

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Baptism Is Not For The Living But For The Dead

IN THE GREAT Resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15, in its 29th verse, the apostle Paul had asked the question to those in the church at Corinth who were doubting the resurrection, **"Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?"** His reasoning was, baptism prepares one for life after death, but if there is no life after death, then why be baptized? The very act of being baptized into Christ and into His death (Romans 6:3) itself proves that there is a resurrection.

Some have held that at that time there was a custom of baptizing living persons for the benefit of persons who had died without baptism. This is simply not correct. Had such custom existed the apostle would have rebuked for it, as he did in every other case, instead of using it as an example to teach the most important truth of resurrection from the dead. The apostle had rebuked them when some of them were causing division in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4). He had also rebuked them for their immorality that was defiling the church (1 Cor. 5). In another instance, the apostle had reprimanded them for their corrupting of the institution of the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 11: 17-34.). And now as some of them were denying the resurrection, he argues with them that since Christ rose from the dead, so in the same manner one day all will rise from the dead by the power of God. And it was in the hope of

the resurrection of the dead that they were baptized. The apostle was affirming the fact that when they were baptized in water they were baptized for the dead. He was not alluding to the prospect of them having been baptized for proxy baptism—for another person who was physically dead. Rather he was telling them that when they were baptized, they were baptized with the view of their own death to sin through repentance; they were buried in the tomb of water and had come out of it, thus portraying their own death and burial and resurrection. But if there is no resurrection, then their emblematic burial in water and coming out of the tomb of water had no meaning. Why were they baptized for the dead? How vain a thing their baptism been if there will be no resurrection?

Many of the Corinthians were baptized (Acts 8:8), but before going through the act of baptism, one must repent or die to sin (Acts 2:38), and that is precisely what the Corinthians had done. Before their baptism—their burial in the watery grave of baptism—they had died to sin. They were through baptism put in the grave of water as dead men and women. A living person is not buried, but a dead person is. **So their baptism was a “planting” in the likeness of the burial of Christ, and was a “raising” in the likeness of His resurrection from the dead.** They had gone in the grave of water, through their baptism, as dead men and women, and were raised from the tomb of water to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). The inference is, their baptism was in the very likeness of the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But if Christ had not risen, and the dead rise not, then their emblematic burial in water and coming out of the watery tomb of baptism had no meaning. Hence the question, Why were they baptized for the dead? How vain a thing had their baptism been if there will be no resurrection? Must they stand by it or renounce it? **Paul was reminding them that when they were baptized, they were baptized for the dead, with the view of their own death to sin, through repentance, they were buried in the tomb of water, and had come out of it, declaring their own death and burial and resurrection to walk in the newness of life.**

Interestingly, the same apostle Paul writing to the Colossians on the subject of baptism had said:

“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the

dead" (Colossians 2:12), and continuing, he told them, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). The Colossians, to whom the apostle was writing were living indeed. But he told them: "**For you died.**" When did they die? Of course, when they had repented from their previous living, the old life of ignorance and sin, before they were buried in baptism. Baptism is a burial. It is a burial in water (Romans 8:35-39). A dead person, and not a living individual, is buried. One is asked, therefore, to repent, before baptism (Acts 2:38). Repentance represents death to old sinful person—a change of heart or mind—turning from one to another is repentance. Before their baptism into Christ the Corinthians had died, and so were the Colossians, as all others are. **A living being cannot be baptized scripturally.** One must repent, die to the old man of sin, after believing in Christ, before going down into the watery tomb of baptism and coming out of it a new creation. What a glorious portrayal of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ a believer's baptism is!

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

J.C. Choate

Lesson Six

Organization of the Church

Christ established the church (Matthew 16:18). That church is made up of the called out, the world over (Colossians 1:13,14). It consists of the saved (Acts 2:47). It is his spiritual body (Colossians 1:18), and there is but one (Ephesians 4:4).

While the church is universal in nature, it is made up of hundreds and thousands of individual congregations, and each congregation is made up of many individual members. This means that the government of the church is local and not national or international. In other words, the Lord's church does not have an earthly head or earthly headquarters.

The scriptures teach that Christ is the head of the church. Let

us observe the following verses: *"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22,23). *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). Now what do these verses teach? As already stated, that Christ is the head of the body, which is the church. How many heads are there? Just one, and Christ is that one, sharing that position with no other.

With the church being made up of many local congregations, since Christ is the head of the church, then that means he is the head of each local congregation or local church, as well as being the head of each member of the church. In keeping with this, Paul said, *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Next, each local congregation is to have its own organization. With Christ as the head, from among the members, elders and deacons are to be appointed to see after the spiritual and physical needs of the church. The elders are to watch for the souls of the members (Hebrews 13:17); the deacons look after the physical side of things (Acts 6). Notice too that the scriptures always speak of a plurality of elders and deacons over each congregation instead of one elder and one deacon ruling over them. Neither do you ever have the elders and deacons of one congregation taking control of another, or of a group of congregations. Congregations are to fellowship one another but do not exercise control over each other.

