

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

Vol. 45

November 2014

No. 7

## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *God Saves Man By His Grace Through Man's Faith*

MAN NEED salvation from sin. The presence of myriad of religions on earth are an eloquent testimony to this fact. Nearly all men realize the need of salvation from sin. To be saved from sin or to have salvation from sin means to be freed from sin and its consequences. Since man has sinned against God, therefore it is the prerogative of God alone to forgive man. If we are saved, it will not be because we have earned our salvation, since salvation cannot be earned. But it will be due to the grace of God our heavenly Father. By God's standard all have sinned and fall short of His glory. (Romans 3:23). No man deserved to be saved. Man cannot buy his salvation from sin with his good works or by works of his own righteousness or with money or doing charities. If we will enter heaven, after this earthly journey is over, it will be only by the grace of God.

The Bible teaches: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Ephesians 2:8,9).

The word grace means a favor or a gift that is undeserved, or to get what one needs instead of what one deserves. To help us understand the grace of God, the apostle Paul wrote: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ

died for us," (Romans 5:6-8). Christ died on the cross for us, the sinners. He, the Bible says, by the grace of God tasted death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9). "For the grace of God" the Bible says, "that brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11). however, this does mean that the whole world has been saved or will be saved, since Christ has died for the sins of all. Man is saved by the grace of God, or God saves man by His grace, through the faith of man. Grace is God's part, which He has already revealed from heaven through Christ. Man through faith must accept God's grace to be saved. How? Should one merely believe in mind that since Christ has died for my sins therefore I believe I am saved? Just a mental assent is enough to be saved by the grace of God? What kind of faith or belief is acceptable to God? This is most important for every individual to understand to be saved by the grace of God.

In Galatians 3:6 we read about Abraham, and it says, "Just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." This does not mean however, that Abraham just believed in his heart, and didn't do nothing to be acceptable to God? If one understands this passage in this way, then one needs to read what James has to say on the subject of Abraham's belief in James 2:19-24. James wrote: "You believe that there is one God, you do well. Even the demons believe and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." **Abraham was justified to be righteous before God by faith, but not by faith alone.** His faith was made perfect when he did what God had asked him to do. **One has to be most obtuse, or as James says foolish, to say that Abraham didn't have to do anything to become righteous before God.**

After His death on the cross for the sinners by the grace of God for the entire human race, God had raised Christ from the dead three days later, after some time when He was going back to heaven, He had told His followers, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16).

Who will be saved? According to men, those who believe in Christ, or who accept Christ in their heart as a personal Saviour, without being baptized into Christ. But what did the Savior say? **He who believes and is baptized will be saved.** To be saved by the grace of God one must believe in Christ, and repent of sins and must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38). Just as Abraham was saved through faith, but not by faith only, God saves man today by His grace through man's faith, but not by faith only.

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## THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

**J.C. Choate**

*Lesson Three*

# The Establishment of the Church

IN OUR LAST LESSON we observed from Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29; and Daniel 2:44 that the Lord's kingdom (or church) would be established in the last days, in Jerusalem, at the coming of the Spirit, that all nations would flow into it, and that it would stand forever. Then Christ promised in Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; and Luke 24:46-49 that he would build his church, that it would come with power, and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations. Now by turning to Acts 2 we will discover that in this chapter alone all of these prophecies were fulfilled and all of these promises were kept.

As we read Acts 2 we find that the Apostles were in the city of Jerusalem at that time: *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:1-6).*

The record continues to tell of the many nations that were represented, *"So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to*

*one another, whatever could this mean? Others mocking said, they are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:12-17,21).*

After showing that all that was happening was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old, Peter launches into his sermon. He shows how that Jesus was a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in their midst. Next he tells how that Christ had been taken and delivered up to the counsel and by wicked hands had been crucified and slain. Then he points out that God had raised him up, having loosed the pains of death. To convince his audience of this he quoted David to show that Christ lived, died, had been buried and resurrected, and had then ascended into heaven to sit upon the throne at the right hand of God.

Continuing, he said, *"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent and let every one 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. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them... And the Lord added to the church daily those*

who were being saved" (Acts 2:32-41,47).

In the foregoing passage of scripture the Lord's church was established. You will notice that all of it took place in Jerusalem. The power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles. What took place was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old. Peter specifically said, *"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel"* (Acts 2:16), so there can be no doubt about this. Furthermore, since the prophets had said these things would happen in the last days, and since Peter said it was occurring as the prophet had said it would, then the church was established in the last days. All nations were present on that day as repentance and remission of sins were preached, and about 3000 were obedient, were saved, and added to the church. Therefore, Christ established the church in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 and it has been in existence ever since.

