

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *Editorial*

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

#### ***There Is A Sin Leading To Death And There Is A Sin Not Leading To Death***

NO ONE IS born a sinner or is a sinner by birth, just as no one is born a Christian or is a Christian by birth. One becomes a sinner when one disobeys God, and becomes a Christian when one obeys God's commandment. By disobeying God all have sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4). Sin causes one to be alienated or separated from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2; Romans 6:23). This separation from God due to sin is called spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). After stating "For the wages of sin is death," the inspired writer of the Scripture wrote, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23). Thus when one believes in Christ and does what Christ has commanded one should do to be saved from sin, one's fellowship with God is restored. We read, "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27).

But, can one not sin again, after becoming a Christian? Does one, as a Christian, again become separated from God because of sin? And should one need to be baptized again to put on Christ? What should a Christian do to be forgiven of sin? God's answer to our question is found in the first epistle of John, where we read: "If we say that we (*Christians*) have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness." (1 John 1: 8,9). As Christian one may do wrong and sin. This is not to say, however, that one should purposely or intentionally sin. But in becoming a Christian one does not cease to be human; and as human one is always susceptible to do wrong and sin in one way or another. The most wonderful thing, however, is that, because one is in Christ that fact brings one under the cleansing power of His blood, and the Scripture says, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7). The Christian has the confidence and the assurance that when he/she confesses his/her sins and repents of sin and prays to God for forgiveness, God forgives the Christian all sins because of the blood Christ had shed from the cross for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28). But remember, this promise of cleansing from sins is for Christians, those who are in Christ, and not for alien sinners who have not put on Christ through baptism into Him. (Romans 6:3 4).

In the fifth chapter of his first epistle to Christians the apostle John mentioned two types of sins a Christian may commit. He wrote: "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death, I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death." (1 John 5: 16, 17).

**The sin, not leading to death or separation from God, is the sin one is willing to confess and repent of.** As one does that and prays to God for forgiveness, God will certainly forgive him, regardless of what the sin might have been. **But the sin leading to death is the sin one is not willing to confess and repent of.** God will not forgive a person of such a sin. Such a sin, will lead one to death, which is the eternal separation from God in hell. One should not even pray for forgiveness of such sins, because God will not forgive unless a person is willing to repent and leave and quit committing that sin. If one, as a Christian, knowingly continues to persist in sin, and is not willing to acknowledge his/her sin and repent or change, even after being told or shown, then there is no point in praying for such an individual, because God will not forgive such person.

May we, as Christians, never so harden our hearts and be filled with such pride that we will not repent whenever we do wrong.

## Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

Lesson 20

# PRIDE

J.C. CHOATE

CAN ONE CHANGE his life? Most certainly. It is not always easy but it can be done. A lot of it depends on one's motivation. One of the best ways to be motivated is to see and understand the difference that can be made in one's life by putting off the old man of sin and putting on the new man of righteousness in Christ Jesus. Then once the change has been made, no right thinking person would want to go back to his old way of living. I hope we can encourage you to try it.

To continue our study along this line, we are now going to discuss the subject of *PRIDE*. First of all, let us define this term. It can be both good and bad. It can be desirable, but it can also lead to one's downfall. In the good sense, pride is that of caring for one's self, how he looks, thankful for his family, taking delight in his job, as well as other things in his life. Pride in the bad sense means that he is puffed up, feels better than others, boasts, is conceited, haughty, and arrogant. In other words, pride is one of those things that you need some of to make you what you ought to be but if you have too much then it can be disastrous. Another way of putting it, the one who has no pride is one who doesn't care about his life; how he looks, the welfare of his family, or whether he has a job or not. As a result, he doesn't try to better his situation and is usually shunned and rejected by society. While it may be bad to have too much pride, it is equally bad not to have enough.

But we are going to think about pride in this study in the sense that one has a destructive pride and what can be done about it.

Usually the thing that produces pride in a person, or proudness, is an over abundance of something. He may be extremely intelligent, have lots of money, have a very important position, and things like that. Sad, but true, these are the kind of people that are unable to deal with these things. It may be because they did not always have these. Coming from nothing to a large amount of something in a short period can be more than some can handle.

Now let us notice some statements in the Bible on this subject.

The Psalmist David said, "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in his thoughts." (Psalm 10:2-4). Again he said, "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment." (Psalm 73:6). Solomon said, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the perverse mouth, do I hate." (Proverbs 8:13). "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2). "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." (Proverbs 13:10). "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." (Proverbs 14:3). "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18). "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." (Proverbs 29:23). Now let us turn to a statement made by Christ: And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hear unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he had entered a house away from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entered into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the stomach, and eliminated, thus purifying all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:14-23).

