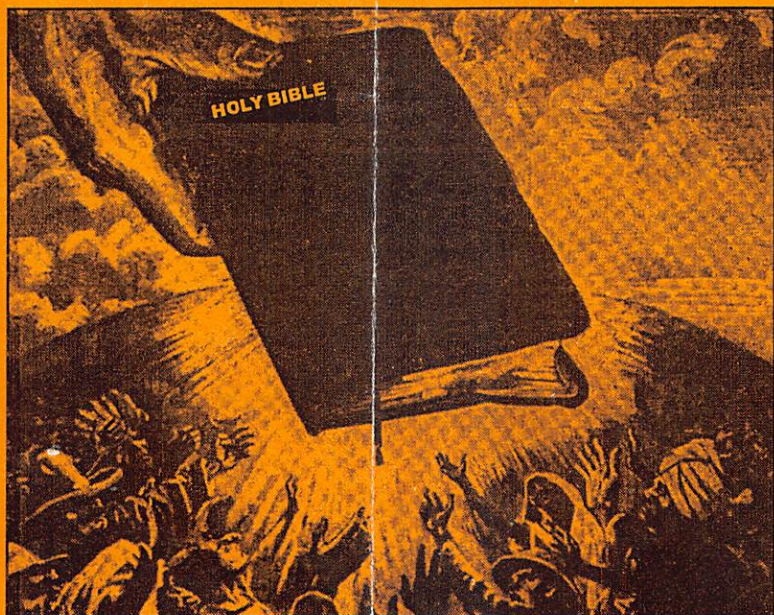


Monthly

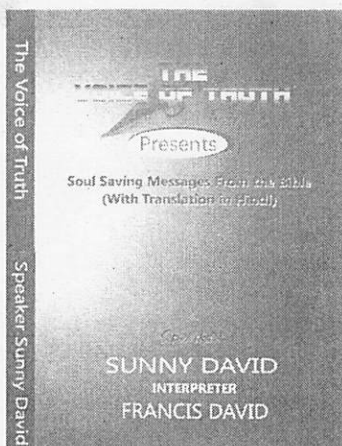
April, 2011

Price: Rs. 2/-

The Bible Teacher



SPECIAL OFFER



Twelve Powerful Messages From The Bible In Three Discs

(Each Message approx. 25 Min.)



To Receive all three Discs
Send Rs. one hundred only

*Preferably by Ordinary Money Order
or Registered Mail*

To : Sunny David
B-201, Sarita Vihar
New Delhi-110076

Please write your name and address
complete with Pincode.
Discs will be sent by Registered Mail.

Cell: (0) 9810896789
Email: sunny_davidin@yahoo.co.in

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 41

April 2011

No. 12

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***"Heaven and earth will pass away
but My words will by no means pass away"***

Christ spoke those words when He was describing to His disciples the impending judgment of God that was to come on the disobedient nation of Israel, and which, historically speaking, actually took place in the same manner, some thirty-seven years later, just as Christ had predicted in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Matthew.

God had chosen the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), in keeping with His promise that He had made in the garden of Eden, when man's first parents had sinned by disobeying God. There, God had promised, how the Seed of woman, whom Satan had first beguiled to sin, would crush the head of Satan, to achieve victory over sin and death, which is the wages of sin. Thousands of years later when the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians, he said to them, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4). He was speaking of Jesus Christ. In the same epistle, at Galatians 3:16, he had earlier said, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to Seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ."

The Jews or the Israelites, who were the descendants of Abraham, amongst whom Christ was born, in the beginning of the

first century, A.D., because of the hardness of their hearts and unbelief did not accept Christ, the Son of God; the Seed of woman, of God's promise. Not only did they reject Christ, but they had also earlier rejected all those prophets whom God had sent amongst them to preach to them repentance from all wrong and to turn their hearts to one true God. Christ also knew how they were conspiring to capture and kill Him. Therefore, Christ's last words to the unbelieving Israelites were: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

It was then, when his disciples began to show Him the magnificent temple buildings of the Jews, Christ told them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Matt.24:1-2). And, it was in this context, Christ told the disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matt.24:34, 35).

We observe from the passage cited above, that all those things the Lord had spoken, as mentioned in Matt. 24:1-33, were going to take place in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem; the city of the Jews, and that those things were to take place within the lifetime of that generation. Further, our attention is drawn to the prophetic statement of Christ that one day both heaven and the earth will pass away. Later, the apostle Peter, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God also wrote in his epistle about the passing away of the heaven and the earth in these words, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements Will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10).

Also, thirdly, and more importantly, notice, that Christ in that passage had said, that heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Friends, we need to take Christ's words, which He Himself

spoke, and which He later spoke through His disciples, unto whom He had sent The Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, which they wrote in the books of the New Testament of the Bible for us (John 14:25,26; 16:13,14) more seriously, because when all is over, we all will be judged at the end by His word alone, as He has warned in these words: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the words that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

We all need to believe and obey, what He has commanded all men must do to be saved from sin. (Mark 16:16). Also, we need to believe and accept what He has taught in regard to building His one church. (Matt. 16:18). Too, we need to believe and accept and practise what He has taught concerning the true worship of God. (John 4:24).