*(To be continued)*

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## The Biblical Connection Between God's Grace And My Giving

DICK SZTANYO

IS THERE A CONNECTION between the grace of God and giving? Some would probably say, "No!" Others might suggest that there is **some** connection, but that it is not very strong. I submit to you, however, that the connection between grace and giving is actually inseparable.

**1. God is a gracious Lord who gives.** In 2 Corinthians 8:9-15, one discovers the most extensive discussion of giving in the New Testament. Read these important words with me: *"Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich ... And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed ... Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"* (2 Corinthians 8:1,9; 9:8, 15).

Among other things, the grace of God provided the gift of Jesus Christ (see Titus 2:11ff; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 9:15). This was the culmination of years of history, all of which has its root in the graciousness of God! Moreover, all of it represents a God who graciously gives every good gift to His children (see James 1:17).

Indeed, as Jesus Himself put it, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).

**2. We must, therefore, be gracious people who give.** Read the Scriptures again with me: *"We urged Titus that ... he would complete in you this gracious work as well. But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also"* (2 Corinthians 8:6,7).

When we give to support the work of preaching, we are abounding in graciousness. Likewise, we are gracious when we give our time to our families and our friends, when we give a *"cup of cold water"* to another in the name of Christ, when we assist others in obeying the Gospel, etc. **There is an inseparable connection between grace and giving.** We must seek to be like our Father in both areas (see Ephesians 5:1).

## RESCUED!

GARY MOORE

PSALM 18 IS DAVID'S SONG of praise in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies. He sang:

*"I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies"* (Psalm 18:1-3).

**Rescued!** There is not a word with any greater impact. Being rescued from anything calls for rejoicing. David's song is actually our song, for we, too, have been delivered through the blood of Jesus Christ. Because of His finished work at Calvary, we have been:

**(1) Rescued from the enemy of sin.** *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ... But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)"* (Ephesians 2:1,4,5).

**(2) Rescued from the enemy of death.** *"But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about to pass the saying*

that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'... but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54,55,57).

**(3) Rescued from the enemy of uselessness.** *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

On a dark and lonely afternoon nearly two thousand years ago, a man of Nazareth, named Jesus, hung from a cruel cross and cried forth, *"It is finished!"* And Heaven cried forth, **"Rescued,"** giving you and me a song of praise to sing eternally!

## ***How Can We Have True Self-Esteem?***

MARK HALL

WE ALL SEEK SELF-ESTEEM, but for most of us it proves to be elusive. There are several reasons for this, one of which is the fact that we live in a world that is constantly forcing us to compare ourselves to other people who are more successful, better dressed, have better cars, more perfect families, and fewer hang-ups than we. We are bombarded by commercials which tell us that we can find our true selves only by wearing the right jeans, using the right deodorant, and drinking the right soft drink.

*How can we possibly feel good about ourselves when someone is continually telling us we don't meet the standard?*

How? First, we need to realize that none of these things that our society values can bring any real worth into our lives. In 1 John 2:16, God says, *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."*

Second, we need to recognize these superficial "values" for what they are: traps that Satan set long ago and that people continue to fall into (and Christians are no exception) day after day, century after century.

The key to the problem of self-esteem is that *self-esteem* is not really what we need at all. What we need is *God-esteem*, focussing

on Him and then seeing ourselves through His eyes. God has created each one of us with *intrinsic* value. The Genesis account tells us that we were made in the *image of God*. He demonstrated His own estimation of our worth by loving us enough to send Christ to us while we were still in our sins.

In Colossians we read concerning Christ, *"For in Him, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete."* As we seek after God and desire to have Him as our savior and friend, we can know that in Him we have everything we need to make our lives whole. When I, individually, acknowledge God for who He is—His power and glory, His grace and love—and realize that He cared enough for me to send His own Son to die for me, how can I not feel convinced that I have value?

