

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

**Vol. 45**

**July 2014**

**No. 3**

## Editorial

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

#### ***"Baptizing Them In The Name Of The Father And Of The Son And Of The Holy Spirit"***

RECENTLY SOMEONE asked me to explain, Why did Peter say to the group of people, who had, after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time, become believers of Him, to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" as we read in Acts 2:38, while Jesus had commanded the disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"? (Matthew 28:19). Why didn't Peter state as Christ had commanded them to baptize the believers in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?

The word name signifies the authority by which an act is done. Just as we read in Colossians 3:17 where the apostle Paul giving exhortation to Christians said, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." No one should have difficulty in understanding this statement of Paul. We all understand that the apostle is saying that the Christian should do and speak everything by the authority of Lord Jesus, or as Jesus Christ would want a Christian to do or speak. None would want to understand this statement to mean that a Christian is required to call or utter or pronounce the name of Lord Jesus every time one does something or says something.

Peter did not overrule Christ's command when he told people to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. All he was saying that they needed to be baptized by the authority of Christ or as Christ has commanded. One should bear in mind that before Christ had commanded the baptism for salvation (Mark 16:16), there existed the baptism of John, as we read in Matthew 3:5 6, "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him (John) and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins." This is the precise reason why they and some others during that period of time were told to be baptized in the name of Christ, because many of them were already baptized according to John's baptism. They were familiar with John's baptism (Acts 19:1-5). But John's baptism was no longer applicable or relevant, since Christ's baptism, the one He had commanded had come into force, after His death, burial and resurrection from the dead.

In Acts 2:41 it says, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." That's all what it says. It didn't say what was said or uttered or pronounced when each one of them was baptized. In fact, there is no record anywhere in the entire New Testament where one could read what was pronounced or said when an individual was baptized.

So to answer the question, were people on the day Pentecost, as we read in Acts chapter 2, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as Christ had commanded or were they baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as Peter had instructed? I believe both are true. They were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, or by the authority of the triune God as Christ had commanded, and when Peter had told them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, he was simply stating that they ought to be baptized as Christ had taught or as He has authorized.

### **Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin**

Lesson 23

## **PERSECUTION**

J.C. CHOATE

OUR STUDY FOR this time will be PERSECUTION. By that I

am speaking of where someone tries to suppress another, punish him in some way, or refuse to allow him freedom of religion because of the religion that he practices. It is unbelievable that in an enlightened and modern age in which we live that there would be those in the world that would persecute others, but this is going on in many parts of the world. There are several countries, where if one becomes a Christian, then that person would risk being killed. Some of these countries do not allow those outside of their own religion to worship. In many other countries around the world, to a lesser degree, persecution goes on, but it is sad that it would exist in any degree at all.

I have often said that I do not agree with a lot of religious people but I would never be for persecuting them because of the religious beliefs, and I further believe that they should have the right to worship, or even not to worship, as they so choose. I likewise believe that I, and all other people around the world, should have the same privilege. Now when we can get to the point where we can respect one another to this extent, then it means that we are making a lot of progress as the human race.

There are many forms of persecution. As mentioned, there is the denial of worship, to do bodily harm to those who leave their religion, and to use various kinds of pressure and repression. Some are rejected by their family, refused an education, not given a job, and such like. It is so sad that we have people even in religion that become so mean and ugly and cruel in dealing with those of other religions. This is the very opposite of what Christ teaches.

It is true that among those who claim to follow Christ, there are many churches and teachings, and this is foreign to the teaching of the Bible, but at least believers in Christ for the most part live together in peace and harmony. There is no thought of doing anyone any bodily harm, even though they may disagree. Now there are a few places in the world where there are believers in Christ who oppose one another to the extent of committing physical violence, but if you will take a closer look then you will see that in every case there are politics that motivates all of the trouble. Even then, all of that is wrong and the Bible condemns it. The Lord taught that we should love one another, to even love our enemy, and if you do that then you will not try to kill him or even harm him in other ways. Paul said, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled

the law." (Romans 13:8). Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matthew 22:37). Again, Christ said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ..." (Matthew 5:43-45). The love that Christ speaks of here has reference to that type of love where you do only that which is in the interest of that person's welfare. Genuine love for him would not allow you to do anything that would hurt him.

In the scriptures we read where the Jews persecuted the prophets before them. Christ said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets before you." (Matthew 5:11,12). Christ further said. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say. If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23: 29-33).

Even Christ, the Son of God, was persecuted. We read, "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day." (John 5:16). On another occasion Christ told the disciples, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also." (John 15:20).