Ever since Christ spoke those words, men have invented many different avenues of salvation, which Christ has not authorised. Men everywhere have established myriad of churches of their own choice, calling them by different names, following conflicting doctrines, disregarding Christ's promise that He would build His own church. Instead of worshipping God in spirit and truth, as he had taught, many are worshipping Him in vain by following teachings and doctrines and commandments of men. (Matt. 15:8,9).

In light of what Christ has said, only those things which He has commanded and established and authorised will abide, every other will pass away. (Matt. 15:13). Christ taught, one who hears what He says and does that he is like the wise man who had built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears Him, but does not do what He has said will be like a foolish man who had built his house on the sand. (Matt. 7:24-27).

WOMEN PREACHERS

J.C. CHOATE

In our day, more and more women are becoming preachers. Many of the pulpits are now being filled by them, and they are often seen on TV programs. In a time in which the women's lib movement is in full swing, the idea of "women preachers" fits right in with the idea of women taking the lead in many or all fields that were formerly reserved for men.

The question here, however, is not a matter of men suppressing women and forbidding them to preach, not allowing them to enter a field of work where men have previously played a dominant role, but does the Lord, Himself, authorize women to take the lead in doing this kind of public work in the church today?

When we look at the public ministry of Jesus, we find Him choosing 12 individuals to serve as His apostles. Who were these apostles? *They were all men!* Later, when Judas betrayed Christ and another was selected to take his place, even though there were faithful women among His disciples, still it was *a man* that was chosen (Acts 1:26). Further, when one was appointed by God "out of due season" to become an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul—a *man*—was the selection.

After the church had been established and had begun to grow and spread throughout the world, there was a need for leaders in each congregation. According to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, those Christians who were qualified were to be appointed as Elders and Deacons. In both cases they were to be *men*, not women. In reply to those who believe that women can also serve as Elders, someone said that, based on the requirements listed in the Scriptures, he did not know how a woman could be the husband of *one* wife!

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, He appeared before the apostles—*all men*—and commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). Also, read Matthew 28:19,20.

Coming over to Acts 2, we are told that those same Apostles—*all men*—were in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and began to preach to the great crowd of people that gathered there. As a result, many believed and asked what else they should do. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. About 3,000 gladly received the word and were baptized, and the Lord added the saved to His church. Read Acts 2.

Later, seven good *men* with an honest report and full of the Holy Spirit were appointed to help the apostles. These served the church in much the same way that deacons later served under the oversight of elders.

Reading through the book of Acts, you will note that it was always *the men* who publicly preached the Gospel and took the lead in other public work. The overwhelming conclusion, then, is that the Lord chose *men* to preach and to be responsible for the welfare and development of the church. Throughout the New Testament, such leadership was given to men. We must respect God's wisdom in doing that.

But is it only by the emphasis on the work of men that we would conclude that women are not to be public leaders in the church of Christ? No, the Scriptures very clearly say by inspiration, "*Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression*" (1 Timothy 2:14). The reason given in this passage shows that the prohibition was not a *cultural thing* but a law made by God's direction.

"*Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says*" (1 Corinthians 14:34).

In the Old Testament, God spoke to *the fathers by the prophets—all men*. He used *men* to write the Scriptures; *men* were the kings and priests, and with only one exception (Deborah), *men were the judges*. Why was there one woman judge? Because in all Israel, there was no man with the courage to lead the people! That fact should set off alarms in the ears of men who would relinquish their God-given responsibilities today. God created men to lead and women to be the helpers. We have no authority to change His order of leadership (1 Corinthians 11:8,9). But when men fail to fill the role God has assigned to them, we find problems. Adam failed to lead Eve properly, because he was there when she ate of the forbidden fruit. Abram failed when he allowed Sara to influence him to father a child by Hagar.

When women left the home to take up work in the outside world, the home began to hurt. With the passing of time, many women have taken on the work of men, while their own work—for which they were especially designed by God—was neglected. In too many cases, now, men are not carrying their own responsibilities; they abandon their wives and families, and live for themselves. With this change in roles, the home, the church,

and the world are in trouble. It is critical that we go back to God's plan, and that men assume their role as leaders, and that women devote themselves to their homes, families, and husbands, and to their own sphere of work in spiritual matters.

Does the woman, then, have responsibility and work to do in the Lord's church? We read of Priscilla, with her husband, teaching Apollos privately (Acts 18:26). The church often met in the homes of women (Romans 16). Women provided help and support in the preaching of the Gospel. In segregated classes in the church, as well as privately, women are to teach other women and children (Titus 2:3-5). This would have been the case among women of the first century when, as in Acts 2:17 the promise was made that the sons and daughters in the church would prophesy by the Spirit's inspiration, and also when Phillip's daughters were described as having the special gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). Then, as now, women would have made up approximately half of the membership of the church, and many of their needs would be met by other Christian women. Above that, they were entrusted with the most important work of all—keeping the home and children (1 Timothy 5:14). God bless them as they obey!

The Church Preaches the Gospel

JEFF JENKINS

The primary purpose for the existence of the church from the beginning was to evangelize the world. Jesus said of Himself, "The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10 NKJV).

Before He ascended to heaven Jesus left us our marching orders. "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). Luke tells us that Jesus told His apostles, "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The book of Acts stresses the fact that the early church grew (2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 8:6). Even more impressive is the way the early church grew. The church grew when people "gladly received" the word and were baptized (2:41), when people heard

the word and believed (4:4), when the word and "Christ" were preached to them (8:4-6). It is clear that the Lord desires for His church to grow, and He has given us the ingredients necessary for growth.