Going on, Paul spoke of the qualifications for becoming an elder, and one of the things was, that he could not be a novice or a new member "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:6). John said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the

world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17).

Now I think you can see that certain things stand out in connection with pride. To begin with the Lord's word finds fault with it. Next, it is associated with the wicked, those who persecute the poor, those who boast, those who leave God out of their thoughts, and the Lord proclaims that he hates pride and arrogance. As a matter of fact, Solomon said that there were seven things that the Lord hated and one of them was a proud look. (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Furthermore, from these verses of scripture that we read it is seen that pride is associated with shame, contention, foolishness, destruction, and Solomon says that it brings one down low. Then Christ said that pride and a multitude of other sins comes out of the heart and these are the things that defile a person and brings about his destruction if they are not removed. The apostle Paul explains that a new member of the church can be given too much attention too soon, such as being appointed to the eldership of the local church, and this can create pride in him or a proudness that will hurt his effectiveness, and therefore Paul said that a new member therefore should not be considered for the eldership. The point is, that he should be left to grow and to gain experience, and then later on, if he qualifies otherwise, then he can be appointed. Then finally, John says that we should not love the world because all of the things in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. Then he says that the things of the world will pass away but those who do the will of God will abide forever.

The Apostle Paul spoke of a group of people who rejected God and one of the things about them was the fact that they were proud or full of pride. Paul said that God gave them up, and after some very descriptive language, he goes on to say that they were "Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:30-32). For them

to have had that attitude then truly they were proud. They didn't feel any need of God. How sad!

On another occasion, Paul said concerning those who teach, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing: that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Paul is talking about the kind of person that you have seen no doubt. He is proud, haughty, thinking that he knows it all, the type that will cause disputes, strife, and all kinds of troubles. In the case of this man that Paul refers to, he will not abide by the truth, and therefore he should be rejected.

Finally, James says that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble". (James 4:6). The same statement is also made in 1 Peter 5:5. That certainly tells us then how God feels about the proud or those who are full of pride.

All of this is to say that if we have this kind of pride, that is, being proud, full of haughtiness, feeling better than everyone else, and so on, then we should rid ourselves of this spirit. Surely the Lord is not pleased when one conducts himself in such a manner. To the contrary, the Lord wants us to be meek, humble, and lowly. Peter said, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5:6). Remember that James says that God gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6). Christ said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5). Again, James said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10). Then Christ said, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:11,12).

Surely then we can see the great difference between pride and humility. Some of course would look down on the idea of humility as representing weakness, but that is not what Christ taught. Just watch the proud of our world and see what happens to them. But those who have the spirit of Christ, and therefore a spirit of humility, will be the ones who will rise in the eyes of the public, and will therefore in the end be more desirable than the other type.

# ***Christianity is Non-Demoninational***

JIM MASSEY

"What kind of car is that?"

"Not any kind, just a car!"

WOULD THIS ANSWER make sense to you? No. You cannot imagine a car that is not some kind of car. You would say that every car must be some kind. This is because all cars are kinds of cars.

But this has not always been true. The original car was not any kind—just a car. The very first car was the only car at the time, and it had no name. In the beginning there were no kinds of cars.

This is true of the church. In the Bible there were not kinds of churches—just the church. Christianity in its beginning had no kinds—just Christianity. Original Christianity in the Bible was not divided. There were no denominations.

We have all been born into a world of many churches. We did not cause these denominations, we did not want them, we just inherited them. They were here when we got here.

For this reason it is very hard to imagine the church as it was in the Bible. We naturally think that there have always been many churches because there are now. It is as hard to imagine a church that is no kind of church as it is to think of a car that is no kind of car.

But read Acts 2:47: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." What church was this? Listen to Acts 8:3: "Saul made havoc of the church." Which church was this? It was like the original car, it wasn't any kind of church, it was just—the church.

Jesus had promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). This meant that He would establish only one. He gave Himself to die for the church (Ephesians 5:25). This just means that He died for the church.

Always in the Bible the word "church" means a called-out group of people. The Israelites in the wilderness were called a "church" because they were people "called out" of Egypt (Acts 7:38). When Saul persecuted the "church," he persecuted "men and women" (Acts 8:1-3), because Christians were the church. Instead of a material building, the church is a spiritual temple of God made up of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). The church is: Christians.

Men in the Bible became members of the church by becoming Christians. Those who were saved were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47), meaning that all Christians were added to the "called out" group—the church. Paul says that the church was purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28), showing that anyone bought by the blood of Christ was in the church—those blood-bought, called-out, saved people who were Christians.