Of course we know that Christ was eventually betrayed, given a false trial, and crucified on a cruel cross. Why? He was a good man, no sin was found in him. But he was crucified for the simple reason that there were those that didn't like the things that he taught. We are told that Pilate, the governor who was in charge of his case, knew that it was for envy that they had delivered him up to be crucified. (Matthew 27:18).

After the church was established we are told that the Lord's people went through some very difficult times. For instance, we read concerning Peter and John, "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed: and the number of the men was about five thousand." (Acts 4:1-4). Later, after threatening them, they let them go. But they returned to their preaching and again they were brought in before the council. This time they were beaten and they commanded them not to speak again in the name of Jesus, and then they let them go. Then we are told, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:41,42). It should be pointed out here that persecution generally doesn't stop a person or persons from practicing their religious beliefs. Usually, it causes them to be more determined and makes their cause to grow more rapidly.

As we read on in the book of Acts we can see that persecution was the means of helping to spread the cause of Christ. In Acts 8 we read where a great persecution came against the church and it says that the disciples were scattered abroad. Saul was one of the leaders in this. Later, as Paul, he described himself as a persecutor and therefore the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:13-15). Even in his conversion, when the Lord appeared to him and he wanted to know who he was, Christ explained, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts 9:5). Actually, he was persecuting the church, but in persecuting Christians he was persecuting Christ, because the church or Christians represented Christ. But we are told, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and haling men and women committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3). Then notice the next verse. It says, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." (Acts 8:4). Notice also that they didn't slip off somewhere and hide. They didn't even keep quite. True, they were scattered abroad, but wherever they went they continued to preach the word, or to preach Christ.

Later on, Paul himself, after he became a Christian, found in a situation where he too was persecuted. (1 Corinthians 4:12). Speaking to the brethren at Thessalonica, Paul laid, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is the truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thessalonians 2:13-16).

As mentioned earlier, we still have religious persecution in the world today. It is unbelievable that there would be those who would be so afraid of the teachings of others that they would try to stop them in one way or the other, that they would even deny them the right of worship. There is no greater form of slavery than this. But when there are those who have to protect their religion, by persecuting those who do not agree with them, then that religion is bound to be false. God's religion, the religion that we read about in the scriptures, Christianity, is not afraid of any other religious teaching. Furthermore, it can survive during times of persecution, under any form of government, as long as there are those who are determined to obey God and be faithful to him, and there have always been people like this in the world.

You can mark it down that those who persecute others are always wrong. There is never any exception to that rule. But what about those who are persecuted? Paul says that those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12). They may not be put to death, beaten, or anything like that, but they may have to suffer in other ways. There are all kinds of persecution, and it varies from one part of the world to the other, and from one time to the next. Peter put it like this, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for

the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (2 Peter 4:12-16).

My friends, it is wonderful when you can live in a country where there is freedom of religion. I would to God there was freedom of religion in every country around the world. But even in a country where there is supposed to be freedom of religion, sometimes there are many things done to oppose those who do not agree with them. For instance, the majority in a religion can make it very hard on those who are in the minority. Let me encourage you to never lower yourself to the point of being guilty of persecuting anyone. Rather, keep an open mind. All of us should want the truth in religion as well as in all other matters.

In regard to Christianity, we want to encourage you to study the scriptures, search them, investigate. (2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39). If you find it is the truth, then accept it. If you find it is error, then reject it. Isn't that fair enough? I hope you feel the same about your religion.

Of course we want you to become a Christian, but only after you are convinced of the truth of God. Only then can you obey the Lord, and only then will he save you.

## *Jesus Christ "Closed the Book"*

CLEM THURMAN

JESUS WAS IN his "home town" of Nazareth, "*Where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day and stood up to read. And there was delivered to him the book of the prophet Isaiah... And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him*" (Lk. 4:16-20). Jesus had just begun His ministry, coming back "home" to be among His friends to worship in the synagogue. But His friends didn't appreciate His message, prompting Jesus to say, "*No prophet is acceptable in his own country*" (v. 24).

Some phrases seem to jump out at us from the written page,

phrases that carry meaning far beyond the perception at casual reading. Such a phrase should rivet our attention in this text: "*And he closed the book*" (Lk. 4:20). Obviously, the simple meaning is that Jesus closed the book of Isaiah from which He had been reading. But there is much more symbolic meaning in the phrase, as it refers to the purpose and mission of Jesus as revealed throughout the Scriptures.

### **JESUS "CLOSED THE BOOK" ON O.T. PROPHECY**

The Old Testament Scriptures speak often of "*the anointed one*" (Hebrew, *messiah*) who was to come. He was to be of "*the seed of woman*" (Gen. 3:15), "*seed of Abraham*" (Gen. 22:18) and the "*seed of David*" (Psa. 89:3-4). This "*Messiah*" was to be God's spokesman, as God promised to Moses, "*I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him*" (Deut. 18:18). He was to be King: "*I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations... A King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely*" (Psa. 89:3-4; Jer. 23:5-6).