The words elder, pastor, bishop, shepherd, and presbyter all have reference to the same office. Thus, an elder is a pastor, a bishop, etc. In Titus 1:5-9, Paul listed a number of qualifications: *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you — if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the*

faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." These qualifications are also stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. So not everyone in the church could be an elder. Only the qualified ones could be appointed, and even then, there must always be a plurality of such men. In congregations where no members are qualified to be elders, the men of the church must take care of the business matters until they grow and develop enough for elders to be appointed.

Deacons are also to be appointed to serve with the elders. They are known as servants and **work under the direction of the local elders**. Paul lists their qualifications: *"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Now this is the divine organization of the church. Christ is the head, with each congregation having its own elders and deacons. Under their authority would be the preachers and teachers and members. In the Lord's way, if one congregation drifts into error, the others may continue faithful. Or if all of the congregations depart from the truth but one, then it is possible for that one to be faithful. In the Lord's plan of organization each congregation is autonomous or independent from the others. They are not tied together by man-made laws, but by love. They have fellowship with one another, and work together, being one in Christ. His way cannot be improved on.

Nowhere in the scriptures do you read of Peter or any other man being the head of the church. Nowhere do you read of a bishop ruling over a number of congregations, or a "pastor" (preacher) being head over a congregation. Nowhere do you read of a "clergy" or "laity". The majority of the religious world has departed from God's organization of the church and that is one reason why there is so much division in the world. Let us therefore determine to return to the Bible for the true scriptural pattern for church organization.

(To be Continued)

THE TRINITY

EARL D. EDWARDS

LONG AGO, MOSES ASSURED Israel that "the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). But what does he include in the term "God" (*Yahweh*) in this passage? Does he affirm a "numerical oneness of God contradictory to the Christian view of the Trinity," as Earl Kalland notes many Jews would believe (*Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*, Zondervan, 1992, 65)?

Not necessarily, because, as Gary Hall states, the Hebrew word translated "one" (*echad*) "is ambiguous. It can mean either a oneness that expresses unity, or it can mean uniqueness" (*Deuteronomy*, College Press, 2000, 136).

Kalland gives examples (Exodus 26:6, 11; Ezekiel 36:17ff) of the same Hebrew word for one (*echad*) used in the sense of more than one part; however, the parts blended into one harmonious whole (65).

Therefore, Deuteronomy 6:4 does not necessarily deny the Trinity idea, but, also, it doesn't affirm it.

The Old Testament and the Trinity

As Benjamin Warfield says, when the Old Testament as a whole is studied to see if it speaks of the Trinity, one "may fairly see hints of an underlying implication of it" ("Trinity," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1939).

Warfield notes that one such sign is found in Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted." It will not escape the reader that about seven centuries later, Christ quoted these words and applied them to Himself as the Messiah (cf. Luke 4:21). But was Christ saying that Isaiah was quoting Him (Christ), or was His only a typological fulfillment of Isaiah's words?

F. Delitzsch is correct in saying that "the Servant of Jehovah and the Messiah are one and the same person" in this passage (*Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Vol. 7, Eerdmans, 1969, 425). If that is true, then the "me" being quoted is Christ:

Edward Young, in commenting on Isaiah 61:1, adds there "is a notable contrast between Spirit at the beginning of the first clause and me at the close of the second, and in each clause the Lord is

mentioned. This is a Trinitarian shade that should not be overlooked" (*NIV Commentary -Isaiah*, Vol. 3, Eerdmans, 1965,459).

In fact, if the above is a correct deduction, then all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned here, around 700 B.C. However, though such seems likely according to this writer, it is not a certain conclusion in this Old Testament passage.

The New Testament and the Trinity

As the old saying goes, what was latent in the Old Testament is patent in the New Testament. That is, God's fuller and complete revelation makes very clear what was previously vague. As Warfield states, New Testament writers are not "setters forth of strange gods," nor are they conscious of "making innovations" as they describe God; they are simply more fully revealing "the God of the Old Testament".

Now to be sure, even in the New Testament the term "Trinity" does not appear. Trinity is not a biblical word, but it is a biblical concept. When Jesus gave what we call the "Great Commission" (likewise not a biblical phrase but a biblical concept) to His disciples, He sent them to make disciples of all nations by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). That is, the command is given by the authority of each of these three.