God conveyed these "called out" people into Christ's "kingdom," another word that refers to the church (Colossians 1:13). When men were born again of water and the Spirit, they entered the kingdom (or church) exactly as a child enters his father's family the moment he is born physically (John 3:3, 5). The church is also called Christ's "body" (Colossians 1:18), and by the Spirit's teachings (in the Scripture) men were baptized into the body or the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). To become a Christian in Bible times was to be added to the body, family, kingdom, or church. The church was simply all God's saved people. There were no kinds.

But what happened? How did our world get so many different churches today? What changed original Christianity into the denominations which we see everywhere? The Bible explains what happened. It says that men departed from the faith.

Paul warned that in latter times "some shall depart from the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1). "The faith" is another clear description of Christianity as it was before divisions came (Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Galatians 1:23). There were not many "faiths," but there was "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). There were no different "faiths," only "the faith." Men departed from the faith.

Men perverted the gospel, the "good news" message of salvation in Christ. Paul warned of men who were trying to "pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). Because the gospel message is the heart of Christianity, to change the gospel was to corrupt the church. Even angels and apostles who made such changes would be accused (Galatians 1:6,9). God wanted Christianity to remain pure.

Men turned away from God's truth (2 Timothy 4:4). Because men's desires run contrary to God's will, it is natural that human opinions would depart from "the truth." Because men do not love "the truth," God sends them a strong delusion that they might believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Men corrupted original Christianity by departing from the truth.

Men changed Christ's doctrine. Paul warned Christians in Rome: "Mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the



doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Doctrine means "teaching." Changing the teaching of Christianity changed Christianity. 2 John 9 and 10 warns that anyone going beyond the doctrine of Christ has not God. But men departed from the pure doctrine of Christ.

Men corrupted the unity of the original church. Paul commanded Christians in Corinth to teach the same thing and to have no divisions among them (1 Corinthians 1:10). He then said that already some in Corinth were wearing the names of Cephas, Apollos, and Paul—preachers who had baptized them (verses 11-15). This is the beginning of "denominations"— named divisions.

Denominating Christians into different named groups was sinful in Corinth. Jesus had prayed that all believers be one as He and God were one (John. 17:20,21). Paul commanded Christians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3-7). This was to strive for one body (the church), one Holy Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. Denominating or dividing Christians is sinful today just as it was in the beginning.

Men departed from the church, just as they departed from the faith, the gospel, the truth, the doctrine, and the unity of original Christianity. In Acts 20:28-30 elders (or overseers) over the church in Ephesus are warned to take heed to themselves and to the flock (or church) over which they had been made overseers. This church (or flock) had been purchased by the blood of Christ (verse 28). These men were to oversee the Christians in Ephesus as shepherds watch over a flock.

Paul explains why: "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (verses 29,30). The church would be scattered by false teachers like a flock would be scattered by wolves. Perverters would lead men away from the church which had been purchased with Christ's blood. This would cause the beginning of other flocks or churches.

These churches would be caused by leading men out of (and away from) Christ's church purchased with His blood. Men departed from Christ's church.

This is where we came on the scene. We were born into a world filled with different doctrines, gospels, and churches. We thought these different groups were Christianity. But the Bible shows that they are changes and corruptions of Christianity. We use the

word "denomination" as if it were a good word, but "division" is one of the worst words in all the Bible. What can we do about the divided condition in which we find ourselves?

Jude 3 teaches us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." The faith of original Christianity can and must be restored. We must restore the faith as it was before it was departed from, the gospel as it was before it was perverted, the truth as it was before it was turned away from, the doctrine as it was before it was corrupted, the unity as it was before it was divided, and the church as it was before men led others away from it. We must restore original Christianity.

Just as keeping the unity of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3-7 requires contending for one God, one Holy Spirit, and one Lord; it also requires that we reproduce one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one body (or church). I can call men back to the faith and the church of the Bible just as I can call them back to the God and Christ of the Bible. Since God commanded it, it is possible. I can and must contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

An honest Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-38) read in his Bible that his sins were laid upon God's suffering Lamb. A preacher taught him that this Lamb was Jesus. Because he wanted salvation by Jesus' death, he was baptized immediately into Christ's death to be united with Christ (verse 38 and Romans 6:3-5). He came up out of the water rejoicing in sins forgiven. But what church was he now in? What kind of Christian was he? He wasn't any kind of Christian—just a Christian. He was in Christ's church, the undenominational and non-denominational church of the New Testament.

What he did, you can do, and must do. What he became, you can become. If he wasn't in a denomination, you won't be either. You can become and be a Christian like Peter and Paul, together with millions whose aim is to restore undenominational Christianity exactly as it was in the beginning. They have come out of denominationalism and taken Jesus as their only Head, the Bible as their only creed, New Testament worship and living as their only practice. They wear all names found in the Bible but do not add to or subtract from Scripture. Will you also be just a Christian?

Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18, 19 that He would build His church. He also promised that nothing would ever prevail against that church which He would build. He has kept both promises. He built His church, and His church is still in the world today. You can be added by the Lord to His church today.

# Are Babies Born in Sin?

GLENN COLLEY

THE BIBLE DOES not teach, as some allege, that babies are born in sin. The idea that we all inherit the guilt of Adam's sin and are thus born lost is a tragic and false doctrine. The New Testament offers a plan of salvation through Christ, but not a word of it applies to how babies can be saved. The reason is that babies are **SAFE**. They are not *in sin* and, therefore, do not need to be saved. If a baby dies, we should have no doubt that he or she is now awaiting our arrival in glory.

The verse most commonly used in proposing that babies are born in sin (the technical term for this is "total hereditary depravity") is Psalm 51:5, where we read from David, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Please observe, however, that David was speaking about **his mother**, and not **himself!** *The one who was in sin was his mother!* I heard someone recently explain this point in this way, "It would be like saying, 'In drunkenness did my father beat me.' The one who was drunken was not the *son*, but the *father*."

What, then, was the sin of David's mother? We are not told. And yet, there is an interesting possibility which will challenge the thoughts of anyone who has seriously considered this passage in Psalm 51.

When we go back to Deuteronomy 23:2, we read, "*A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.*" This statement did not mean that these generations could not be in a right relationship with God, but there was, nonetheless, a cloud which hung over them. They could not be viewed with the full privileges of Israelites without this penalty.

Did you know that David was in such a line of ten generations? In Genesis 38 we read of the sinful relationship between Judah and Tamar. From their fornication, twin sons were born, Phares and Zara. David was a direct descendant of Phares. In fact, **David was the tenth generation!** Here is the genealogy: "*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And*

*Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz. begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king" (Matthew 1: 1-6.).*

It cannot be proven that this is what David had in mind when he made his statement in Psalm 51:5, and yet it raises an interesting possibility.

What we must remember, as we study the Bible with our friends, is that babies are *not born in sin*. Ezekiel 18:20 teaches that each of us must bear the guilt only of **our own sins**: *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."*

Note further that David did not believe that babies were born in sin. Upon hearing that Bathsheba's son had died, David said, *"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."* One can hardly surmise that David had reference to his baby being in torment.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, *"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."* If these little children came into this world black with sin, Jesus would not encourage us to be like them in order to enter heaven's kingdom.

Babies are not born *in* sin. Babies are born *free from* sin.

## IS EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS MEANT TO HAPPEN?

BYRON NICHOLS

MORE AND MORE people, including Christians, are expressing their belief that "everything that happens happens for a reason," or "everything that happens is meant to happen."

Without any desire to be unfair or to misrepresent what others believe when they say that they believe that "everything that happens is meant to happen," please consider the suggestion that there needs to be some careful consideration given to the implications of these beliefs and where those beliefs logically lead.

No doubt most who accept this idea do not subscribe to all of these implications, but where can the line be drawn, and on what grounds?

### **FATALISM**

There is a doctrine called “fatalism,” and it is defined as “the doctrine that all things are determined by fate, or take place by inevitable necessity; a disposition to accept everything as inevitable and predetermined by fate.” This is basically what is involved in the idea that everything happens because it was meant to happen.

Those of us who believe that God is all-powerful and is in control of the universe should have some difficulty in accepting the idea that everything happens because it is meant to happen. Who or what causes everything to happen? Does God do this? If so, this puts God in a position of being responsible for all sins, all tragedies, all troubles, everything that happens. Can this possibly be true? Sin happens. Surely God does not cause sin to happen. The sins of mankind brought about the death of God’s only beloved Son — please don’t say that God caused that death to take place because He caused the sins to be committed. Terrible calamities occur, such as hurricanes, floods, fires, etc. that destroy many lives, and often some or all of the lives lost are people who have not yet heard the message of eternal salvation that has originated with God. Does God cause people to die in their sins? How can we believe the Bible when it tells us that God is love and that He loves everyone and wants all to be freed from their sins, and then at the same time believe that God is the cause responsible for the destruction of some of the very folks for whom Jesus died?

If everything happens for a purpose, surely we are all then but powerless pawns on God’s great gameboard of life. Surely there is a better answer than this. God didn’t create robots — He created intelligent humans in His likeness.

### **THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD**

Oh yes, we believe in God’s providence, but His **providing** for us is far different from His causing us to do what we do. In the beginning God put His created humans, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, with the ability to discern right from wrong, but also with the freedom or ability to choose right or wrong. As a result, Eve’s sin was her sin, not action forced upon her by God. Cain did not kill Abel because that was “meant to be” — he killed him because of his own disobedience.