It is evident that Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies. But there is much more. Prophecies foretold that He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and would be God's Son (Isa. 9:6). Prophecy foretold His manner of life, His rejection by men, and even the kind of death and burial He would have (Isa. 53). The scene of the cross at Calvary is described in detail, hundreds of years before Jesus was even born (Psa. 22). Jesus knew that He fulfilled these prophecies, and He constantly referred to them. This was His reading in the synagogue at Nazareth: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor...*" (Lk. 4:18). Such a reference to being—"anointed" could hardly be lost on the Jews, who associated that prophecy with the promised Messiah. Jesus, in effect, was saying, "*I am the Messiah, the Christ.*" There is no need to look further for a Messiah, for "*Jesus closed the book.*"

### **HE "CLOSED THE BOOK" ON THE OLD TESTAMENT**

God gave the law through Moses, as His spokesman to man to reveal God's will to men. Today God speaks to us "*in his Son*" (Heb. 1:1-2). The contrast is stated thus: "*The law was given through*



*Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (Jno. 1:17). But Jesus never taught rebellion against the old law. Just the opposite was true. He taught men to obey that law, for until He died on the cross, the old law was still in effect (Heb. 9:15-17). He stated, *"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill"* (Matt. 5:17). He never "destroyed" the law, but He fulfilled it in every way.

The prophet had foretold that God would make a *"new covenant"* (Jer. 31:31-34) with His people. This prophecy is quoted in Heb. 8:8-12, and then is added, *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away"* (v. 13). Notice that again: the old covenant was *"ready to vanish away"* when Jeremias wrote his prophecy. It is plainly stated that the *"law was changed"* (Heb. 7:12), and the time it happened is also stated: *"He [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance"* (Heb. 9:15). The old law had to be *"taken away"* that the new covenant could be established (Heb. 10:9-10), and this was possible only when Christ died (Heb. 9:16-17). Jesus *"closed the book"* on the old covenant and gave us the new covenant.

### **HE "CLOSED THE BOOK" ON THE NEW TESTAMENT**

While the Old Testament Scriptures were given over a long period of time and in a variety of ways, the New Testament was given and written within one generation. *"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son"* (Heb. 1:1-2). Peter, James and John went with Jesus up into a mountain, saw Him transfigured and talking with Moses and Elijah, the personification of *"Moses and the prophets"* (Matt. 17:1-3). They also heard God say, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him"* (v. 5). In other words, they were no longer to listen to *"Moses and the prophets."* They were to hear Jesus. He is now the spokesman of God: *"All authority hath been given unto me, both in heaven and on earth"* (Matt. 28:18)

Jesus knew He would not always be on earth to speak to man, so He chose apostles to speak His word, and He promised the Holy Spirit to guide them. *"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit,*

*whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you... When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth"* (Jno. 14:26; 16:13). These men were guided by the Holy Spirit in their writing of the word of God for us (2 Pet. 1:20-21). As Paul wrote, *"Which things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth"* (1 Cor. 2:13), *"When ye 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 Thes. 2:13), *"All Scripture is inspired of God"* (2 Tim. 3:16).

Many look for some type of "latter day revelations" in which the Lord reveals new truths. But it isn't going to happen. His word is given, final, complete: *"Contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). As Jesus points out, the word He gave *"will judge you in the last day"* (Jno. 12:48). That word *"is able to make the man of God complete, completely furnished unto every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:17). Peter says that the inspired word gives us *"all things that pertain to life and to godliness"* (2 Pet. 1:3). Nothing more is needed. Nothing else is allowed. Even the apostles could not change it: *"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8). That word is final, for all men, God's last word. Jesus *"closed the book."*

### **JESUS "CLOSED THE BOOK" ON SALVATION**

Why did Jesus come to earth? He replies, *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Lk. 19:10). Paul wrote, *"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"* (1 Tim. 1:15). That is why He went to the cross and willingly shed His blood: *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission... In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins... The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7; 1 Jno. 1:7). Our plight is caused by sin, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23), *"The wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). But we see Jesus, the Son of God, living among men as man, dying on the cross: *"That he by the grace of God should taste of death for every man"* (Heb. 2:9). No one else died for us, no one else shed blood to cleanse us from sin.

