counted against him (vv. 1-2; cf. Romans 4:7-8). Paul, in the Romans citation, uses a very strong double negative to declare that David was saying God would "never" (v. 8) count the forgiven man's sin against him. David shares with us his personal experience of suffering the debilitating results of failing to confess his sins (Psalm 32:3-4). David then announces his complete cleansing upon confessing his sin, iniquity and transgressions (v. 5). Finally, he exhorts his readers not to follow his temporary troubles resulting from his former denial, but to share his consciousness of lasting joy resulting from God's granting grace to him in forgiveness (vv. 6-11).

- **Isaiah 6:5-7, Wound and Heal:** Isaiah confesses his sinful condition, and a seraph (angel) announces, "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (v. 7b). The prophet accepted the completeness of that forgiveness and went forth with boldness to preach to Judah the word of forgiveness for them.

All these passages set forth completed action and thus indicate that forgiveness was a reality, not merely a promise for the future. They also indicate that forgiveness was equally administered on a corporate as well as individual level when the proper conditions were met.

### **Forgiven and Forgotten Sins**

- **Isaiah 43:25, No remembrance and no regret:** Because of God's own nature ("for my own sake" v. 25), He forgives so completely that forgiven sins are remembered no more. The one forgiven need never have any sense of lingering guilt when forgiven.

## **PARADOXES**

### **The Cause and the Means of Forgiveness**

The New Testament declares that Christ bears the very image or nature of God (Hebrews 1:3 NKJV). Christ now manifests the same forgiving characteristic as did God in the Old Testament. God is still our Savior (Luke 1:47), but He now exercises that prerogative through the mediation of Christ (2:11).

Isaiah 43:25 says that God was not remembering sins against His people once they were forgiven, but Hebrews 10:3 says there was a remembrance of sins, and Hebrews 9:9 says that Old Testament sacrifices could not cleanse the conscience. Although these passages seem to be contradictory, they are only paradoxical.

Under the Old Covenant, God's grace, mercy and love provided the effective cause of forgiveness (Exodus 34:6-7). The animal sacrifices were the God-given means whereby God's nature provided forgiveness according to His own purpose and promise (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22).

In the apostolic age of the church, the Jews had misinterpreted those sacrifices to be the effective cause of forgiveness. The writer of the book of Hebrews, by inspiration, declared that those sacrifices were inadequate when so misinterpreted (Hebrews 10:1-4). He was not contradicting what Moses, by inspiration, said of those sacrifices in Leviticus, nor was he contradicting Isaiah 43:25. In the New Testament, God's and Christ's eternal natures - grace, mercy and love - also provide the efficient cause of forgiveness (Titus 3:4-7).

Today, the means of forgiveness for the unsaved are faith, repentance, confession and baptism (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 2:38; 8:37). The means of forgiveness for the erring Christian are repentance, confession and prayer (vv. 22-24).

The Old Testament sacrifices were adequate to do what God intended - to serve as a means of obtaining the grace of God - but they were inadequate in serving as the cause of salvation.

### **Christ's Adequate Sacrifice**

The New Testament book of Hebrews gives a full discussion of Old Testament sacrifices. First, the phrase, "year after year" (Hebrews 10:1 NIV) reveals that the writer is here discussing the

rituals of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16; 23:26-32). Inanimate objects were also cleansed along with the people. These ordinances included ceremonial cleansings, thus indicating an annual rededication of the tabernacle and later the temple and its appurtenances as well as the rededication of the people. Such rituals could not clear the conscience because they pertained externally to the body, not internally to the soul (Hebrews 9:6-10). These were external regulations applying only until the "new order" came in.

Second, the sacrifices offered daily (Hebrews 7:27; 10:11) likewise could not serve as the efficient cause of salvation, for only amoral animals devoid of volition were being offered (v. 4). The sacrifice of Christ, on the other hand, was willingly offered by one who possessed the very nature of God (1:1-4; 10:5-10, the latter a quotation from Psalm 40:6-8).

Third, the Old Testament priests provided a temporary service because of their death, but Christ provides a permanent priesthood because He always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:23-25).

Fourth, the high priests who officiated at the Old Testament sacrificial service were imperfect, but Christ is a perfect high priest (Hebrew 7:26-28).

Fifth, and very importantly, the need for the continual repetition of the Old Testament sacrifices indicated that they could not provide permanent forgiveness, as does the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-14). The phrase in Hebrews 10:2, "have been once cleansed," translates a Greek perfect passive participle meaning "if they had once for all been cleansed" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament* by A.T. Robertson). The Greek perfect tense describes a past action with present results. The need for repeating those animal sacrifices revealed that they could not provide permanent cleansing, so they had to be repeated. Christ's sacrifice, however, cleanses "once for all" (10:8-10).

### **New Testament Teaching Concerning Christ and Old Testament Forgiveness**

The thrust of Romans 3:9-18 is that both Jews and Gentiles were under the power of sin (v. 9). Paul then quoted several passages to demonstrate that the writers of the Old Testament

recognized the futility of attempting to be justified by keeping the law, for no one kept it perfectly (vv. 10-18). James was in complete harmony with this sentiment (James 2:10). Not every Jew was guilty of every sin catalogued by this list given by Paul, but the apostle employed hyperbole in Romans 3 to demonstrate the pervasiveness of sin and the futility of a legalistic view of law-keeping as a system of justification.

Romans 3:19-20 carries this concept forward by declaring that instead of legalistic keeping of law justifying a person, it actually makes him more conscious of sin. In Romans 3:21-26, Paul declares that the Law and the Prophets (the entire Old Testament) bore witness to a righteousness/justification apart from legalistic keeping of law, that is, a system of works righteousness. Rather, forgiveness is the result of God's providing the justifier, Jesus Christ.

The best example of this witness in the Old Testament is the prophecy given in Isaiah 53. In pre-Christian days, however, there is no evidence that the Jews in general applied that marvelous prophecy to one sent from heaven to save mankind. This failure was at the base of their misinterpretation of forgiveness.

Paul points out that God had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished or not counted against the penitent believers because of the anticipation of the perfect atonement that He knew would be provided in Christ. This is the meaning of Hebrews 9:15. This clearly reveals that God is both just in exacting the penalty for sin and He is the justifier of those who have faith in Christ. Christ bears the penalty of the sins of the confessing faithful Christian, so we do not have to bear it.