Please take the time to review the following verses of Scripture

which are related to this topic: Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Colossians 3:23; Isaiah 59:1-2; and Hebrews 5:8-9. These verses are very important. They deserve your thoughtful attention before you read further in this article.

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

God is powerful, but Satan is also powerful, having been allowed to be so by God. Satan is definitely responsible for much of what happens in this world.

Temptations happen in the lives of everyone, but God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13-15). Furthermore, God provides a way of escape from every temptation that does come along (1 Corinthians 10:13).

If everything happens for a purpose, what is the purpose for such things as these:

A terrible earthquake that destroys so much property and takes a great many lives? A small child being raped by someone who has no concern for anyone or any thing? An elderly man or woman who is beaten or killed by a teenager on drugs or alcohol? A husband and father who loses his job, and thus his ability to provide for his family? Sin in general? The list could go on and on.

Question: If this belief is accurate, why make an effort to accomplish anything or do what is right? Things will happen a certain way regardless. Also, why pray? It won't change things, according to this idea. However, James 5:16 says that *"the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

Good things may very well result from bad events, but that is more attributable to God's providence than to God's causing the bad events to take place. May we not carelessly put God in a position of blame for things that He **ALLOWS** to happen, but does not **CAUSE** to happen.

## *The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day*

CECIL MAY JR.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS and others often ask, "Where does the Bible change the day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday, seventh day) to Sunday (first day of the week)?"

Most Protestant churches today take the Lord's Supper as often or as seldom as they may choose. The largest group in Christendom celebrates Mass every day. A number of churches in recent years have announced celebrations of the Lord's Supper as part of wedding ceremonies or in connection with a reenactment of the Seder on Thursday night of Passover week (commemorating Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper in the Passover week before He was crucified) and on other occasions on various weekdays.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper and why we worship on Sunday instead of Saturday are more closely related issues than some might suppose.

Scriptural evidence, corroborated by second- and third-century writings and practice, points to the fact that Sunday is the Lord's Day and is the day the early church assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Virtually all of the churches that offer communion less frequently than every Sunday nevertheless meet every Sunday. All biblical evidence for Sunday as the day of meeting, however, is tied to the church's assembling to partake of the Lord's Supper on that day.

### **The Lord's Supper and the New Testament**

For people committed to biblical authority, the first consideration must be Scripture - the teaching of the apostles.

When the church was first established, Scripture says, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). McCord's translation, following correctly the original Greek, has "the breaking of the bread," which according to a frequent usage of the Greek article, would signify a particular breaking of a particular bread.

It is generally recognized, however, even without considering the article, that a continued, regular participation in the Lord's Supper is spoken of here.

To the Corinthian church, Paul repeated teaching he had already delivered to them (presumably in person) concerning the Lord's Supper. It was teaching he said he received from the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23). It agrees in remarkable detail with what the Gospel's account tell us Jesus said and did in instituting the Supper "on the same night in which He was betrayed" (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20).

Paul adds the detail, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Once again, the apostle's teaching implies a

continued regular participation in this feast of the Lord.

### **The Lord's Supper and the First Day of the Week**

In Acts 20, we find Paul in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16), but when he came to Troas he waited 7 days before meeting with the disciples (v. 6). "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (v. 7).

The stated purpose of their meeting was not to hear preaching but to break bread, that is, to partake of the Lord's Supper. The time of their meeting for that purpose was "the first day of the week."

This account agrees with what we learn from Paul's epistles to Corinth about the practice of that church and, indirectly, even about the practice of the churches of Galatia.

The Corinthian church also came together for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20, 33). Verse 20 says, "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper," but the context shows he was rebuking them because their assembling was supposed to be to take the Supper and their conduct made it so that it was not the Lord's Supper they were taking! Verse 33 adds, "When you come together to eat ... ."

In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul speaks of a contribution he is urging all the Gentile churches to make to the Jewish congregations in Judea. He tells them, "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Some say this simply means "lay aside at home," but in any case it points to a special significance for the first day of the week.

Dr. Everett Ferguson, of Abilene Christian University, observes, "This verse says nothing specifically about an assembly, and it has its difficulty in interpretation, but I would call attention to its position, after chapter 15's discussion of the Resurrection, which occurred on the first day of the week. And, however, the putting something aside was handled, 'store it up' is literally 'to put in a treasury.' But what concerns me here is that the first day of the week had some special significance to the Christian communities (in Galatia as well as in Corinth). The natural thought is that this was the occasion when the Christians were accustomed to being



together. Otherwise, the specification of the day is unintelligible."

### **The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day**

Some things the early church did are significant and exemplary; some are insignificant and incidental.