As His children, we have fullness in Him through Christ, and *in Him we lack nothing at all.*

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## LIVING FOR JESUS

JOHNNY RAMSEY

ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS about Christianity is the challenge found in various areas of living for Jesus. We must constantly strive to grow in the grace and knowledge of God. There is no place where we can rest on our laurels and conclude that we have arrived at the zenith of our service to the Lord. But, pressing on in the pursuit of righteousness adds zest to the divine adventure the gospel affords. Nothing is more invigorating as walking down the road of life hand in hand with the Master! To claim friendship with the King demands our best and richly rewards every fleeting moment. To live in this sinful world without such a relationship would be overwhelmingly sad. A grand hymn says it well:

*Savior, Thy dying love  
Thou gavest me,  
Nor should I aught withhold  
Dear Lord from thee.*

Indeed, what a friend we have in Jesus. He puts genuine meaning into our sojourn and helps us to see those matters that are eternal. We are blessed beyond measure to have purpose in life, hope of heaven and fervent love in our souls that propels us



into sharing with those who are lost without the unsearchable riches of Christ.

*There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.*

Living for the Lord demands that we stand up for the truth in spite of the popularity and ease of error, compromise and worldliness. It may seem that Satan's followers are blessed with all the wealth of this mundane sphere, but that kind of riches fade into oblivion. Remember, "If you want to feel rich, just seek the things that money cannot buy." The abundant life reserved for the saints of God far exceeds all the trappings of material pomp. No one is ever as wealthy as the loyal devotee of the Redeemer: *"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Sometimes it may appear that living sincerely for Jesus Christ is an impossible task due to the excessive opposition Christianity receives from the world. As one sage put it, "Great opportunity is often disguised as an impossible situation." When we rise to the occasion, when we meet the foe and march on to greener pastures and more vibrant challenges, we are much nearer heaven than when we are *"at ease in Zion"* (Amos 6:1). It is generally true that ships are safe in the harbor, but that is not what ships were made for! We are not on earth merely to exist but to ardently serve the Master: *"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves"* (James 1:22). Our lot in life is not for parking but for building.

Living for Jesus demands our close attention to sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), scriptural worship (John 4:24) and godly living (Matt. 5:8). We dare not claim to walk with the Savior while overlooking these fundamental facets in the life of a child of God. Pleasing men is an easy, shallow and unrewarding lifestyle: *"If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ... Friendship of the world is enmity with God"* (Gal. 1:10; James 4:4). Though purity demands courage and loyalty to eternal mandates, the effort is well worth it. When we compromise the high ethics of Christianity to make friends of carnal neighbors, we will find that we lose the fellowship of the redeemed for all eternity (Matt. 25:46). What a

poor bargain!

Living for Jesus definitely makes one an optimistic person. The One we serve has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18) and is willing to guide, maintain and sustain us every step of the way (Psa. 27:1-4). How could we ever be pessimistic and sullen? If we have the proper set of attitudes, no set of circumstances can overwhelm our journey toward heaven. There will be days that appear dark and dreary, but in the midst of them we find sweet peace in the shelter of His wings. On the darkest day in the life of the Christian, there is still hope. But in the brightest moment in an infidel's existence, only eternal despair awaits him. Let us, therefore, always remember the brilliant advantages faithful followers of the Lamb of God possess. We truly are bound for the promised land. Beyond this vale of tears is the land of fadeless day. Living for Jesus will continue on a golden street forever.

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## ***THE INCARNATION***

STEVE WILLIAMS

"THE INCARNATION" IS THE term which describes Christ leaving heaven, where He was in the form of God, and coming to earth, where He was a man. John 1:14 is the best-known biblical declaration of the incarnation: "*And the Word (logos) became flesh and dwelt among us ...*" The doctrine of the incarnation is a fundamental Christian doctrine. It is a test of fellowship. If someone does not adhere to the doctrine of the incarnation, that one simply cannot be called a Christian. After denoting anyone who does not "*acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*" as "*the antichrist*," John refuses Christian approval or fellowship to those people (2 John 9-11).

Sometimes the incarnation is strongly implied by a passage of Scripture. Through the interpretive tool of necessary inference, the incarnation doctrine is established in such passages. For example, Paul wrote, "*When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman ...*" (Galatians 4:4). Since Jesus was born of a human being, a woman, the inference is that He was a human being.

Humans give birth to humans; thus, Jesus was human. But this Jesus who was a human was the eternal, pre-existent Son of God. Thus, Jesus Christ was not simply another human being, but was

God's Son, who became (was incarnated) as a human being. Similarly, the fact that Jesus possessed a human body or flesh implies that an incarnation had taken place (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 1:22; Romans 8:3; 1 Peter 3:18; 4:1). The following are further scriptural allusions to the incarnation:

*"Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same nature" (Hebrews 2:14).*

*"... He was manifested in the flesh..." (1 Timothy 3:16).*

*"... Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 John 4:2).*

The most lengthy explanation of the incarnation is found in Philippians 2:6-8, with which we conclude our study: *"Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."*

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## On The Cross

GARY MOORE

I'M PERSUADED THAT if you want to see the terrible nature of sin and God's attitude toward it, you'll not find it in His judgment upon the wicked, but in His judgment upon the innocent.