Jesus recognized that salvation was possible only in Him: "I

*am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jno. 14:6).* There is no other access to the God of heaven than Jesus. The apostles declared this forcefully to the Jews: *"In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).* There is no simpler way to say it than in the words Jesus used in Lk. 10:16, *"He that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me."* When one rejects Jesus, he rejects God. The salvation which Jesus offers is the only salvation that is offered. Period. Jesus *"closed the book."*

### **JESUS WILL "CLOSE THE BOOK" OF THE FUTURE**

When Jesus ascended from this earth to go back to the Father, angels said, *"He will come again" (Acts 1:11).* That was His promise, also: *"If I go, I will return again" (Jno. 14:3).* As we journey through this life, it is apparent to us that this world is not our permanent home. The body tires, ages, dies, decays. But Paul wrote, *"We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).* That hope is only *"in Christ?" (Eph. 1:3-14)* where we become the heritage of God. No one else can offer us such, hope.

If God wanted to assure us that there is life beyond the grave, and give us hope that we shall live forever with Him, how could He do it? Jesus is the answer. Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised from the dead the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). There is the heart of the gospel. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven forever" (1 Pet. 1:3-4).* We have salvation because He died for us. We have hope of eternity because He was raised from the dead, a pledge of our resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

When we are raised, it will be to judgment. *"We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ... So then each of us shall give account of himself unto God" (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12).* Two possible judgments await: *"These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46).* If we would live with Jesus forever, we must live for Jesus in this life. It is that simple. Jesus has *"closed the book"* on prophecy, on

the old law, on the Scriptures, on salvation. He will close the last book at the judgment. Where will you and I stand? We are answering that question now, by the lives we live. Yes, "*Jesus closed the book.*" There is one more book that He will close. Let us make sure that we are right with Him when that time comes.

## ***Will Keeping the Ten Commandments Save Us?***

JOHN THIESEN

WE OFTEN HEAR it said that all that is necessary to please God and be saved is to "keep the commandments", referring to the Ten Commandments given through Moses on Mt. Sinai. These were delivered to the nation of Israel while they were in the wilderness following their escape from slavery in Egypt. Many people feel that, although many other commandments were also given through Moses on the mountain, the Ten Commandments embody the whole duty of man to God and his neighbor.

### **The Law Brought Condemnation**

The Bible teaches that the Ten Commandments cannot save us. If they could, then it would not have been necessary for Jesus Christ to come into the world. The Law, including the Ten Commandments, was given to the Jews some 1,500 years before Christ, but, strangely enough, instead of saving the people, it resulted in their condemnation. The reason is that the law increased their knowledge of right and wrong, making them even more accountable to God when they sinned against it. "*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20)

The problem was that, although the Law was good and designed for the good of the people, when it was sinned against there was no power in the Law to remove the guilt of the sin. Since "*all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23), and "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23), a sacrifice for sin was needed in order to remove the guilt of the people. The Lord set up a temporary system of animal sacrifice for them which ceremonially removed their sin, but that system could not in reality accomplish the remission of sins, because "*It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats*

*should take away sins*" (Hebrews 10:4). It took the death of Jesus Christ, coming into the world centuries later, to remove sin with the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. *"Neither by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"* (Hebrews 9:12).

The Law of Moses, which embraced the Ten Commandments and many others, was given to curb lawlessness and to serve as an instructor, or schoolmaster, until Christ came to take it out of the way. When faith in Christ came centuries later, the schoolmaster was no longer in operation (Galatians 3:19,24,25). Now Christ has given us a new law, called a *"law of faith"* (Romans 3:27). This new law is the Gospel of Christ, which is *"the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"* (Romans 1:16). Therefore, no one is any longer under the old law given through Moses. To try to go back to it is to reject the forgiveness of sins that comes through Christ and to enter once again into condemnation.

Does this mean that it is now alright to worship idols, kill, commit adultery, steal, and covet, since God has removed the Ten Commandments? By no means, for it has always been wrong to offend against these great moral principles, written on the hearts of men since the beginning of the world, long before the Law of Moses was given to the Jews (Romans 2:14,15). Killing was wrong when Cain slew Abel in the beginning.

No, we are not saved by the Ten Commandments. It takes a Savior to save us from the sins which we have committed. If law without Christ could justify us, then God would not have had to send His Son to die for our sins on the cross. Today we dare not rest our hope in our own goodness and sinlessness, deceiving ourselves into thinking we have kept "the big 10" of Moses perfectly. We must run for refuge instead to our sin bearer, Jesus Christ, to be made right in the sight of God through His blood. Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

## *The Devil at Work*

OWEN COSGROVE

A RECENT RELIGIOUS survey indicates a sizable number of people do not believe that there is a real, actual, literal Devil. The claim is made by some that he is just some religious fabrication

developed to explain socially unacceptable behavior in people. Such thoughts must please the terrorist, Satan. He works most effectively when people are not even aware of his presence.