In the intervening years thousands of books and articles have been written concerning the need for church growth. Numerous methods, techniques, and ideas have been presented. It appears that all Christians are interested in growth, but the fact remains the church is not growing as it has in ages past.

Some people say that growth can only occur if we are willing to change. Advocates of change abound, telling us that we must conform to culture and become more like the religious groups around us. It is difficult not to be reminded of 1 Samuel 8:20 which tells that God's people wanted to be like all the other nations around them. But God has always demanded that His people be different (Isaiah 52:11; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9).

Some among us argue that these verses and others like them refer only to the "unchurched," a term used to describe those who are not religious in any way, and therefore cannot be talking about religious people in the denominational world. This argument is easy to believe if you buy into the false teaching that the church of Christ is just another denomination that only came into existence through the Restoration Movement.

However, if we believe that there is only one church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14), then the idea of denominationalism is impossible. After all, the "Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23) declared that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). He did not promise to build many different churches so that we might pick the church of our choice.

If the church of Christ is just a U.S. born denomination, we have no right to exist, any more than any other denomination has a right to exist (1 Corinthians 1:10). It is impossible to convert any person to a man-made denomination and that person be a part of the church for which Jesus died at the same time.

Besides the biblical reasons for not believing that the church of Christ is a denomination there are also many good practical reasons. As one of my dear friends and mentors often says, "If the church of Christ is a denomination, we are doing a poor job."

So the theory is that we should just leave all of the good, religious people in the denominations alone. They love the Lord; they are good, moral people of faith; they do many good works;

they must be Christians. If the advocates of change and tolerance among us continue to convince members of the church of Christ that we are just another denomination, the idea of denominationalism somehow seems more palatable.

If we are all the same and the lines become blurred, we then move to the idea that we should not teach the gospel to our religious friends around us. Obedience to the gospel becomes unnecessary, baptism is no longer essential to salvation, church organization doesn't matter, and how we worship is no longer an issue. We do not preach doctrine in our worship services because, as one preacher stated, "If grace will cover moral error, why are we so afraid to let it cover doctrinal error?"

After doing away with the idea that we should teach the gospel to people in the denominational world, those who advocate that the church must change tell us that we must concentrate our efforts on those who are unchurched.

Copying the community churches around us we are told that if we want to reach the lost we must design seeker-sensitive services. These are worship services where people are made to feel good about life; no one is ever confronted with sin in his or her life, and we certainly can never leave the impression that the church of Christ is the one church that is spoken of in the New Testament. So we cannot teach that religious people in denominationalism are lost because the church of Christ is no better. We do not confront the non-religious seeker with his or her sin because we might offend someone with the gospel.

Is it any wonder or surprise that the church is not growing as it has in the past. Confusion abounds! It seems that we have become so tolerant and non-offensive that we are concerned with what everybody wants except the One who shed His blood to purchase the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-26). Many groups have de-emphasized the clear teaching of Scripture for so long that we have nearly an entire generation of people who do not know that we should be teaching everyone the gospel of salvation.

The only answer to this problem is a return to Scripture. Paul stated unequivocally that God would take vengeance upon two groups of people—those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

If it is true that all good, religious people are saved, why did

the Holy Spirit instruct Peter to teach the gospel to Cornelius (Acts 10)? Paul himself was sincere in his religious convictions and heritage, but he was commanded to be baptized in order to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

Should the church of Christ grow or should we cease to exist? Can the church of Christ grow? We can praise God that many stalwart members refuse to bend their knee to the gods of tolerance and multiculturalism.

Many of those people in our country and around the world continue to preach the truths of God's Word. If we are going to grow, it is paramount that we teach our children to love the church for which Jesus died. We must teach them that there is only one church and that this church was established in the first century in Jerusalem (Acts 2). We must teach that if one wishes to become a member of the Lord's church he must believe the gospel message, repent of his past sins, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. When he does this, he has not joined a denomination; he has been added to the church by Jesus (Acts 2:47).

We must teach that the church should practice in life as well as in our worship only those things that are authorized in God's pattern, the New Testament. These teachings must be presented out of hearts of love for the Lord, His church, the lost and our families. Whenever we teach these facts we will be accused of being elitist, arrogant, narrow-minded and intolerant. May God help us to remember that we do not preach to please men, we preach to please God who is our ultimate Judge (Galatians 1:10).

Whenever we are clear in our teaching and preaching of the gospel message to the lost, the church will grow. It happened in the first century. It happened during the Restoration Movement, and it will happen in our day when we preach the truth in love.

Brethren, the fields are white for the harvest. These can be exciting days. This is no time for timid souls. It is no time to change the church, and it is no time to change the truth of God's Word. It is not a time to run to the so-called church growth experts in the denominational world. It is not the time to become like the community churches around us.

It is time for us to call men back to the Word of God and to the church that was purchased with the blood of the Son of God. It is time to preach the unsearchable riches that will turn men from darkness to light. The challenge is before us. May God help His people around the world rise to the challenge.

The Church Anticipates Heaven

CHUCK MONAN

A persuasive case can be made that John Lennon was the voice of his generation. No wonder, then, that his words sung 30 years ago continue to exert a palpable influence today: "Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try / No hell below us; above us only sky. / Imagine all the people, living for today."