God's hatred for sin is not so much seen at Sodom and Gomorrah or a thousand Sodoms and Gomorrahs, as it is seen at Calvary. And this is actually the *"glory"* of the cross: that God hated sin so much that He allowed His *"only begotten"* Son to come and be crucified in order to deal with sin once and for all.

I am persuaded that you'll see the matchless love of God, not so much in His daily provisions for us, as you'll see it at Calvary where the Innocent died for the guilty.

On the cross, the prayer that Jesus offered three times in the Garden of Gethsemane was answered in the negative—He would have to drink the cup. But His prayer was also answered in the positive, for it was the will of God that He drink the cup and, therefore, He was given by God the ability to drink the cup.

So, in the garden Jesus made peace with the cup. He made peace with the burden He was to bear; and, in the angels ministering

to Him, He found the strength to bear it.

The most glorious scene from the cross, the most glorious point of time in the history of the world, is when Jesus, in all of His agony and pain, looked down upon an ungodly and unbelieving mob and cried, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

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## *The Wisdom of Men Versus The Wisdom of God*

HOLLIS MILLER

LONG BEFORE THE APOSTLE PAUL declared to the Corinthians that the world's wisdom is foolishness to God, the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed that God's thoughts are not men's thoughts, nor His ways men's ways. "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,*" said the prophet, "*so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isaiah 55:8f). God's thoughts and ways are flawless, while man's thoughts and ways are filled with weakness and error. God's wisdom defies finite fallacies, for, as Paul informed Titus, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). When the wisdom of men collides with the wisdom of God, God must always be found true, though every man be found false (Romans 3:4).

The context of 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, as well as the entire New Testament, reveals that the human wisdom Paul labels foolishness is man's efforts to govern his soul apart from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the apostle declared that the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). The philosophers of the world who have sought to lay aside the wisdom of God have never been successful in their efforts. The course of history is speckled with philosophies of all descriptions that have cast their momentary "light" across the path of mankind, only to have it flicker and die as another "light" replaced it. When men, and sometimes even Christians, are captured by their own wisdom, other words of Paul come to one's mind as the tragic sadness of the circumstances are contemplated. "*O, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified ... are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now becoming perfected in the flesh?*" (Galatians 3:1,3).

Had Jesus never lived, none could debate the nature of His person. Had the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave not been the power of apostolic preaching, none would have sought to redefine it. Had the church never been established, none could wish for it a permanent resting place in the archives of forgotten events. Had the New Testament never been written, none could have attempted to demythologize it. Had heaven not been the hope of the first Christians, none would have spoken of eternal life as the hope of foolish and ignorant men. It is surely apparent to all that the great doctrines of Christian faith precede all efforts to discredit them.

The question has been asked before, and is worthy of repetition: "Why do men oppose Jesus Christ and the work He came into the world to accomplish?" None has provided a better reply to the question than Jesus Himself. *"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed"* (John 3:19f). The cross of Jesus is itself a memorial to the ongoing conflict between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God.

Is there reason to abandon the wisdom of God in favor of the wisdom of men? It has been argued that with changing times must come new ways of viewing old traditions. But does that argument not depend on what traditions are under consideration? Shall truth become falsehood and falsehood become truth because times are changing? Why should changing times dictate that the truths of Christian faith be abandoned? The truths of Christian faith are firmly established in history, and they are no more the subject of change than any other historical event.

The wisdom of God does not fluctuate with the changing moods and values of men. Therefore, when God's wisdom is rejected, those who reject it are necessarily delivered to the wisdom of men. Of human wisdom, separated from God, Paul wrote: *"For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools ..."* (Romans 1:21f). For this reason the apostle warned Christians against falling prey to the vain speculations of men (see Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:20; James 4:4).

# *The Impotency of Unbelief*

WAYNE JACKSON

IN GALATIANS 4:9 the apostle Paul describes the former unregenerate state of the Galatian Christians as *"weak and beggarly."* The meaning suggested is this—their pagan lives had been void of power and thus impoverished. Unbelief, whether of ancient or modern vintage, simply has no strength, and it is without that rich depository of treasures for which the human spirit throbs. Let us reflect upon the following.