As Carson says, "individually" such texts similar to Matthew 28:19 do not prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but "contributing evidence makes it difficult to deny the presence of Trinitarian thought in the NT documents: (1) the frequency of the God-Christ-Spirit formulas; (2) their context and use: it is impossible, for instance, to imagine baptism into the name of God, Christ, and the elect angels; (3) the recognition by NT writers that the attitudes of Yahweh may be comprehensively applied to Jesus and, so far as we have evidence, to the Spirit" (598).

Jesus Is Divine in the Old Testament

Notice, for example, Carson's statement about the connection between Yahweh (also called Jehovah) and Jesus. Many passages show that Jesus is to be identified with Jehovah (cf. Micah 5:2; John 1:1-14; 8:58).

However, as Walter Martin and Norman Klann point out, Isaiah 9:6 "is the most powerful verse in the Old Testament in proving

the Deity of Christ and incontestably declares that Jehovah Himself planned to appear in human form. The verse clearly states that all government will rest on the 'Child born' and the 'Son given' whose identity is revealed in the terms used to describe His attributes. Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, describes Christ as the 'Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,' all attributes of God alone. The term 'mighty God' is in itself indicative of Jehovah since not only is He the only God [Isa. 43:10-11], but the term 'mighty' is applied to Him alone in His Deity" (47-48).

Now while Martin and Klann may have gone a bit beyond what is provable in their statement about the title "mighty," still the general thrust of the statement concerning Christ and His divinity is valid.

About the four descriptions - "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6) - Clyde Woods properly says, "These four marvelous throne names of the envisioned king reach beyond the merely symbolic theophoric names appropriate for royal heirs in Israel. Indeed, these titles ultimately stand uniquely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth" (*People's Old Testament Notes, Isaiah*, Woods Publishing, 2002; 49).

The same author notes further that "no human king of David's line fulfilled the prophetic hope of this passage. ... The text here is best regarded as, not indirectly and implicitly, but rather directly and explicitly Messianic" (30).

In fact, about this prophecy, Young is correct when he affirms that "in this particular prophecy the deity of the Messiah is clearly taught" (Vol. 1, 341).

Jesus Is Divine in the New Testament

Jesus is sometimes called "God" in the New Testament (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20).

In John 1:1, John says, "In the beginning was the Word [Greek: *logos*] and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Frank Pack rightly says that the second instance of the word "God" here can "express the quality or the nature of a person, place, or thing. John here is describing the nature of the Word. The *logos* without being identified with the Father shares the nature of deity and is fully God" (*Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, Sweet, 1975, 29).

In John 8:58, Jesus stated, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Merrill Tenney properly says that this statement, "could only mean a claim to deity. 'I am' implies

continuous existence, including existence when Abraham appeared. ... Furthermore, I AM was recognized by the Jews as a title of deity. When God commissioned Moses to demand from Pharaoh the release of the Israelites, he said, 'This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you' (Exod. 3:14)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary: John. Zondervan, 1981,99*).

That the Jews understood Him to be saying He was divine is clear. They sought to stone Him because they believed He had violated Leviticus 24:16 (John 8:59).

Surely it is clear in both Old and New Testaments that Jesus is presented as a divine being. Therefore, the oneness of Deuteronomy 6:4 can not mean a oneness of being, rather a oneness of nature and of plan or purpose for man and the world.

The Holy Spirit Is Also Divine

What about the Holy Spirit? Does Scripture affirm the Spirit's divinity also? Yes, it does, but in a manner less direct than in the case of the Son of God. Examples of this affirmation are found in several passages.

The first one we deal with is Acts 5:3-4. There Peter asks Ananias, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the price of the land? ... You have not lied to men but to God." It should be noted that to lie "to the Holy Spirit" in verse 3 is equivalent to having lied "to God" in verse 4. Clearly, that implies that the Holy Spirit is divine.

As F.F. Bruce says, "The language of verses 3 and 4 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is viewed as a divine person" (*Acts of the Apostles, Eerdmans, 1953, 906*).

Further, it should be noted that the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to "guide [them] into all the truth" (John 16:13). Again He is called the "Spirit of truth" (14:17). He was to be an infallible guide to help reveal God's message without error. Only a divine being has that kind of infallibility. And, no, He is not just a glorified "it"; He is a divine being.

In fact, Paul admonishes Christians not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). A document (like the Bible) or an influence cannot be grieved. Only a person can be grieved.

As Harvey Floyd says, "The fact that the Holy Spirit can experience sorrow shows beyond question that He is self-conscious and personal. A person is one who can think, purpose, reason, feel, know. The Holy Spirit has exhaustive knowledge, even of the

'depths' of God (I Cor. 2:10). He can be neither a finite being nor the impersonal energy of God. Neither is the Spirit simply God in action, for the Spirit himself purposes (I Cor. 12:11)" (*Is the Holy Spirit for Me?* 20th Century Christian, 1981, 2-3).