Now, this may sound like some superstitious bumpkin from the dark ages, but I believe that Satan actually exists, that he works in people, and that he is the consummate enemy of mankind. Jesus knew that the Devil lives and that he destroys that which is good and holy. His confrontation with him and victory over him is the hope of humanity. That evil one who had captivated mankind was himself led captive by God's Son.

The Devil is sometimes pictured as a deformed, little creature with horns and a pitchfork-like tail and cloven feet like a cow. Satan could not be more pleased than to see himself so represented, almost in comic proportions. He can work most effectively when people either doubt that he exists or when they believe that he is a clownish little being like one would see in a cartoon.

The Scriptures say that he transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). The apostle Peter says that he goes about as a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Peter does not say that he looks like a lion. He says that he acts like one in his deadly viciousness and cunning. He often wears a cloak of righteousness. Some of the most devilish things in history were done in the name of religion.

We sometimes picture Satan as working in bars, crack houses, casinos, and bordellos—and he does. However, our first view of him in the Scriptures is in the Paradise of Eden—posing as a friend to our earliest parents. Satan has always worked that way. His appetite is whetted at the thought of defiling the virtuous person. The adulterer seeks for the precious life (Proverbs 6:26). Vandals look for the prettiest, nicest things to destroy. Satan even sought out an apostle of Christ. Judas opened the door and Satan entered into his heart (Luke 22:3).

The devil works in the scum pits of life, and he goes almost unnoticed in the bedlam and pandemonium of iniquity, but it is in the quiet symphony of God's righteousness that his factious spirit is most discordant and destructive.

# POOR JUDAS!

E. CLAUDE GARDNER

AS LONG AS one reads and believes in the inspiration of the Bible, he honestly cannot think or imagine that Judas and his conduct were misunderstood.

How does the Holy Spirit describe him? He was chosen as one of the original Twelve Apostles. He is called Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:2). Judas was the treasurer for the group. He had "the bag." *"This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it"* (John 12:6). He, along with the others, was well-trained by Christ. But his greed and temptation of thieving led him to commit the heinous sin of denial of the One who had so honored and befriended him. *"For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, 'Buy those things we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor"* (John 13:29, John 12:6). Judas' lust led him to betray Jesus, and to consort with the Lord's enemies for a mere 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave.

Shortly, he changed his mind and wanted to return the money, but when the temple hierarchy would have no more to do with him, he committed suicide. The "blood money" was used to purchase a field for the burial of strangers.

*"Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem, so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood"* (Acts 1:18,19).

Judas is called *"the son of perdition"* (John 17:12). He went to *"his own place"*—Another was chosen *"to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place"* (Acts 1:25).

Contrary to these true facts, some scholars and theologians have sought to redeem Judas. The claim is made that he misunderstood what the chief priests intended to do with Jesus. Others say that, with the best of intentions, Judas was simply trying to "force" Jesus' hand, to get Him to declare His Kingship while the exuberance of the people was high in His support.

These are false views of an apostate. One influential professor argues, "We owe him [Judas] an enormous debt for having helped Jesus to accomplish God's will. Why the church has turned against him so terribly badly is a mystery to me, and it also means that the church still hasn't understood the meaning of Christ's death" (from William Klassen's book *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus*).

Another professor wrote, "The Gospels are not historical documents, they're theological documents. They're trying to express faith, and the Judas character functions differently within each of those" (Ray Anderson in *The Gospel According to Judas*).

A third writer declares, "If there had never been a Judas, Jesus still would have been on the cross. We need to see Judas as a person who represents the terrible possibility of betrayal, but also the depths of God's forgiveness and grace."

Friends, let's just rely on the accuracy of the inspired Word of God as it tells us about Judas, his conduct, and that by the wisdom and judgment of God, "*...he went to his own place.*"

## NOAH

HANS J. DEDERSCHECK

NOAH IS ONE of the outstanding personalities of Genesis. His faith and works show his devotion to God, although he lived in a world of godlessness and evil. Unrighteousness had grown to such proportions that we are told "*...the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5).

Noah must have been a lonely man since no one shared his faith except his family. He was divinely instructed with regard to God's purpose to punish and cleanse the world. Right here we see Noah's sincere faith demonstrated in obedience. The Lord told him to build a great ship with the dimensions of a modern ocean vessel, to save himself and his household from the flood that would come upon the earth.

But this case of divine judgment is also related to God's plan of redemption. The flood of Noah's days is not simply a divine punishment—it is a demonstration of God's saving grace to the obedient. These events regarding the flood are powerfully related, along with God's plan to redeem posterity, and to fulfill the promises



given to the generations before Noah.