**(1) Origin**—Man is inquisitive by nature. He is the only living creature on earth that is interested in where he came from. He is ever searching for his "roots." Unbelief, however, simply cannot provide any answer. It knows nothing of the origin of matter or the organized universe. It frustratingly attempts, without success, to explain the mystery of life. Its theories of the origin of man are hopelessly contradictory, and in conflict with known scientific data. Unbelief knows absolutely nothing of origins!

**(2) Purpose**—Exactly what is man's purpose upon this planet? Unbelief argues that there is no purpose to human existence. Man's function is simply to reproduce his species, and so, hopefully, for some unknown reason, to advance along the evolutionary scale. But why? What is the goal? There is none, humanists dismally reply. The Biblical record, however, reveals that mankind's ultimate goal is to serve the Creator (Isaiah 43:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13).

**(3) Human Conduct**—What is the motivating factor for moral conduct in those who know not God? There is no rational motive! If there is no God, why shouldn't men live lives that are devoted strictly to their own selfish interests? In His parable of the unjust judge, the Lord noted the connection between those who have no fear of God, and hence, no regard for man (Luke 18:2,4). Moreover, after describing the wickedness characteristic of the ancient world, Paul focuses upon the real problem when he writes: *"There is no fear of God before their eyes"* (Romans 3:18). If there is no God, and so no judgment reckoning at which all men will ultimately give an account of their conduct, then there is no final value to choosing a good life over a bad one!

**(4) Mental Tranquility**—What mental satisfaction does the man have who considers his existence to be nothing more than a meaningless moment in an endless panorama of passing history?

The infidel philosopher David Hume expressed the feeling of many an unbeliever when he depressingly wrote: "Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition do I return? ... I am confounded with all these quotations, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty." Perhaps the unbeliever John Stuart Mill said it most pointedly when he selected these words as the epitaph for his tombstone, "Most Unhappy."

**(5) Future Hope**—What is the hope of those who are without knowledge of the Creator? There is no hope in a mere grave! I am reminded of the conversation that Alexander Campbell once had with the skeptic Robert Owen. As they walked past the family cemetery on Campbell's farm one day, Owen remarked: "There is one advantage I have over the Christian; I am not afraid to die." Campbell responded: "Have you any hope in death?" After a solemn pause, Owen replied, "No." "Then," rejoined Mr. Campbell (pointing to an ox standing near), "you are on a level with that brute...he has neither fear nor hope in death!" Owen smiled and evinced some confusion, but there was no denying the force of Campbell's inference.

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## *Which Faith Will You Choose?*

ANCIL JENKINS

NO TIME IN HISTORY HAS benefited more from scientific knowledge than ours. Huge advances have been made in just the past ten years in electronics, medicine, and even cookware. This progress has led some to regard science as all-powerful and all-knowing.

This reliance and reverence of scientific learning has led some to assume that our faith in God is mistaken and even unnecessary. Yet science has not and cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of God. Both science and the Bible teach the origin of man. Since neither view can be verified by experimentation and observation, they both can only be accepted on the basis of faith.

One factor that affects belief is the reliability and credibility of both parties. Does science or the Bible present the better case? Does science or the Bible have the credentials that promote the

most believability? To the honest searcher God and the Bible will appear more reliable and credible. This is not to say that scientists are frauds or charlatans. Yet, the record of science is inconsistent and raises some questions.

As stated, science has by no means answered all the questions of our world. Scientists, for example, long ago discovered that lightning is caused by clouds becoming electrically charged. Today, however, they still cannot agree how the charges are generated. Although evolution is assumed by most scientists to be true, there are many difficulties with it. For example, there is no fossil evidence to link insects to anything else in an evolutionary process.

Too often, science has gone beyond proposing theories based on observable facts. Instead, it demands belief based on a system that claims that only the known and tested can be true and rational. This is self-contradicting, since this statement itself cannot meet this criteria. Often this produces an attitude similar to the fisherman who stated there was nothing in the ocean less than two inches long. This came from his use of a certain net over a period of time. Someone pointed out there were many creatures less than two inches and they were simply escaping his net. He haughtily replied, "What my net can't catch, isn't fish." Many truths cannot be scientifically verified. This does not mean they are not true.

Science has not yet produced a consistent theory for the origin of either the earth or mankind. Instead, we are asked to accept the theories on the basis of faith. Such theories often become an orthodoxy that allows no deviation. Forrest Mims III, for example, claims he was denied a writing position with the esteemed *Scientific American* magazine. Mims believes this was because of his stated belief that God created the heavens and the earth.