A growing multitude have no need to imagine such a scenario because they are living it. Heaven has been either ignored or dismissed altogether by many people who have chosen to live for today. Even Christians are making the mistake of overlooking the blessing of heaven by being so preoccupied and consumed with the cares of this life. A strength of the church has always been the anticipation of heaven as our eternal home. In troubled times like these, we have more reason than ever to look forward to the time when our faith will be brought to fruition as we come into the presence of our Lord forever. Consider some reasons why our interest in heaven has been diminished and what we need to remember so that we can recapture our longing for this abode of the righteous.

Part of our society's hesitancy to talk about heaven is grounded in a general lack of faith in and knowledge of God's Word. Many people are unacquainted with the promises of God about heaven and unfamiliar with the soaring passages of Scripture which paint such a powerful picture of the joys awaiting us there. But another reason we act as if heaven doesn't matter is a shift in the way we live and view life. Philip Yancey, in his book, *Was Just Wondering*, suggests three reasons why our culture rarely looks forward to heaven:

"A growing affluence has made us comfortable." For countless centuries people have waged an unending struggle to survive, hoping they could forge a living by beating the odds to secure shelter and enough food to stay alive. Karl Marx lashed out bitterly at the captains of capitalism and leaders of organized religion for dangling a promise of "pie in the sky by and by" before the lower classes to make them forget their poverty. He called religion the "opiate of the people" because it dulled their desire for material satisfaction today.

"A creeping paganism invites us to accept death as final." Death was once seen as a violent transition into an ongoing life—as an enemy to be overcome. The apostle Paul certainly saw it in this light (1 Corinthians 15:50-57). But the influence of Eastern religions is causing people to see acceptance of the belief in annihilation as brave and dismiss the hope for a home in heaven as cowardly.

"The older, biblical images of heaven have lost their appeal." Walls of emerald, sapphire and jasper, streets of gold, and gates of pearl were very inspiring to Middle Eastern peasants. They don't tend to mean as much to those of us who are surrounded by beauty, comfort and luxury for much of our lives. We have luxury SUVs, high-definition televisions with hundreds of channels, and swimming pools. How are we supposed to get excited about a few precious gems? The apostle John faced the dilemma of trying to describe an other-worldly place in worldly terminology. We need to project a new understanding of heaven into modern consciousness.

Given these obstacles, how can we succeed in helping each other grow in our anticipation of heaven? We face the obvious disadvantage of describing a place we have never been and we have never seen. But what the Bible tells us about heaven is so wonderful that it doesn't take much imagination to picture a place that dwarfs anything this world has to offer. Revelation 21:1-27 describes an idyllic existence for the saved. It will be wonderful if only for the things that will not be there:

Heaven is a place with no tears. A woman in New York said recently, "I don't have any tears left." All of us understand what she means. The tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, continue to reverberate throughout our world. Thankfully, the tears brought on by heartbreak, disappointment and tragedy will be a forgotten relic of the past in heaven.

Heaven is a place with no death. The ache of separation from those we love will not exist in the place where death is swallowed up in victory. Imagine a place where we will be free from the sting of death.

Heaven is a place with no pain. Pain is a constant companion to many people. Whether physical discomfort, sorrow or grief, the dull ache of pain will be replaced in heaven by joy unspeakable.

Heaven is a place with no night. The darkness, alienation

and loneliness so endemic in this world will be driven away by the brilliance of the Lamb of God in heaven.

Heaven is a place with no impurity. The horrible consequences wrought by sin will have no place in heaven because it will be entirely free of evil, wickedness and disobedience.

Yet this only tells part of the story. Heaven is also a place of rest (Hebrews 4:9), glory (2 Corinthians 4:17), worship (Revelation 19:10), holiness (21:27), fellowship (Hebrews 12:23) and reward (2 Timothy 4:8). To live eternally in the presence of the Lord should thrill us beyond measure and is a thought that should dominate our lives. That it doesn't is an indictment of our love of this world.

A DIFFICULT PROPHECY

JEFF BELL

Few books in the Bible have been more neglected than Ezekiel. This is a shame because Ezekiel was a great man of God and left us with some powerful words of instruction and encouragement. One reason for this neglect is undoubtedly the apocalyptic nature of some of his material. Chapters 37 and 38, for instance, contain a great deal of figurative language. As a result, these chapters have often been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misapplied.

Mormonism finds support for its belief system in the latter part of chapter 37. Ezekiel was instructed to take a stick and write on it: *"For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions."* On another stick he was to write: *"For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions."*

Then he was to join the two sticks together (Ezekiel 37:15-17). Mormons contend that the stick of Judah is the Bible while the stick of Joseph represents the Book of Mormon. What really makes this twisting of the Scriptures so incredible is that God Himself gave the proper interpretation. God would take the children of Israel from among the nations and make them one nation (Ezekiel 37:21,22). No longer would there be division among God's people as in former days, but they would be one united people.

This prophecy was perhaps partially fulfilled in the return of Israel to its homeland in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. However,

its ultimate fulfillment is seen in the establishment of the church. This was the great mystery that Paul said had now been revealed: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel (Ephesians 3:6; 2:14-16). The King who was to rule over them was not literally David (Ezekiel 37:24), but his descendant, the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12,13; Isaiah 11:1-5). He would be their prince forever (Ezekiel 37:25). He would make an everlasting covenant with them (Ezekiel 37:26; Jeremiah 31:31f).