Indeed, the oneness of Deuteronomy 6:4 includes existing in three persons. We witness all of these three relating to one another at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17. First, "Jesus came up immediately from the water." Second, we see the heavens opening and "the Spirit of God descending as a dove" and lighting on Him. Third, we hear "a voice out of the heavens," which is clearly that of God the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased."

Here we have the three, the triad, the Trinity. Again, someone objects, "But the Bible never uses the word 'Trinity,' therefore we shouldn't." The truth is, the Bible never uses the word "Bible" either! However, in both cases the idea is in Scripture, so the words can't be wrong.

Definition of Trinity

Even a non-biblical dictionary like Webster's gives a reasonably correct definition of the Trinity: "the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons in one Godhead" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate*, 1991).

In a fuller definition, Floyd writes, "What the doctrine of the Trinity says is that God is one God, and that is what we have to maintain according to Deuteronomy 6:4. But he exists in three persons, and he exists eternally in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not playing three roles one after the other, but he exists eternally and simultaneously in the three-fold relationship. ... The unity consists not in the unity of purpose only, but in the common nature, in the sameness of Godhood".

Distortions of the Biblical Concept of God

Over the centuries, there have been many distortions of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity like Tritheism, Arianism and Sabellianism (see Floyd 10-11). The latter of these came in the middle of the third century. Tim Warner writes, "Sabellius was excommunicated and declared a heretic because of proposing the idea there was only one 'person' in the Godhead revealing himself in different offices: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This heresy was named Sabellianism (and later modalism) after him,

though the heretical doctrine did not last for long" ("Oneness Doctrine" (Jesus Only) vs. Trinitarianism: Part 1: The Early Church Fathers Declared "Oneness" (Sabellianism) Heresy, www.velocity.net/~edju/webATrinity1.htm, Nov. 20, 2007).

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ is a created being and even translate John 1:1 in such a way to make Jesus "a god" which makes any worship of Him idolatry. But Jesus accepted worship while on the earth (Matthew 28:9).

What Does It Matter?

But someone will say, "What difference does it make? Surely these are not salvation issues!"

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, Paul decries those false teachers who preach "another Jesus whom we have not preached." In Galatians 1:6-8, he speaks forth-rightly against those who preach "a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"

Clearly, for the inspired Paul, any distortion of God's message is serious. To preach a Jesus who is not divine or a Holy Spirit who is not a person or a God who is not in three persons is to preach "another god" who is not the God of the Bible. Such teaching does, indeed, matter!

Major Bible Themes

JOHNNY RAMSEY

THERE ARE FOUR BASIC LESSONS from the first to last in the Scriptures. From Genesis to Revelation, it is evident that the love of God, the sinfulness of man, the death of Christ and the hope of heaven dominate the sacred text. All other points blend into these salient thoughts. A careful study of the Bible will magnify the grace and mercy of a loving Creator and the enormous problem of sin that demanded a Savior. Once reconciled to God, mankind has the beautiful hope of eternal bliss in heaven with God. The crucial factor in all of the divine drama is the cross of Calvary where sinful man meets the righteousness of the Redeemer. The place

of the skull, Golgotha, or Calvary, where our blessed Lord was crucified that we might live, is our door of hope.

On the rock of ages

I shall not be moved,

Like a tree planted by the water

I shall not be moved.

We truly stand amazed in the presence of that Nazarene and wonder how he could save sinners so unclean. God sent Christ to save us and not to condemn us, as we read in the words of Jesus: *"For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him"* (John 3:17). The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). While we were yet in our iniquity, the powerful concern of heaven was clearly shown, when, in spite of our rebellion, the Messiah died between two thieves (Rom. 5:8). We should be forever grateful for such incomparable compassion (2 Cor. 9:15).

Jesus died for me,

All to Him I owe,

Sin had left a crimson stain,

He washed it white as snow.

The shame of sin engulfed us (Jer. 3:25), and thus alienated us from our Maker (Eph. 2:11-12). Sold under sin (Rom. 7:13), lost humanity cried out for someone to blaze the trail for us back to God. Jesus answered that cry, *"That he, by the grace of God, should taste of death for every man"* (Heb. 2:9). On the Cross, our sins were placed on the only One who never erred, *"Who did no sin . . . who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Pet. 2:22-24). He gives us the victory over the devil (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). What a lesson we learn concerning vicarious love and brilliant sacrifice. How could we ever, because of this, be stingy with the Lord? Because of Calvary, we possess the vibrant hope of heaven - in Christ (Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:3-4). Jesus is our Advocate, to plead our case for entry into the celestial realm (1 John 2:1-2).

In the hour of trial,

Jesus, plead for me,

Lest by base denial,

I depart from thee.

"Teach Us To Number Our Days"

W.A. HOLLEY

"SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). The true meaning of life can be understood only in the light of God's divine revelation (Jude 3; I Peter 1:3; II Timothy 3:15-17).