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## *Attitude in Bible Study*

DON W. WALKER

"SON OF MAN, these men have set up their idols in their heart and put the stumblingblock of iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?" (Ezekiel 14:3).

Motive, emphasis, and attitude are three of the key words of New Testament Christianity. When we consider Bible study we must realize that our attitude plays a very important role in our



understanding of God's Word. Jesus said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:11). We will get out of Bible study exactly what we want to get out of it.

In Ezekiel's day the people approached the prophet to hear God's counsel. However, they had their minds made up already. Their attitude was all wrong. Rather than seeking the truth so that they might be set free (John 8:32), they were seeking justification for that which they had already determined.

Now, how does this apply to us today? We have noted that God has provided His Word, and expects man to respect it. That is, man is to believe it and follow it, but is to be very careful not to alter it in any way. This principle is known as the "Silence of the Scriptures." Yet, there are other points to consider.

Notice James 1:21,22. *"...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."* Our attitude must be one of respect and also of action. A simple intellectual knowledge of Scripture is of no value. We must also determine to fulfill what God reveals through His Word. This is what is meant when Jesus said, *"If ye abide in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed"* (John 8:31).

**Conclusion:** The Word of God is profitable for all men and women if they follow through with a proper attitude. To alter or ignore it is folly indeed. With this in mind, let's maintain proper attitudes as we each study our Bibles much, much more.

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## *"God Said It, I Believe It, That Settles It"*

DAVID WADE

PERHAPS YOU HAVE SEEN or heard this declaration of faith in God's Word. As good as it may sound, it falls short of what ought to be said. **"God said it. That settles it, whether I believe it or not"** more accurately describes the true nature of God's Word and the faith we are to have in it.

The Psalmist declared, *"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven ... Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever ... My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness"* (Psalm 119:89,160,172).

Each time we study the Bible we should realize that we have access to *"the mind of Christ"* through *"words ... which the Holy Ghost teacheth"* (1 Corinthians 2:13,16). *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:21). Since God inspired the speakers and writers of His Word, Peter could affirm that *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy: where unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn ..."* (2 Peter 1:19).

When we are inclined to disagree with any part of God's Word, we need to remember that *"the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). When Paul resisted the Word and railed against the church, he was hurting himself (Acts 9:5; 1 Timothy 1:13). To resist the truth is folly (2 Timothy 3:8-9). If we refuse to do the will of the Father, Jesus will say in judgment, *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

God's spiritual blessings are pronounced only upon those who hear, believe, and obey His Word (Matthew 7:21). **God said it, and that settles it. Period.**

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## THAT AMAZING (CONDITIONAL) GRACE OF GOD

WALLACE ALEXANDER

THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD in saving mankind cannot be surpassed as a concept depicting love and compassion. Mankind, the very creation of God, rebels against his Creator and plunges into the mire of sin. Yet God, the very antithesis of sin (Jas. 1:13) reaches down to earth to bring His creation back to Him when there was no way for man to come back by his own power.

While some have wondered how a God of love could permit anyone to be eternally lost, the marvel is that anyone could be saved. God, being the just God that He is by His very nature, had to find a way that He could blend His justice with His compassion for man in his sinful condition. Of course, He did that through Jesus the Christ (Rom 3:26).

The plan devised in the mind of God from the beginning involved the Messiah coming into the world in a body of flesh and dying for

mankind, thus taking the punishment that sinful man so richly deserved. A vicarious death, indeed! And that death became the payment for sin that was demanded by the justice of God. No other being could pay the price—not the angels, not animals, not a human being. The total price was paid by Jesus; indeed, Jesus paid it all! Nothing man does can add anything to it!

However, the acceptance of that marvelous gift depends on a human response. It is conditional. As remarkable a gift as it is, the Father still leaves sinful man the option to either accept or reject it. God remains just, but justifies “him that hath faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). And that faith which saves is a faith that trusts in Jesus, obeying what He commands, finally culminating in one being “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). A genuine, trusting faith will do no less. A dead, inactive faith equals no faith. And that one with obedient, saving faith, as he comes forth from the waters of baptism, can exclaim, “Thanks to God, I’m saved by his marvelous grace!”

At that point, one is a child of God, in the family of God, forgiven of every sin he has committed. And yet, it must be remembered, that his continued favor with God is still conditional. God still gives the option to return to his old ways (see entire letter to the Hebrews). He can still reject the amazing grace that saved him.