Premillennialists also use these two chapters as proof-texts for their erroneous views. In his book, **Late Great Planet Earth**, Hal Lindsey contends that Ezekiel 37 and 38 show the Jewish nation being reborn before the battle between God and Satan, the battle of Armageddon. He says that Ezekiel 37 does not refer to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, but he tries to identify God as Russia and the battle in Ezekiel 38 as a Russian attack on the Middle East. He thinks that after the ensuing war, Jesus will return and save man and set up His kingdom here on earth (Merideth, **Difficult Texts of the Old Testament Explained**).

It is readily admitted that the symbolism of these verses is difficult to understand, but the concept of premillennialism is clearly refuted by other Scripture. Premillennialists argue for the coming of a **future earthly kingdom**, but **people were already in the kingdom in the first century** (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

Jesus taught that His kingdom would not be of this world (John 18:36). Rather, it is **spiritual in nature** and is made up of **those who have been added to His church** (Acts 2:47; Matthew 16:18,19).

Christ will not return to set up an earthly kingdom because when He does return, the earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). When He returns, there shall be no one left on earth to be in an earthly kingdom, because we shall meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord, according to the letter of Paul to the Thessalonian church:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words"
(1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Our God Of Comfort

RANDALL CASELMAN

Jesus came to show us God. No one has ever seen God. It is God, the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known. Our view of God is important to our daily comfort. A distorted view brings doubt and misunderstanding. For instance, consider these improper views of God...

- Some view God as only their conscience. Their concept of God is that He is that small, inner voice that convicts us of wrong and makes us feel guilty.
- Others see God as a cosmic Santa Claus, one who exists only for the purpose of satisfying our wants and wishes, regardless of how petty they might be.
- Still others see God as a celestial policeman. They view Him as one who is simply waiting for us to do something wrong so He can correct us and punish us.

So, the question becomes ... How should we view God?

God is our friend. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. God is a friend Who never fails us. As a friend, He knows our every thought, every need. He knows the problems with which we struggle. Regardless of how dark the moment, how lonely the road, how rough the path ... God is near. "My God and I go in the fields together, we walk and talk as good friends should and do; we clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter, my God and I walk through the meadow's hue."

God is our shepherd. David saw God as his guide, counselor, and comforter. He is our creator, provider, and sustainer. He gives us inward renewal. He leads us in paths that are right, reasonable, and proper for us to honor His name. He accompanies us in the valley of death. He uses His resources to care, comfort, and discipline us. He blesses us in this life and then brings us home to be with Him eternally. God, like a shepherd, never withholds anything that is good for us. We are told that all good and perfect gifts come down from our Father.

"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done."

God is our Father. Think of the comfort that is ours from knowing that the creator, sustainer, protector, provider of the whole universe is our Father—and that He treats us like a good father should. He knows our needs. He hears our prayers. Even when we don't know what to ask for, He supplies. *"I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"* (Matthew 6:25-27).

God is our Savior. All too many of us have exiled God to the remote past. We see Him as a great figure in history, but we fail to see Him as a present reality. We see Him in the creation, in the flood, at the Red Sea crossing, on Mount Sinai, in the manger, calming the seas, at the cross, on the Damascus road ... but we fail to see Him as our personal Savior. Jesus was not just a good man or a superman—He was God in the flesh, came to save us. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us ... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth ... In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us"* (John 1:1-3; Eph 1:7) John 3:16 is alive today: *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 1:1,14; Ephesians 1:7,8).

What is our view of God? Do we find comfort in Him? Are we enjoying the blessings found in the Father's house? I pray that we are, and that this article has reminded us of His grace and greatness.

THE SPIRIT AND HIS POWER

DAVID PHARR

Who is the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost)? What are some things you need to know about the Spirit? What was His miraculous work in the time of the apostles?

The terms "Holy Spirit" and "Holy Ghost" are interchangeable. Some of the other terms that are used to refer to the Spirit are "Spirit of truth", "Comforter", "Spirit of God", etc. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, just as God the Father and Christ the Son are Divine Persons.

The study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is a deep subject, and it is not our purpose to go into detail in this article. It is important, however, for us to understand certain basic truths about the Spirit.

In New Testament times there was a **baptismal** measure of the Spirit. Jesus promised the apostles that they would be "*baptized with the Holy Ghost*" and that "*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*" (Acts 1:5-8). On the day of Pentecost those chosen men were miraculously filled with the Spirit and spoke the Word of God in many languages (Acts 2). Except to the apostles, the only other time the miraculous power of the Spirit was given directly was to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17). This was to prove that Gentiles were to receive the Gospel, the same as the Jews.

Also in New Testament times miraculous gifts of the Spirit were sometimes given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-18; 19:6). The miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 were given in this manner. Only the apostles were enabled to bestow these gifts. For example, Philip was given miraculous powers, but he could not pass them on to others (Acts 6:5,6; 8:5-7,14-18). Instead, as these verses show, it was necessary for apostles to come to Samaria, that the miraculous gifts might be given by the laying on of their hands.