Virtually all of Christendom follows the example of the early Christians having Sunday as the day of assembly. Churches of Christ have followed the same example more fully by breaking the bread on that day.

However, while the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus in an upper room and also celebrated in Troas in an upper room (Mark 14:15; Acts 20:8), hardly anyone deems it important to seek an upper room for the Lord's Supper today. What makes the difference?

The difference is that there is no theological or doctrinal significance to an upper room. It was merely coincidental that such a place was used twice. No point is made of it. There is no significance to attach to it.

Great theological or doctrinal significance is attached to the first day of the week.

Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. Every resurrection account, in the four accounts of Gospel, begins with a time designation stating that fact (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

Most of the recorded post-resurrection appearances of Jesus took place on the first day of the week - the one on which He was raised (John 20:13) and then one week later (v. 26). On both occasions Jesus ate a post-resurrection meal with His disciples. Pentecost is set on the day after the seventh Sabbath from Passover (Leviticus 23:16), and the day after any Sabbath, of course, is always the first day of the week. So the birthday of the church, the establishment of the kingdom, the promised coming of the Spirit, Peter's first use of the keys of the kingdom given him by the Lord - all occurred on the first day of the week.

John wrote from Patmos that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10) when the visions he recorded in Revelation began. With good reason and by near universal agreement, "the Lord's Day" is acknowledged to be the first day of the week. What we call Sunday.

Although it is more illustrative than evidential, it is striking that the only two occurrences of the New Testament word "*kuriakos*" an adjective meaning "pertaining to the Lord" and translated "the

Lord's," occur in reference to "the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20) and to "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day, as we have seen, are scripturally and apostolically connected. Let us leave them that way. "No Lord's Day without the Lord's Supper; no Lord's Supper without the Lord's Day." I first heard that statement in an excellent presentation by Dr. Everett Ferguson of Abilene Christian University. I have since seen it in his writings. He refers to a similar statement, "No Lord's Supper without Sunday, and no Sunday without the Lord's Supper," as the conclusion of Willy Rordorf, in *The History of the Day of Rest and Day of Worship*.

### **The Lord's Supper not on the Sabbath**

The best claim for a time rivaling Sunday for assembly and the Lord's Supper would lie with the Sabbath, the seventh day, Saturday.

Speaking negatively, no reference in the Bible connects the Lord's Supper or the assembly of Christians with the Sabbath. Evangelists went to synagogues on the Sabbath to preach and make converts, just as they went to the gathering places of pagan philosophers for the same purpose (Acts 17:17), but there is no indication in Scripture that Christians used the Sabbath as a day of meeting or worship.

Keeping of the Sabbath was one of the laws of the Old Testament nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-16) and abolished at the death of Christ (Ephesians 2:15).

Consider the doctrinal significance of Sabbath keeping. Two listings are in the Old Testament of what we call the Ten Commandments. The record in Exodus says concerning the Sabbath commandment, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

The record in Deuteronomy, when Moses repeated the law for the new generation about to enter the land of promise, restates the Ten Commandments and at the command to keep the Sabbath adds, "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Putting the two passages together, the Lord chose the seventh day as the day to honor and rest because He Himself rested that

day (Exodus), and He commanded the children of Israel to keep the day as a memorial of their deliverance by God from Egyptian bondage and their formation by Him into a new nation (Deuteronomy).

The stated theological significance of the Sabbath fits the Jews and the first covenant. The theological significance of the first day fits Christians and the new covenant. As Jesus said as He gave His disciples the cup at the institution of the Supper, "this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The Lord's Supper on any day other than Sunday is without scriptural sanction and weakens its doctrinal significance.

### **The Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day and Early Church History**

The biblical evidence is compelling. Under the direction of the apostles of the Lord, the early church understood it had an obligation to assemble on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper. And they regularly did that.

I realize, however, that it is not as clear-cut as some would like. Is there a way to check our conclusions? Have we put the evidence together correctly?

Christians in the years immediately following the death of the apostles reached the same conclusions concerning the apostles' teaching on this subject.

The writings of these devout but uninspired men do not, of course, have scriptural authority, and no such claim is made for them. They are significant enough to be heard, however, and on the subject of the day of Christian assembly and the Lord's Supper, a large number of such writings testify, and they are unanimous and unequivocal.

Several of the early writings state that Christians assembled for the Lord's Supper; several state that they met on Sunday because it was the day of the Lord's resurrection; many state both.

An early writing called the *Didache* (14:1) says, "Come together each Lord's day, break bread and give thanks."

Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1, 67) says, "On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or rural district.... When we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine mixed with water.... We all make our assembly on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day on which God changed the darkness and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior

arose from the dead on the same day."