Adam and Eve had been required to act under moral conditions of obedience. Their conduct came under condemnation. And in the intervening time leading up to Noah's day, human beings had fallen even more deeply into sin, such sin that the Lord had no choice but to destroy them. God promised, however, to save the obedient, righteous souls among mankind. Out of all the population, how many were acceptable? Only eight!

Noah was a man of righteousness, a man of faith. He must have been the laughing-stock of that godless people during the period of 120 years while he was building the ark. The apostle Peter says that Noah preached righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and faithfully declared the coming doom.

What was special in Noah's life? His faith. He lived alone in a wicked world. He showed his faith by obeying God's Word. Would you think it was easy to accept such a requirement of the Lord, to build a ship (ark) of such tremendous measurements, in spite of the fact that there is no indication he was near a large body of water, or that there had ever been rain, much less a flood? The voice of God speaking to Noah regarding a universal flood to destroy all flesh must not have been easy to believe. But for Noah, a man of faith, there was no problem. We may learn an excellent lesson from him: Christians can survive and bring forth good fruits for God in a world that is very similar to Noah's world.

*"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him'" (Luke 9:35). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).*

*"And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26,27).*

## ***REMEMBER THE PARCHMENTS***

T. PIERCE BROWN

NEAR THE CLOSE of his life, Paul gives Timothy some interesting

instructions in 2 Timothy 4:13. He says, "*When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments*" (NIV). The KJV says "books", but since the books of which he speaks were doubtless scrolls, we use the NIV in this case. Of course we do not know what books or parchments these were, but the fact suggests some worthwhile thoughts.

Some have assumed that since Paul was at the end of his life, he could not want these for his own use. Clarke says, "The books and parchments now sent for could not be for the apostle's own use, as he was now on the eve of his martyrdom. He had probably intended to bequeath them to the faithful, that they might be preserved for the use of the church." However, this is merely an assumption, for no matter how short Paul's remaining time might be, if he ever needed books and parchments, he may have wanted them now.

Our point in this article is that although Paul was inspired, there is no indication that his inspiration gave him information that he might have obtained in other ways. For example, an Athenian poet said, "*We are also his offspring*" (Acts 17:28). This was recorded by inspiration, but there is no reason to assume it was revealed by inspiration. There is little doubt that Paul as an educated man had read the Athenian poets. He also had apparently read the Cretan prophets (Titus 1:12) and did not need inspiration to reveal that they had said, "The Cretans are always liars".

So whether Paul wanted these books and parchments for his own use or to have them to pass on to others when he had departed, it seems apparent that he had taken them with him before and found them useful. If an inspired man as learned as Paul found that it was useful to have books and parchments, we should realize that we need to have knowledge as broad and deep as we are capable of handling, that we might better proclaim God's Word. We should try to have access to as many good books as our intellect can properly use.

Even if the parchments contained only Paul's own writings, or letters that he may have received from friends or churches, we still have the same lessons. Those things were very precious to him, and such should be precious to us, whether for our own use, or to pass on to friends when we are gone. While each one of us should recognize that the Bible is the only book we need to find out what God wants us to do to be saved and live in a way that is pleasing to Him, we should not be either arrogant or stupid enough

to think that nothing but inspired writing is of any value to us.

We should never substitute the learned opinions of man for God's Word, but not every jewel of value is a diamond. A pearl or a ruby may also have its proper place.

## ***THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH***

TODD O'DONNELL

ACCORDING TO THE very first verse of Isaiah, we can know when this man of God was prophesying: during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. From historical records we find that these kings ruled from about 740 B.C. till 700 B.C. These facts are significant to the book of Isaiah because many of the predictions that he made (by inspiration of God) would be fulfilled hundreds of years later. There are 35 Messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah alone, and a total of over 300 concerning the Messiah throughout the Bible.

We want to look at a handful of Isaiah's prophecies and trace their fulfillment in the New Testament. The importance of this study is seen when we read 2 Timothy 3:16,17, where the Bible claims to be inspired by God. If Isaiah had been only an ordinary human being, there is no way he could have so accurately predicted so many things. The explanation for his ability to foretell future events is clearly understood in light of Biblical inspiration. God was the mind behind Isaiah's writings and prophecies.

**Isaiah 2:2-4:** *"In the last days."* This has reference to the Christian or New Testament age (Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 3:3). The "mountain" has reference to the church in which all nations (Jew and Gentile) would become one people (Ephesians 2:11-16). The Word would go forth from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Now look at Luke 24:46,47. Jesus shows that Isaiah 2:2-4 was to be fulfilled when the church was established. Take special note: *"Thus it is written..."* The events of verse 47 were written by Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 2:2-4 and were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the church was established and the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem.