There is no record of miraculous gifts of the Spirit ever being given in any other way (with the exception of the apostles and Cornelius, as discussed above). Since, therefore, these gifts were available only through the laying on of an apostle's hands, and since there are no apostles living today, it must obviously follow that miraculous gifts are not being given today.

When we remember the purpose of the gifts, it is not difficult to understand that the miraculous work of the Spirit ceased with the end of the apostolic age. Remember, miracles were used to confirm the Word, which was still being revealed (Hebrews 2:3,4; 1 Peter 1:12; Mark 16:17-29). When this purpose of confirming the Word was finished, the gifts would no longer be needed. We now have the complete, perfect, written, and confirmed Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8 Paul listed three of these gifts and plainly declared that they would be of limited duration. This is in a context which discusses all the miraculous spiritual gifts and names these three as typical of the whole. The gifts were present at the point in time when Paul was writing, but the day was coming when they would “cease”, “vanish”, and “fail”. The verses that follow show that the age of miraculous gifts was the childhood period of the church; but with the coming of the manhood stage, these temporary gifts would end. Then “*faith, hope, and charity*” would continue to abide until the return of Christ.

Evidences Of Adam And Eve

WAYNE JACKSON

In the book of Genesis, God placed man in the beautiful paradise of Eden (Genesis 2:8). Eden was a place of perfection where, prior to man's sin, neither death nor its attendant evils (disease, etc.) had entered. In the archaeological literature from ancient Sumer (near the head of the Persian Gulf) there is the account of the land of Dilmun. It is a paradise that is good, clean, and bright; it knows no sickness or death. It was alleged to be located at the place where “the sun rises” (Cf: Genesis 2:8—“eastward”).

According to the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, had access to the “tree of life” (Genesis 2:9; 3:22). G.H. Livingston says: “From ancient Mesopotamia have come cylinder seals and other art objects which depict a tree and figures of perhaps divine beings.... The sacred tree of life was closely associated to the reigning king of almost every ancient nation.”

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 2, p. 492) shows the “Tree of Life” depicted as a young fig palm on a bone handle from the ancient city of Hazor. Harold Stigers puts

this material in proper focus: "The tree of life motif may be seen represented on the monuments of the Middle East and represents a witness to the truth of the biblical record but at the same time a corruption of its place in the original design of God."

In the last century, a seal was found at Nineveh depicting a man and a woman seated on either side of a fruit tree, and to the left of the woman "stands" a serpent. Of this seal, which is now in the British Museum, Dr. I.M. Price said: "Not one word is recorded on the seal. The group alone tells the story. Most scholars suppose that this is a figurative representation of some tradition of the fall of man which was current among the peoples of old Babylonia." Price was Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at the University of Chicago.

Another seal, called the "Adam and Eve Seal", was discovered at Tepe Gawra (in Iraq) in 1932 by Dr. E.A. Speiser of the University Museum of Pennsylvania. It features a naked man and woman, walking as if downcast, and followed by a serpent. Speiser said that it was "strongly suggestive of the Adam and Eve story". Pictures of both of these seals are to be found in Halley's Bible Handbook.

Again, Stigers has well written: "Some writers have doubted that there is any real significance to these seals as evidence for the fall. However, the specific personages and elements cannot easily be dismissed in such fashion. For what reason should an artist select such a motif by which testimony is made as to the cause of man's degradation? Rather, one should select a theme that would enhance man's image."⁵

Though we are certainly not dependent upon the findings of the archaeologists for our belief in the divine origin of man, it is encouraging to know that the spade has become a willing witness for the credibility of the Scriptures in this connection. Time and further archaeological research will add to that confirmation.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PRE-FLOOD PERIOD

REX BANKS

The first seven chapters of the book of Genesis contain an account of the creation event and the first seventeen hundred years of human history. In these foundational chapters of the Bible

we read of the creation of Adam and Eve (parents of the entire human race) of their original habitat, (the Garden of Eden) of the sin that drove them from their earthly paradise, and of the worldwide, year-long Flood which brought an end to an increasingly depraved civilization. The preservation of Noah and his family aboard a specially prepared vessel (the ark) closes out this part of the record.

Has archaeology provided insight into the world of Adam and Eve, their sons Cain, Abel, Seth and others who inhabited the early earth in the pre-Flood period? Typical of many comments relating to the pre-flood habitat of our first parents is the following by John H. Sailhamer in **The Expositor's Bible Commentary**, Vol 1:

"The location of the Garden of Eden has long been a topic of debate. Two of the rivers mentioned in association with the garden can be identified with certainty, the Euphrates ... and the Tigris.... It is difficult to identify the other two, the "Pishon"... and the "Gihon".

Now, although well-meaning, such comments reveal a failure to appreciate the immense impact which the Flood of Noah had upon the surface of the earth. According to the Biblical account *"all the fountains of the great deep burst open ... the floodgates of the sky were opened (and) all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered"* (Genesis 7:11,19). In his book, **Scientific Creationism**, prominent creationist Henry Morris speaks of the "torrents of water from the skies ... erupting reservoirs from the depth ... universal destruction ... violent tidal actions ... rising mountains and sinking basins" which would have accompanied a cataclysm such as a universal flood. A worldwide flood would have deposited a vast layer of sediment over the face of the earth, altering topography all over the globe. Thus land masses, mountains, streams, and seas in the post-flood era tell us little about the early earth. Reference to *"fountains of the deep"* (Genesis 7:11) suggests that vast subterranean reservoirs supplied much of the flood water, and perhaps after the release of this water these reservoirs collapsed to form the present sea basins. According to Psalm 104:7 the waters *"fled"* and *"hurried away"* which may be a description of the flood waters retreating from the land into these newly created basins.