Psalm 39:4 states: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." As man lives, he soon becomes aware of his frailty and brevity of life (Hebrews 9:27). He knows that he soon will be cut off (Job 14:1-2; Ecclesiastes 12:1-2). Man's life is like grass: it blooms, but soon withers away (I Peter 1:24-25).

How long have you been upon the earth? 20 years? 30 years? 40 years? 50 years? 60 years? 70 years? 80 years? How many years do you have left? Use them wisely.

1) Adam and Eve were in the beautiful garden. They never thought that hearing a lie, believing a lie, and obeying a lie would remove them from Paradise (Genesis 3). Now, in order for one to again eat of the "Tree of Life," and thus live forever, one must hear the truth of God, believe the truth, and obey the truth (Romans 10:16-17; Hebrews 5:8-9; I Peter 1:22-25). The "Tree of Life" is now in heaven: (CF. Genesis 2:9; Revelation 2:7; 22:1-14). Only those who enter heaven, through obedience to the gospel, can have access to the fruit of the "Tree of Life."

2) The antediluvians whose hearts were evil continually, lost their way and perished in the waters of the flood (Genesis 6 and 7). "Number their days" they did not. Noah and his family "numbered their days," and were saved (II Peter 2:5; I Peter 3:20-21).

3) Others who failed to "number their days" are Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 princes who rallied to their ungodly cause (Numbers 16:1-35). These were "sinners against their own souls" (Verse 38).

Nadab and Abihu were destroyed because they "... offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1-2; 16:12, ASV).

Ananias and Sapphira failed in their responsibility when they lied to God with regard to their contribution (Acts 5:1-11).

Judas, who could have had a bright future, failed to properly

"number his days," and ended up in a suicide, thus dying in disgrace (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:17-20).

Some Successfully "Numbered Their Days"

1) Abel offered "by faith" a sacrifice according to God's word (Genesis 4:1-13; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17). After this manner, he made his life count for God Almighty.

2) Although David committed some egregious and flagrant sins (II Samuel 11:2-27), he recognized he had sinned, and repented of them (Psalm 51:10-13). Apparently, Solomon would not repent of his sins; hence his name is not recorded in God's Honor Roll of Faith (Hebrews 11). Sins unrepented of can never be forgiven (Luke 13:3).

3) Paul knew what the real meaning of life was. He gave up all Hebrew advantages and associations in order to become a Christian (Philippians 3:4 ff; Galatians 1:11-17; Acts 26: 19). Furthermore, he never looked back! His faith and obedience brought him safely over the tide (II Timothy 4:6-8).

How To Make Your Days Count

1) Memorize Romans 8:28 and use it often. What does it say? We quote, "And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (ASV). What does "all things," refer to? It refers to whatever is according to God's purpose. Read the verse again. Paul does not refer to the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). "All things" has reference to those things in keeping with God's holy and divine will. Hence, Paul's statement is somewhat limited. In some instances failures can become benefits. For example, Paul's hardships were translated into blessings for others (Philippians 1:12-19).

2) Keep on fighting for truth and righteousness. Never permit discouragement to keep you down. When others failed, "David ENCOURAGED himself in the Lord his God" (I Samuel 30:6). Paul put the situation like this: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (II Corinthians 4:8-9). We may fall on our faces: but let us get up, and get going again!!

3) Never measure success by the world's standards. In our society, everything seems to be measured by material wealth. Jesus teaches that life is more than the abundance of man's wealth (Luke

12:13-21). The love of money is what gets countless millions into all kinds of sins (I Timothy 6:6-11, 17-19). Your soul is worth more than the entire world (Matthew 16:26). Wealth laid up in heaven is the only wealth which can endure (Matthew 6:19-21).

4) Learn to live today. Yesterday is forever gone, and in a very real sense, tomorrow never comes. Goodspeed put it in these words: "But you must make his kingdom, and uprightness before him, your greatest care, and you will have all these other things besides. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries of its own. Let each day be content with its own ills" (Matthew 6:33-34).

5) Above all, learn to depend upon God. Become a Christian; worship and serve him, no matter what. Read the Holy Bible each day; and pray often. Memorize great sections of the Bible, e.g., Matthew 16:18-19; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Psalm 1; Psalm 23; John 14:1-6, 25; 16:7-13; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-42, 47.

In the lonely hours in the hospital, or when you are approaching the hour of death, you will desperately need them.

SIN and Its Consequences

AUBREY JOHNSON

WHAT WAS SHE THINKING? When Eve ate the forbidden fruit, her mind was focused on three things: It was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise (Genesis 3:6). We know what she was thinking, but what was she not considering? The aftermath.