**Isaiah 7:14:** This is one of the most famous prophecies by Isaiah. *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel."* The fulfillment is seen in (Matthew 1:22,23). How could Isaiah have known that a virgin would give birth, that the child would be a boy, and that he would be called

Immanuel, which means "God with us"? These things took place around 700 years later, so either Isaiah was good at guessing things, or he had some help from God. Obviously, he was inspired by God to write what he wrote.'

**Isaiah 52:13; 53:12:** Christ was rejected by the Jews (Matthew 27:17-22). He took our sins upon Himself (1 Corinthians 15:3). He was scourged. He was put on the cross, and He was pierced. He kept silent before His accusers (Matthew 26:63). His grave was assigned with criminals because He was accused of being a criminal. He was with a rich man in His death in that He had an honorable burial (Matthew 27:57-61). He became a mediator for us (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

There is even more in this chapter that I have not brought out in this short study. But again, how was Isaiah so accurate in all that he said? It is unreasonable to conclude that he just guessed!

These are but a few of the prophecies found in Isaiah. There are others that do not refer to Christ, but have reference to the rise and fall of nations, such as Babylon in chapter 13. It can only build up our faith to study these prophecies and realize that we serve a mighty God Who has revealed His will to us.

## ***But They Paid No Heed***

LOY MITCHELL

**WHO WAS MANASSEH and who were his people?** Manasseh was king of Judah and his people were his subjects, the people of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-five years and did *"what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord"* (verses 1, 2).

**Did the Lord have regard for this man and the people?**

Yes, He did. That is why He spoke to them. God wanted them to do His will. He had the desire that they be faithful servants of His. However, they paid no heed. They followed the abominable practices of the nations God had dispossessed. Manasseh erected altars to Balaam and worshipped the *"host of Heaven"* leading the people of Judah away from faith in the true God.

**Did God punish Manasseh?** Yes, He did. *"So the Lord brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, they captured Manasseh with spiked weapons, and bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon"* (verse 1.1). Sin has a penalty, and this man and his nation suffered.

**Did Manasseh repent?** Yes, He did. *"In his distress he prayed to the Lord his God and sought to placate Him, and made his humble submission before the God of his fathers"* (verse 12).

**Did God forgive him?** Yes, He did. *"He prayed and God accepted his petition and heard his supplication. He brought him back to Jerusalem and restored him to the throne; and thus Manasseh learned that the Lord was God"* (verse 13).

Let us learn from this tragic story. Let us see the consequences of the sin in Manasseh's life, and determine to follow God's laws. Let us **heed** daily the Word of the Lord. Let Him speak to you as you read, study, and meditate upon that Word. Then do what he commands! When you find you have fallen, **repent! Pray!** God does forgive and restore. Let us do His will today.

## ***I Do Not Nullify The Grace Of God***

JUSTIN ROGERS

THE GRACE OF GOD is made manifest in Jesus Christ. Grace makes salvation possible. Grace makes righteousness possible. Grace makes goodness possible. Any religious system not founded on the cross of Christ cannot rightfully claim grace. God's grace is available to anyone who will accept Christ as Lord and obey His Word. To all others, the grace of God is cut off. This narrow view of God's grace is not popular in the religious world today. Many wish to argue that goodness and righteousness can be located somewhere other than in Christ. But can one truly be good without the gospel? Can one be righteous without obeying God? Grace does not excuse ignorance nor does it negate obedience. Grace must be understood from its biblical background, especially from the author who spoke of grace more than any other in the Bible: the apostle Paul.

### **Paul's Understanding of Grace**

Paul used some form of the noun "grace" 96 times in his writings. The term seems to be used in at least three ways:

(1) To greet his readers—he used this term at the beginning of every one of his epistles (e.g., Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3). This is probably Paul's Christianized version of a standard greeting found at the beginning of many Greek letters (e.g., James 1:1).

(2) To designate what God or Christ *does* (e.g., 2 Corinthians

8:9). Grace is proven through action. God's offering of Christ on the cross (or Christ's offering of Himself) is the ultimate act of grace (Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ paid a debt He did not owe for those who could not pay.

(3) To detail what God or Christ *gives* (e.g., Ephesians 4:7). The cross was the most significant event in the history of the world. The death of Jesus opened a new reality and made an outpouring of grace possible for the first time (Romans 3:24). Grace truly comes only with the death of Jesus (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

Hans Conzelmann, in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, describes Paul's view of grace as follows: "Paul orients himself, not to the question of the nature of God, but to the historical manifestation of salvation in Christ. He does not speak of the gracious God; he speaks of the grace that is actualised [sic] in the cross of Christ (Gal. 2:21, cf. vv. 15-20) and that is an actual event in proclamation." Truly grace is not described as an *entity* but as an *event*. The cross of Christ is where grace is located and from which grace flows.