In the same Psalm we read that: "*The mountains rose*" (v 8) and John Whitcomb comments on this verse: "Orogeny, or mountain-building is one of the unsolved mysteries of modern uniformitarian geology; but the Bible supplies the missing dynamic in terms of God's omnipotent intervention at the closing phase of the Flood year. Before the huge sedimentary deposits laid down during the Flood had time to consolidate or solidify they were pushed up to great heights. Still somewhat plastic in consistency, they did not split or shatter when uplifted, but rather were bent and twisted like pages in a thick magazine" (The Early Earth).

Although all the details are not clear and supplied to us in the Scripture, it is quite evident that the post-Flood world is quite different from the earlier earth. The site of Eden may now be at the bottom of a sea, under a mountain range, or buried under sedimentary deposits.

Luther made the following sensible comment: "My opinion of the matter ... is that paradise ... left no trace or vestige of its original state remaining... The awful Deluge destroyed all things ... And therefore mountains exist where fields and fruitful plains before flourished, so there can be no doubt that fountains and sources of rivers are now found where none existed before, and where the state of nature was changed by the mighty convulsion..." (Commentary on Genesis)

In 1929 during his excavations in Mesopotamia, Sir Charles Leonard Woolley came upon a clay deposit about three metres thick, under which was discovered evidence of human habitation. Woolley announced to the world "We have found the Flood!" Though such an announcement seems supportive of the Biblical record and was welcomed by believers in the Noahic Flood, Woolley was wrong.

The rivers which we know as the Tigris and the Euphrates are not the rivers spoken of in Genesis 2. Likely these names were given to these rivers by the descendants of Noah, and we should not expect archaeologists to find evidence of Eden in the region which we call Mesopotamia. As evidenced by deposits of sea fossils on the tops of even such mountains as the Himalayas, and the burial of fossils hundreds of feet deep, the entire surface of the earth was re-made by the effects of the Flood.

Encouraging Followership

BILL HARTLINE

There is an old story of an epitaph on a tombstone where the deceased invites those who pass by to follow him into the next world. Someone scribbled below his invitation the words, "To follow you I am not content, till I know which way you went."

Effective shepherds will have sheep who follow. But the number of congregations that are departing from the faith give evidence that their leadership has failed.

The warning of Ezekiel 34 alerts us to the possibility of false shepherds among the people of God. After giving a challenge in chapter 33 to the "son of man" (v. 7 NASB) to be a "watchman for the house of Israel" and to "hear a message from My mouth, and give them warning from me," the watchman is told, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fat sheep, without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and severity you have dominated them" (vv. 1-4).

To bring it closer to our time, Paul warned the elders at Ephesus of an impending challenge to their leadership by telling them it would come from within their own ranks (Acts 20:28-31).

The Bible is clear about the duties of shepherds of the flock. The practical example given by Jesus in John 10 illustrates the importance of their task (vv. 1-18). A number of admonitions to the shepherd point out how he is to function in that leadership role—"he goes before them" (v. 4); "he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out" (v. 4); "a stranger they simply will not follow" (v. 5).

It is certainly appropriate to emphasize the importance of "followership" of those who are the sheep of God's pasture, the church. But it is equally appropriate to be concerned with the leadership, those who are shepherds over the family of God, and how they lead.

In Hebrews 13:7, the writer says of those who serve as shepherds that they are to lead in such a way as to encourage followership (NKJV). The word "follow" could have been translated

(and is in some translations) as "imitate" and means "the faith of spiritual leaders ... suggesting a constant habit or practice" (W.E. Vines). However, it must be stressed that the shepherds' faith must be worthy of imitation! Just designating someone as a shepherd does not guarantee his right to followership. Trust and followership come because the sheep have confidence that the shepherd will not lead them into danger.

Paul invited the Corinthian Christians to "be ye followers of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16 KJV) and added in 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (NKJV uses the word "imitate" in place of "follow").

Sadly, some elderships have degenerated into a board of directors who sit behind closed doors estranged from the sheep they are supposed to be leading. Their time is taken up in making decisions about matters that could be better handled by others, freeing them to shepherd the flock.

Then there is the autocratic style of leadership that regards itself as indispensable and expects total submission regardless of the decision made. No decision can be questioned because it was made by the leaders. An example of this method can be found in 3 John 9.

This CEO method of overseeing the flock operates mostly behind locked doors, making decisions and announcing to the membership that "if a rule we have made, that settles it," regardless of what Scripture might have to say about the issue.

One of the ways to determine that this type of leadership does not work comes when one seriously and prayerfully questions the method and is told, "If you are not happy, you should find another place to worship." Can you see Jesus inviting His sheep to go somewhere else?

Leaders should lead. It is hard to shepherd the flock from the barn. In fact, Scripture teaches that the 99 sheep safe in the fold should free the loving shepherd to seek those who have gone astray.