Every choice has a real-life consequence. Paul said: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7). This farming analogy illustrates the unbreakable law of cause and effect. People are kidding themselves when they think they are exceptions to this rule. The fact is that sin always has negative consequences. Although unintended, the repercussions are predictable, inescapable and disagreeable. Sin's backlash diminishes your life and jeopardizes your soul (Romans 6:23).

The Problem

Paul warned, "There will be trouble and distress for every human

being who does evil" (Romans 2:9). Troubles are complications or difficulties that arise from sinful choices. Distress is the sorrow and pain that accompany trouble. Paul believed life has enough problems without adding to them unnecessarily. How much better to spend your time solving problems rather than creating new ones.

The good news is Jesus came to make your life more abundant by reversing the damaging effects of sin (John 10:10). The blood of Christ can remove the consequences of sin from your past life (Matthew 1:21), and the teaching of Christ can help you avoid the consequences of sin in your present life (John 8:32). The stronger your commitment to Jesus and His church along with studying your Bible, praying passionately, practicing self-discipline, developing virtue, serving others, giving cheerfully, sharing your faith, and persevering in tough times, the more abundant your life becomes. It is guaranteed, for as a man sows, so shall he reap.

The Power

Abundant living occurs when you have the confidence and capacity to meet life's demands. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13 nkjv). Whatever life threw at him, he knew he could handle it. Paul was talking about the spiritual strength Christ affords you to fully engage life (2 Timothy 1:7). Jesus empowers you to live a peaceful, joyful, fruitful life.

"All things" does not refer to technical knowledge or skills. You cannot perform surgery or play the violin the moment you are baptized, but you are on a path to increased emotional and relational stability. You can get along better with others thanks to the fruit of the Spirit. You can set and reach meaningful goals because you understand the law of sowing and reaping. You can make the most of your God-given potential because faith frees you from fear, pride and worry. You are able to meet life's demands because a Christian mindset allows you not only to cope but to flourish.

To live abundantly is to constantly learn, adjust and grow in order to become the best possible you. The more you trust and obey Jesus, the holier and better you become. John the Baptist said it well: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus atones for your sins, but He also equips you with the attitude and abilities you need to overcome temptation and thrive spiritually.

The Possibilities

Imagine a world where folks live without a higher purpose, have no fellowship with people of faith to comfort and encourage them, believe that truth and morals are relative, think there is no divine power to assist them, see more virtue in self-expression than self-control, rarely consider others' interests, prefer receiving to giving, believe the gospel is a myth, and base their commitment on the idea "If it feels good, do it."

Jesus offers you an alternative to this aimless, lonely, confused existence. He gives your life ultimate meaning and healthy boundaries. He invites you to share in deep, dependable friendships with people of faith. He provides you with truth to enlighten your mind and direct your paths. If you want to live eternally in heaven and enjoy a more abundant life on earth, Christ is the answer to sin and its consequences. So if you have not made Him your Savior and Lord, I have one question: What are *you* thinking?

The IMAGE of GOD

DOUG BURLESON

ACCORDING TO GENESIS 1:26-28, God created humankind, both male and female, in His image (cf. 5:1-3). After the fall and flood, God's prohibition against shedding the blood of another human being was still connected to God's creating humankind in His image (9:6). Thus, sin alone did not invalidate the fact that humanity was made in God's image.

In the New Testament, readers are again reminded that all humankind was made in the image of God (James 3:9). There, the concept of the image of God was connected to the nature of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:24) as the One to whom Christians are to seek to be conformed both in Christian living and, ultimately, in glory (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10; 1 John 3:2-3).

In sum, Scripture reveals that all humanity was created in the image or likeness of God, but by means of their redemption, Christians in particular are to strive to be transformed into the image of God made evident in His Son Jesus Christ.

Beyond the testimony of God's Word, there has been much

theological discussion of the meaning of "the image of God." By simple observation, one can observe that humankind possesses a quality the animal and plant kingdoms lack. Humankind has a special value as those created in God's image and those intended to represent God among His creation.

Jesus Himself observed the greater value of humanity as compared to birds or flowers (Matthew 6:26, 30). Furthermore, the divine image is perfectly revealed in Christ. So when humans are united to Christ in baptism, they can share in this image in a special way. This is essential to humankind's living out God's purpose for those made in His image.

Most theologians adopt one of four views in defining "the image of God." Proponents of the **structural view** suggest the structure that makes us human is tied to the divine. In other words, features such as a capacity to reason, freedom to make moral decisions, or self-transcendence are intrinsically tied to the divine. Some have tried to distinguish between "the image of God" (lost by humanity in sin) and "the likeness of God" (the structural capacity of humanity to reason). But this proposal does work with the parallelism evident in Hebrew and Greek texts.