As a consequence of Christ's death, all faithful Christians enjoy a new relationship with God. We have done nothing to deserve this relationship. It is a free gift made possible only by the grace of God realized at the cross. Thus, grace should emerge in every aspect of our lives.

Grace should dominate our speech and conduct (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6). Grace should fill our hearts with hymns (Colossians 3:16). Even persecution can be regarded as a grace in which we can participate (Philippians 1:7). Christians must be people of grace because our faith is established on the gracious sacrifice of Jesus (Galatians 2:20).

### **Misunderstanding Grace**

Grace was made available at the cross, but it still has to be accepted by man. Paul spoke of receiving the grace of God (2 Corinthians 6:1). Hebrews speaks of finding grace (4:16) and falling short of grace (12:15). It is apparent that grace can be accepted and rejected. It is possible to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). Many in the modern world, however, describe grace much differently.

Many today speak of God's "irresistible grace." There can be no acceptance of grace, for human beings have no power to accept or reject it. The resultant doctrine is very comforting: We are saved whether we want to be or not. Further, once we are saved, we

cannot lose that salvation. But what about the biblical notion of receiving (i.e., accepting) grace? What about the fact that the Christians to whom Hebrews was addressed were in danger of falling short of grace?

The truth is that grace is a gift, but just as with gifts given by human beings, gifts given by God must be received. We must accept God's grace. God's desire is that all people be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but this does not mean that God will save all people unconditionally. Peter even declared, quoting Proverbs 11:31, "Now 'if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'" (1 Peter 4:18 NKJV).

Some in the church today wish to argue that God will save the unimmersed. Despite what Peter and the other apostles taught in Scripture about immersion (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), God's grace, they say, extends beyond the bounds of Scripture to cover all who are sincere. *Sincerity*, and not *obedience*, has become the new requirement for salvation.

There is a biblical problem with such a view of grace. First, Jesus was given all authority (Matthew 28:18), and He passed that authority on to His apostles (16:19; Acts 1:8). Second, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to lead the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). Did the Spirit fail in His commission? Was Jesus mistaken about the authority the apostles had? Knowing this is not the case, we realize that anything the apostles taught must be obeyed as the truth. Sincerity is a quality all Christians must possess, but it is possible to be sincere and wrong (Jeremiah 17:9; Acts 23:1). Grace is available to all, but it has not been accepted by all.

### **Nullifying the Grace of God**

When anyone speaks of the grace of God without specific reference to the cross of Christ, he is guilty of nullifying God's system of salvation. Grace cannot be divorced from Christ any more than salvation can be divorced from God. When anyone claims that God will extend grace to those who are ignorant but sincere, he is speaking where God has not spoken.

Indeed, "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people" (Titus 2:11 ESV), but that grace demands obedience. For that very grace is "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age" (v. 12). Grace comes with strings attached.

In Galatians, Paul battled those who wished to affirm faith in Jesus while continuing to insist on the works of the Mosaic Law (Galatians 2:16). They believed that faith in Jesus was insufficient for salvation. The works of the Law were also necessary to guarantee righteousness. It was these works—and not acts of Christian obedience—that Paul targeted when he declared that salvation is “not a result of works” (Ephesians 2:9).

In response to this false teaching, Paul answered firmly, “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (Galatians 2:21). Paul’s statement is in agreement with the judgment of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:11). Salvation is a gift, but the gift can be given only because of grace. The Mosaic Law was insufficient as a system of righteousness even when it was in effect (Galatians 3:10-14).

The death of Christ introduced not only grace but also righteousness (Romans 4:13; Philippians 3:9). Righteousness is a gift just as grace is a gift. Neither of these qualities is earned; both are freely offered to all. But grace does not nullify obedience. On the contrary, grace makes obedience possible.

Grace also makes true forgiveness possible (Hebrews 8:12). No longer does the worshiper of God need to be sinless. Grace abounds wherever sin occurs (Romans 6:1). While grace is not a license to sin, grace guarantees forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7).

## **Conclusion**

The fact that salvation is even possible is proof of God’s grace (Romans 5:8). Salvation cannot be earned any more than grace can be earned (Ephesians 2:8-9). They are gifts freely offered to all who obey. But as with every gift, grace and salvation must be accepted.

Far too many people seek to extend God’s grace to those who have not yet obeyed the gospel. Some even attempt to dissuade people from obeying the gospel, assuring them that “ignorance is bliss.” But ignorance is no excuse (Acts 17:30). Sincerity is not enough.

The grace of God is centered on the cross, and the apostles taught us how to live in the light of the cross. Many church leaders today, by seeking to extend God’s grace, are actually guilty of nullifying it. Grace is found only in the cross of Christ. Salvation is found only in obedience to God.