Paul plainly made this important point to the Christians in Rome (and to Christians today). He rhetorically asked, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?” (Rom 6:15). The answer was an emphatic “no!” As great as God’s grace is, it does not justify one continuing to live in sin. Just as that original saving grace was conditional, just so that grace which keeps one saved is conditional.

The inspired apostle presents a test. He asks, “Who do you obey?” He wrote, “Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey” (vs. 16). And there are only two options. One can obey sin or righteousness. The result of obeying sin is death; the result of obeying righteousness is life. It depends on how one lives.

Paul concludes with the graphic statement in this context, “For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs. 23).

The faithful life in Christ in no way earns one’s salvation, but is an important condition to be met to receive it. Paul told the Ephesian Christians that salvation is “not of works, that no man

should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:9-10).

John helps us see that a saint occasionally stumbling into sin does not necessarily mean one is a "servant of sin". (See 1 John 1:5-10.) John said we cannot have fellowship with God and "walk in darkness". He further affirms that while "walking in the light" "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." One may occasionally sin while walking in the light, in which event the blood of Christ cleanses. (Observe carefully that it is the blood of Christ that cleanses and not the walking in the light that cleanses. Again it is forgiveness through God's grace and not man's works.)

John also affirms that an arrogance that refuses to accept the reality of his sins closes that door to forgiveness (see vss. 8-10).

It was that wonderful grace of God embodied in the death of Jesus on the cross that paid the price for sin—the total price. In that context it can be said one is saved by grace only. And yet, that grace is conditioned on man's response. Initially it is conditioned on obedience which places one into Jesus Christ and thereafter it is conditioned on being an obedient servant of God or walking in the light.

May the Lord's people today express the same determination of the beloved Paul when he declared, "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

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## ***Homosexuality—A Grievous Sin!***

RICHARD KIT

THE BIBLE IS A HOLY BOOK, inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). It teaches us of the higher road of life that leads to heaven and warns those who choose the lower road of sensuality and carnality of their impending doom. Many are unwilling to walk that higher road of salvation, but are choosing instead to heap upon themselves heartache and sorrow, disease and despair as they travel the lower road that leads to eternal death. The homosexual is one that has chosen this road.

Regardless of what society may demand, or the civil law may

allow, or the homosexual may practice, homosexuality is sin! God's instruction to the Levitical priesthood is too clear to misunderstand. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:13). It is true that we do not obey that law today, but it was "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4), and it clearly demonstrates God's attitude toward this sexual perversion.

Despite the clamor of the homosexual community and the mislegislation of certain religious charlatans, God's word forcefully condemns this sin. "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (Rom. 1:26-27).

In the long ago, when "Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord provoking him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed" (1 Kings 14:22), "there were also sodomites in the land; and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel" (v. 24). The sodomites were so called after the men of Sodom who were guilty of homosexual sin (Gen. 19:4-5). When Asa, king of Judah, "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father" (1 Kings 15:11), "he took away the sodomites out of the land" (v. 12). Will our nation's leaders never learn that breaking down the moral fiber of our nation by condoning and practicing such awful perversions will bring swift demise to our nation? Verily, "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

The homosexual is a blight in our nation. He incites tumult, provokes anger, and produces emotional disturbance. His sexual activity has accelerated the spread of diseases of many types, especially AIDS. His lifestyle leads to insecurity, heartache, loneliness, sorrow, depravity, and despair in this life, and ultimately eternal death. He exasperates the practicing heterosexual, confuses our children, frustrates the Christian, and evidences a wanton disrespect for God's law. The exceeding sinfulness of his sin is well established. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor effeminate (homosexuals, R.K.), nor abusers of themselves with

mankind (practicing homosexuals, R.K.), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Indeed, homosexuality is a grievous sin! However, the homosexual is no different from any other sinner. He needs a change of heart, a change of life, and a change of relationship. If he will turn from his sin and seek God, God will abundantly pardon. Paul said to the Corinthians, "and such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Our prayer is that all homosexuals may come to understand and appreciate God's law, turn from their sin, and by obedience to the faith live for and serve the living and true God. Amen.