Those who adhere to the **relational view** of the image of God recommend the image of God is made evident only in a proper relationship with God and others. During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, John Calvin and others proposed this view, often presupposing that one needs to be elected in order to receive salvation. For relationalists, the image of God was marred and is restored through election, but those in the wake of the sin of Genesis 3 were still privileged to be called ones made in "the image of God" and were given moral imperatives on the basis of this reality (Genesis 5:3-6, 9; 9:6).

Third, according to proponents of the **functional view**, being made in the image of God is reflected in the task of subduing the earth and having dominion over it (Genesis 1:26-28). Humankind was made to be sovereign over earth as God is sovereign over all things. Thus, reflecting the image of God is tied to the God-given work that humanity does.

Finally, the **dynamic view** is not connected to a past relationship lost by Adam (relational), what makes up man (structural), or even our role in the cosmos (functional); rather, it is connected to the work of Christ. The image of God was made manifest in Christ,

which now compels God's people to live as He lived until the day of the Lord. Glorification will mark the occasion when the image of God is restored in perfection.

Although these four views of "the image of God" are diverse, it is interesting that the proponents of each position can say Christ is the One who is going to restore the likeness and image of God in humanity. Although it is beyond the capacity of humanity to understand fully what it means to be made in the image of God, one must begin by acknowledging that the work of Christ is foundational to the discussion.

All humanity was generally fashioned in the image of God in Adam, but now, all can seek, as those made in the image of God, to be transformed into Christ as the exact representation of God. Christians must strive to live as those made in and brought into conformity with the image of God while longing for the day of glory when God's people will be like Him.

The GOODNESS and Severity of God

HUGH FULFORD

IN A TEXT DEALING WITH the cutting off of unbelieving Jews as the covenant people of God and the grafting in of believing Gentiles, Paul called upon people to "consider ["behold," kjv, asv, nasb] the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22 nkjv).

"Goodness" is from the word *chres-totes*, which is also translated "kindness" and "gentleness." God is good! "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him" (Psalm 34:8). "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (86:5). In a passionate sermon to the heathen of Lystra, Paul reminded them that God "in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17).

The supreme evidence of God's goodness is seen in the gift of

Christ to the world as an offering for sin (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Titus 3:4-7). God's goodness is designed to lead men to repentance (Romans 2:4) and to move them to love and serve Him faithfully from a heart of love (1 John 4:19).

On the other hand, we must not overlook the severity of God. "Severity" is from the word *apotomia*, which signifies various shades of meaning: cut off, abrupt, precipitous like a cliff, rough, sharp. Unfortunately, many do not want to behold (see, recognize, accept, consider) this characteristic of God. But as surely as God is a God of love and goodness, He also is a God of justice and retribution or, as the New International Version 1984 puts it, a God of "sternness."

God's severity drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24), compelled Him to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (19:24-25), and led Him to ban from Canaan those who were disobedient (Numbers 14:29-30). When Christ returns, it will be "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 nkjv).

R.L. Whiteside, in *A New Commentary on Paul's Letters to the Saints at Rome*, astutely observed: "Let us not get a one-sided view of God. 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). It is equally true that 'our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 12:29)."

"I Believe Jesus is the Christ"

CLEM THURMAN

JESUS ONCE ASKED THE APOSTLES, "*Who do men say that I am?*" and they gave a variety of answers. But then He asked, "*But who say ye that I am?*" Peter answered for them, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:13-16). The religion of Jesus-Christ is based on faith, a faith which permeates every aspect of the lives of His followers: "*From faith unto faith, as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:16-17). We are "*justified by faith*" (Rom. 5:1), we are "*saved by faith*" (Eph. 2:8). In fact, "*Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him*" (Heb. 11:6).

The Jewish leaders opposed Jesus, and often sought to discredit him with the people. As they discussed Jesus, He told them, *"Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins"* (John 8:24). There was ample evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. One of those rulers told Jesus, *"No one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2). They knew. And Jesus later told them, *"If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me"* (John 5:46). If one is to please God, he must believe in Jesus. That is why Jesus, when He sent the apostles to preach the gospel, told them: *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16).

There is much more to this *"belief"* or *"faith"* than just believing that Jesus lived, that He taught, and that He was a good man. True faith involves believing certain things with regard to Jesus.

Belief in the Life of Jesus

There is no question that Jesus lived a good life, for even His enemies admitted that. *"We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). Can anyone live without sin? Jesus did! Peter wrote of Him, *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"* (1 Pet. 2:22). His teaching reflected the way He lived. Just read the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5,6,7) and you will see the loftiest standard of morality ever given to mankind. That Sermon doesn't just deal with outward actions, but seeks to change the life by first changing the heart, and attitude. We need to believe in the life of Jesus, recognizing it is the best kind of life for us to live.