(These and many more pertinent ancient texts can be found in Everett Ferguson's *Early Christians Speak*.)

Things began to happen as early as the second century and some are mentioned with approval in these writings that are not in accord with biblical teaching. They are not presented here as authoritative. The great number of them, however, and their unanimity on this question yield a strong presumption that our understanding of the biblical evidence is correct.

Early Christians, throughout continued Roman persecution, persisted in Sunday meetings, although the penalty for discovery was beating, imprisonment and often death. Why did they not fool the authorities by meeting instead on a Wednesday or Thursday night?

As Dr. Furman Kearley said, "They died rather than give up Sunday assembly, because the Lord was not raised on Thursday night."

## *Will Evil Go Unpunished?*

JOEL WHEELER

ALMOST TWO DECADES ago, the decomposed body of an eight year old girl was discovered in the bottom of a ravine near a lake in a mid-western state. Law men searched for clues, but never found the victim's killer and the case was dropped until recently when a witness to the crime came to the authorities and revealed the killer.

At the time of the murder, the witness was also a child and had blocked the crime out of her memory. About twenty years later, she had what the doctors called "flash-backs" of the crime and then went to the authorities to tell her story. The witness told police that her own father had struck a blow to the head of her friend and pushed the body off the side of a steep cliff.

Those police detectives which had investigated that mysterious case had given up. But, after almost twenty years of secrecy, the truth finally came to light and the killer was apprehended. The files had been closed. However, unlike man, God never closes the "files".

Moses said in the long ago "...and be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23)." The truth of this matter is although we are finished with our sin, our sin is not finished with us. We may flee

from it or try to cover it up with good deeds, but it will track us in every turn of life and we must pay the penalty some day. Every evil which is done will be evil to the doer. God told Adam and Eve that they may eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16,17). The Lord told them they could not eat it "lest ye die" (Gen. 3:3). Adam and Eve denied the divine law that says "every sin brings punishment" (Rom. 6:23). The first man and woman were driven from paradise and they died spiritually before the Lord.

Not every sin will be detected by others, but the sin will detect the man. It is like a shadow that follows him and suddenly it catches him. Many crimes will go undetected and will never be made known to man, but God knows them (Psalm 139:1-8).

Jesus said on one occasion "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad" (Luke 8:17). God will punish the evildoer at the day of judgment (II Pet. 2:9).

## *Two Ascensions, Two Returns*

EDDY GILPIN

SOMEWHERE AROUND THE year 1490 B.C. a man ascended a mountain on the southern end of the Sinaitic peninsula with the promise that he would return. That man was Moses. That mountain was Sinai. That event is recorded in Exodus 19-32. Chapter 32 reveals that the children of Israel became restless when Moses delayed in coming down the mountain. No doubt many of them believed that he would not be coming back. Therefore, they commissioned Aaron to make them a god fashioned from gold. This was done despite the fact that every plague brought upon the nation of Egypt was directed toward one or more of their idols, thus revealing the futility of serving gods which "be no gods" (Acts 19:26). These Israelites had witnessed the powerful nation of Egypt, with its various gods, pale in insignificance before the God of heaven (Ex. 5-14). The record reveals that "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Ex. 32:6). But, there came a reckoning time (Ex:7:35).

Some 1520 years after this, another individual ascended from a point about 300 miles north of Mt. Sinai, with the promise that he would return. That individual was Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That point was Mt. Olivet, just outside Jerusalem. That event is recorded in Acts 1:1-11 (and other places). Since that time, many have erroneously concluded that he will not return again (II Pet. 3:1-4). Some have determined that his coming will be delayed (Mt. 24:42-51). Far too many have "sat down to eat and to drink" and "arisen to play." Man has fashioned for himself idols, gods which "be no gods." Fame, fortune and fun are proudly displayed as worldly man's actions proclaim, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Although he has the recorded history of the devastation of Israel because of such disdain for God, man continues to plunge headlong towards the same ruin (Rom. 15:4). Even though the many proofs of God's truthfulness assure the return of Christ (II Pet. 3:8-10), modern man continues to act as if such will never occur. But, there will be a reckoning day (II Cor. 5:10). "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11); and, "he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Are you ready for that day?