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## ***Are The Church And The Kingdom The Same?***

TODD CLIPPARD

TWICE IN THE LAST WEEK I have been confronted with this issue. While reading an online article by David W. Bercot (an author whom I highly respect), I found that Bercot tried to make the church and the kingdom two separate things. To prove his point, he substituted the word "church" for "kingdom" in several New Testament passages. While this exercise may convince the unlearned, it begins with a faulty assumption that everywhere the word kingdom appears, it is synonymous with the church. Even a casual reading of Scripture reveals that this is not the case. However, does this prove the church and the kingdom are not the same thing? Absolutely not! The church is also described as a vineyard, but that does not mean the terms are always interchangeable. "Kingdom" and "vineyard" are simply terms that describe specific characteristics of the church.

Consider the comparison of the church and the kingdom as seen in the language of Jesus in Matthew 16:16-19..."And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the

gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [KJV].

In this text, Jesus speaks of building his church, and then in the same breath spoke of giving Peter the keys to the kingdom. The question would then be, "Is Jesus here speaking of two separate things, the church and the kingdom, or in speaking of the church and the kingdom in the same context is he speaking of the same thing?" I believe it is the latter. Consider...The church was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. On that same day Peter preached the first sermon in the name of the resurrected Christ. In that message he gave the terms of entrance (i.e., "keys") into the kingdom, namely, repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (v 38). The audience would have been thinking in terms of a kingdom as Peter had earlier identified Jesus as sitting on the throne of David (v 30), being exalted at the right hand of God (v 33), and made both Lord and Christ (v 36). No doubt their thoughts would have tended toward the kingdom for which they had been waiting (cf Acts 1:8). No thoughts of the church would have entered their minds, yet the Bible says they were added to the church based upon their belief and obedience to the gospel message (v 41,47).

Another text wherein the church and kingdom appear together is Colossians 1:12-18. In verse 13 the Father is said to have "delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." After extolling the redemption, majesty and authority of Christ in verses 14-17, verse 18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church...that in all things he might have the preeminence." In this text the kingdom and the church are the same.

Furthermore, all passages prior to Acts 2 point to the coming of the kingdom, with those in the New Testament giving the impression that its coming was close at hand (Matt.3:2; 4:17). Specifically, Jesus said some living at that time would not die until they saw the kingdom established (Matt. 16:28). After Acts 2 the kingdom is spoken of as an established fact (Acts 14:22-23; Col.1:13; Heb.12:28). The only reasonable and logical deduction is that the kingdom was established in Acts 2, just as the church was established in Acts 2. They are the same thing.

# *He Came and Preached Peace*

DAYTON KEESEE

OUR WORLD IS breeding gangs, racial slurs, domestic fights, and conflicting lifestyles, all growing in the bitter pool of abused freedoms. An increasing number would rather react than relate, create conflict rather than cooperate, slander or shoot one another rather than serve one another.

With all of these problems, it is important that we strongly emphasize one of Christ's primary reasons for coming into the world: *"He came and preached peace to you"* (Ephesians 2:17). The context shows that Jesus not only preached it, He produced it! He produced it in all the areas where our generation is losing it!

In Ephesians 2:11 Paul urged his readers to remember a day when every brand of reaction and rebellion prevailed instead of peace. His punch line was that when Christ came into their hearts, all of that changed. Blessed be that day and praises be given to God when peace prevails where hurt and strife have been. We need to remember again what Christ can do. Paul pointed to where racial (Jew and Gentile) and cultural (circumcised and uncircumcised) alienation prevailed, adding *"But now in Christ Jesus, ye that once were far off are made near in the blood of Christ"* (Ephesians 2:13). Racial and cultural differences disappear when the blood of Christ is applied!

Social differences also faded away as He *"broke down the middle wall of partition."* Why should the wall stay there since He *"made both one"* (Ephesians 2:14)? The media that gave such jubilant coverage to the wall in Germany coming down should telecast and broadcast Christ to everyone, for He can make us one internationally!

Christ removed doctrinal differences, *"having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances"* so that He could *"create in Himself of the two one new man, so making peace"* (Ephesians 2:15).

He even removed ecclesiastical differences by reconciling those differences *"in one body through the cross,"* which is in one church (Colossians 1:18). Would to God that every preacher, pastor, and priest would be honest enough to surrender to Him in this matter, ending all church divisions to become *"one body"*—one church—as He built it (Ephesians 2:16; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22).

Most glorious of all, He ended the human-Divine differences, *"for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father"* (Ephesians 2:18; 1 Timothy 3:15).

Racial, cultural, social, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical peace—what a delightful and devoutly-to-be-desired concept! Christ can do it, did do it, and desires yet to do it! Let's call Him *"LORD, LORD"* and do what He says (Luke 6:46; John 10:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10).