The Acid of Anger

CLARENCE DELOACH

"...Be angry and sin not..." (Ephesians 4:26)

Anger is one letter short of danger, and is like an acid that eats

through whatever it touches. It is a problem built within the fabric of human nature. It is one of the most dangerous weapons in Satan's arsenal of destruction. If uncontrolled, it can damage and destroy people emotionally and spiritually.

However, not all anger is bad. You can be good *and* mad! Once when Jesus healed a man, the Pharisees reacted against the miracle, and Jesus was "*moved with anger*" (Mark 3:5). When our Lord saw others abused, misused, or neglected, He was moved with anger.

There are some things that should move us to anger—the pornography racket, child abuse, the drug traffic, the slumlords! The way to be angry and sin not is to be angry only at sin. Love the sinner, but hate the sin! Sometimes, anger is the best expression of love.

Yet, there is an uncontrolled, ungodly anger. How can you determine if your anger is a sinful anger? Analyze it and determine if there is sufficient or insufficient cause for the way you feel. Jesus spoke of one being angry with his brother *without cause*. If anger is not provoked by a righteous reason, it is sinful. If it is against the *person* rather than the *offense*, it is sinful. If your anger calls for revenge, it is sinful. If it is harbored and you are unforgiving, it is unrighteous.

Solomon said, "*Anger rests in the bosom of fools*" (Ecclesiastes 7:9), and, "*He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls*" (Proverbs 25:28). One man said, "I'm at the mercy of anyone who can make me mad."

There's a lot of rage in people. Often the slightest thing can set off an explosion. When we are angry, we open ourselves to the devil's invasion. Immediately after Paul said, "*Be angry and sin not*" he added, "*Don't give place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4:26,27). We are an easy prey to Satan when we are angry!

Remember, harbored anger is like an acid that destroys its container. We are weak, and we must learn to lean on Jesus to overcome this problem.

The Vacant House Parable

OWEN COSGROVE

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus told a parable about a vacant

house. The owner apparently evicted a bad tenant and cleaned the place up, but he left it vacant.

There is nothing more vulnerable to mischief than a vacant house. That is why it is difficult to obtain insurance for one. Property can run down in a hurry if it is not occupied. In Jesus' parable, the evil spirit slipped back into the house and brought seven of his friends, and they trashed it.

There is a powerful lesson in this seldom-noticed parable. Nature abhors a vacuum, and life cannot be lived successfully in a spiritual vacuum. It is not enough just to take sin out of our lives; we must put something better back. It is not enough just to quit our meanness; our conduct must then be filled with positive goodness.

Negative morality prides itself in what it does not do, but *what we do not do does not make us anything!* A telephone pole does not drink or curse or smoke. It does not steal or covet or hate. These negatives do not make it moral. A field can be left unplanted and unworked and it will grow up in weeds. It is not enough just to clear the land. All of the weeds can be removed, but the field will be unproductive if the good things are not cultivated and nurtured there.

In that marvelous contrast of spirituality and carnality in Galatians 5:16 and 6:10, Paul begins by saying, *"Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."* That's the way to keep sin out of our lives. Fill the soul with the good things and there will not be any room left for the bad.

But a house that is "full" of empty space that ought to have been filled with knowledge and faith and prayer and hope and Christian fellowship is a vacuum for evil to conquer. The parable of the sower shows how the seed of the Gospel cannot grow productively in a heart encumbered with the weeds of the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Neither do the weeds of carnality grow well in a heart that is full of truth and faith and discipline.

Christ does not just take away evil; He puts something better back. That is how Christianity offers positive solutions to life's problems. When we live prayerfully and well for the Lord, we will not have to worry about Satan breaking in and vandalizing the place. Walk after the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).



HEAR THE VOICE OF TRUTH ON RADIO SRI LANKA

HINDI: Thursdays and Sundays 6:45 A.M.—7:00 A.M.
Speaker, Sunny David, Church of Christ, P.O.
Box 3815, New Delhi-110049

TELUGU: Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 2:00
P.M.—2:15 P.M. Speaker, Joshua. Gootam, Box
80, Kakinada-533001.

TAMIL: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 5:30
P.M. to 5:45 P.M. Speaker, P.R. Swamy, Box
8405, Bangalore-560084.

MALAYALAM: Fridays 3:45 P.M.—4:00 P.M. Speaker, P.K.
Varghese, P.O. Box 5540 Thiruvananthapuram-
695034 (Kerala)

Please write to these addresses for Bible correspondence courses,
magazines, and other Christian literature in your language.

**ALL OF THESE PROGRAMMES ARE SPONSORED BY
CHURCHES OF CHRIST.**

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.

DL(S)-17/3154/2009-2011

Licence to Post without Prepayment

No. U/SE/25/2009-2011

Posted at Lodi Road HO

Total No. of pages 24+cover

on 10-11 April 2011

Welcome to the Services of
CHURCH OF CHRIST

that meets at

B-350 (L.G.F.)

Chitranjan Park

Near Market #1

New Delhi-110019

SUNDAY

Bible Study ... 10.00 A.M.

Sunday School ... 10.00 A.M.

Worship ... 11.00 A.M.

English/Hindi

To:

MR. G. SYAM PRASAD,
CHURCH OF CHRIST,
NANDIGAMA (PO),
PIN-521185, KRISHNA DIST., A.P.

From:

THE BIBLE TEACHER

P.O. Box 3815

New Delhi-110049