## *"Pray Without Ceasing"*

DALTON KEY

WE WEAR OURSELVES weary with worry, we line our stomachs with stress induced ulcers, we slowly dig for ourselves premature, fretful graves - and all because we have lost sight of the purpose and the power of prayer. We seem to have forgotten the truth of I Peter 5:7, which encourages, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." We appear oblivious to Paul's admonition to "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

Convinced that God exists, that he is omnipotent, and that he deeply cares for us, we must return to this wonderful avenue of prayer, taking the good example of the Bible's prayerful characters to heart. Observe the history of the ages! Great men of God have always been great men of prayer. Issac prayed in a field (Genesis 24:63); Jacob, by a brook (Genesis 32:22-24); Jeremiah, from a dungeon (Lamentations 3:55); Daniel from a den of lions (Daniel 6); Jonah, from a fish's belly (Jonah 2:1); Peter, on a housetop (Acts 10:9); and the inspired record reveals the apostle Paul, a mighty man of prayer, petitioning God from a prison cell on more than one occasion.

And what of our Savior? Was he not, while in the flesh, a man of prayer? Did he not spend many long hours, yea sleepless nights,

engrossed in earnest supplication? So impressed were his disciples by our Lord's prayer life, that on one occasion, when he had finished praying, one of them asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:10). His prayer recorded in John's seventeenth chapter, the prayer which probably should be termed "the Lord's Prayer," reveals the true depth and richness of his prayer life. These all, "of whom the world was not worthy," along with countless others not here mentioned, recognized and realized an important biblical principle which too many of us have foolishly, faithlessly laid aside. These all believed - firmly believed - that "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

# Measuring The Value of Life

NEAL POLLARD

RECENTLY, OUTSIDE THE Bulgarian Embassy in Washington, D.C., the son of a former embassy member lost his life. Walking with his friends, he was confronted by muggers. Apparently, however, his murder could have been averted! The thieves only wanted his jacket. He resisted and fought until one of the agitated criminals slew him.

Without benefit of an opened police report, one's imagination awakens. What was so special about that jacket? What made the coat worth a human life to its young, foreign possessor—its age, its design, or its material? Why did he not just **give up** the jacket!?

Tragically, mankind has made this same mistake, giving up something so valuable for something less important, since the dawn of his existence. Adam and Eve gave up their life for a piece of forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6-7). Lot's wife gave up her life for a single glance back at Sodom (Genesis 19:26). Korah gave up his life for a run at power (Numbers 16:31-35). Achan gave up his life for, among other trifling things, some "Babylonish garments" and a bit of wealth (Joshua 7:21-25). Samson gave up his life for relief from the nagging of a wicked, heathen woman (Judges 16:17-30).

Absalom gave up his life for a seat on a throne (2 Samuel 18:14-15). Ahab gave up his life for a vineyard of grapes (1 Kings 21:19; 22:29-38). Haaman gave up his life for a bow from Mordecai and his own foolish pride (Esther 3:2ft; 7:9-10). Judas gave up his life for approximately twenty dollars (Zechariah 11:12; Acts 1:18). Ananias and Sapphira gave up their lives for an infinitesimal percentage of the world's riches (Acts 5:5-10). Some Christians give up their lives for brief pleasure (1 Timothy 5:6).

The soul is worth far more than anything of the world with which we might compare it (Matthew 16:26; I John 2:15-17). So many fritter away their spiritual selves in pursuit of the transient (Luke 12:15). Life is so worthless to many!

Supposedly, two pre-teen boys came upon a rushing river in which a little rabbit, trapped upon a rock, was about to be swept away by the current. One of the boys, feeling sorry for the hare, jumped into to save it. Swimming against the rapid flow of the water, the boy arrived at the little creature. The fast-moving river grew quicker, and the boy placed the animal in his coat, cradling the bunny and attempting to swim the river one-handed. But, the undertow and rush of the river took him under and drowned him. Would-be rescuers pulled him from the water, asking the dead boy's friend and the sole eyewitness why the boy drowned. The friend, brushing tears from his eyes, reached into the coat and pulled out the dead rabbit. He held it up and cried, "My friend gave his life for this!"

If one is lost to materialism, he is spiritually dead. When called before the judge, will he watch Christ hold up his cars, houses, bank accounts, boats, pleasures, and unforgiven sins and say, "My friend gave his life for this?" May it *never* be so!

## *Direction*

MIKE BENSON

THE LOUDSPEAKER of the big jet clicked on and the captain's voice announced in a clear even tone, "Now there's no cause for alarm, but we felt you should know that for the last three hours we have been flying without the benefit of radio, compass, radar, or navigational beam. This means that we are, in the broad sense of the word, lost, and not quite sure about which direction we are heading. However, on the brighter side of the picture, I'm sure you'll be glad to know that we are making excellent time!"

I have observed that many people today "fly" at top speed. They make excellent time, they involve themselves in a flurry of activity, 'but their lives lack real direction.

Each of us need a single, long range goal to unify our life. Paul wrote, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14). Dear reader, it is important to make good time, but it is also important to know **WHERE** you are going. From an eternal perspective, do you know where you are going (Colossians 3:1-2)? How do you plan to get there?