Prophecies declared the coming of the *"Messiah"* or *"Christ,"* and described much of his life on earth. He was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) of the seed of David (Jer. 23:5). Rather than being born to riches and worldly power, He was to be *"despised and rejected of men"* (Isa. 53:3). Prophecy declared, *"A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). Prophecies, written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, accurately foretold His birth, His manner of life, His death and His resurrection. Those prophecies prove Him to be what He claimed, *"Jesus Christ, the Son of God."*

Nicodemus said, *"We know thou art a teacher come from God;"*

for no one can do the signs which thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). After choosing the twelve, a storm threatened them on the Sea of Galilee; Jesus said, *"Peace, be still"* and there was an immediate calm. The apostles marvelled, *"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"* (Matt. 8:27). Jesus cast out evil spirits (Mark 5:1ff), cured lepers (Luke 17:12), healed the sick (Mark 1:32-34), walked on water (Matt. 14:26), raised the dead (Luke 7:14; John 11:44) and did many other signs that prove Him to be *"the Christ, the Son of God."* When John's disciples asked if He were the Christ, Jesus said, *"Go and tell John the things which ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them"* (Luke 7:22). His miracles surely prove Him to be the Christ, the Son of God.

Belief in the Death of Jesus

Prophecy foretold the death of the Messiah (Isa. 53), and Jesus told the apostles, *"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death ... and to crucify"* (Matt. 20:18-19). His death was no "historical accident." It was planned, *"according to God's eternal purpose"* (Eph. 3:11). Jesus willingly went to the cross to atone for our sins, offering Himself as the sacrifice for us. You see, *"The wages of sin is death ... the soul that sinneth it shall die.... That by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man ... We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died"* (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:20; Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:14). Because we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23), we all must die. But Jesus died for us, paying our penalty. Thus Paul writes that we are *"reconciled to God through the death of his Son"* (Rom. 5:10).

When Jesus died on the cross, He shed His blood as the cleansing agent for our sins. Under the Old Testament, the blood of animals was regularly offered for sins. In fact, *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22). But, *"It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins"* (Heb. 10:4). That is why Christ, the perfect sacrifice, *"The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29), went to the cross. Peter wrote that we are redeemed *"with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The purpose of the death of Jesus, and the

necessity of our believing in His sacrifice, is the core of Paul's argument that we are justified by faith: *"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood"* (Rom. 3:23-25). Belief in the death of Christ, and the cleansing power of His blood, is vital for us if we would please God.

Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus often spoke with His apostles about His death, and just as often He told them He would, on *"the third day be raised up"* (Matt. 16:21). His resurrection had been foretold in prophecy (Psa. 16:10; Hos. 6:2) and promised by Jesus, Himself. Peter used these prophecies on Pentecost, then said of the prophet, *"He foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ"* (Acts 2:31). His resurrection is well-documented, in that Jesus appeared to a number of witnesses after He was raised. *"Christ died for our sins ... he was buried ... he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once"* (1 Cor. 15:3-6). His resurrection was the final proof that *"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."* The apostle then writes, *"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead"* (1 Cor. 15:20-21).

The resurrection of Jesus is a pledge of our own resurrection. As He was raised, so God promises to raise us from the dead. Peter said of God, *"Who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Because He was raised, we have assurance of the joys of heaven. It all hinges on His resurrection, as Paul wrote, *"If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins... If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable"* (1 Cor. 15:17-19). Our hope is based on belief in His resurrection. Without such faith, we are without hope. But because He was raised, He has gone to heaven *"to prepare a place for you ... A building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"* (John 14:3; 2 Cor. 5:1).

Belief in the Gospel of Jesus

In the great commission, Jesus told the apostles, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16). Believe what? The gospel! It reveals the life of Jesus, His death and His resurrection!" Jesus told the Jews, *"Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me"* (John 5:39). It is truly ridiculous for anyone to claim they believe in Jesus while they refuse to believe what He said! As Jesus told the devil, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). Jesus promised that the apostles would speak His word (Luke 10:16; 12:12) as they were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:15,26; 16:13). Paul explains what that means: *"Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth ... When you received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it. not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God"* (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thes. 2:13). The letters of Paul, James, Peter, John and Jude are no less the word of Jesus Christ than what we read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

How important is the gospel of Christ? It is the *"power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"* because it reveals the *"righteousness of God"* (Rom. 1:16-17). We are exhorted, *"Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls"* (James 1:21). The apostle Peter writes of the inspiration of the gospel of Christ (2 Pet. 1:19-21), as did the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Peter further writes of the Lord, *"Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The gospel provides all we need in the spiritual realm, to provide faith for salvation and the teachings for how to live. If we believe in Jesus, we believe in His gospel.

Jesus said it, *"If ye believe not that I am He ye shall die in your sins."* Do you really have *"faith unto the saving of the soul"* (Heb. 10:39)? Only if you really believe in Jesus.

