

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

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

***There Is A Way That Seems Right To A Man  
But Its End Is The Way Of Death***

GOD HAS ALWAYS, from the beginning, communicated to man His will. The Bible says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...." (Hebrews 1:1,2). But man has had a perennial problem of listening to some other source than God. Just as Adam, in the beginning, listen to the voice of his wife, rather than God, and consequently brought sin into world (Genesis 3:17), man has always listen to some other source than God. Some listen to their own conscience, other listen to men, or their religious leaders or parents, etc., thus jeopardizing their souls for eternity. Today God is speaking to man, as we have read, only through His Son Jesus Christ, and not through any other source. God is not revealing His will to any man in dreams or by sending an angel. Those who claim to be God's spokes-persons or prophets today are falsely deceiving people. As the apostle Paul wrote centuries ago, "But even if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8). To know God's will for us today we must turn to the New Testament of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Even though Christ Himself wrote nothing in the Bible, but He had chosen men, His disciples, whom He had trained to be His spokesmen, after His resurrection and ascension into

heaven.(Matthew 28:18-20). Before His death, He had told them: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (John 14:10). To those chosen disciples He had promised, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you . But the Helper , the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all thing that I said to you." (John 14:25, 26). He further instructed them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak ; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12,13). Accordingly, after His death and resurrection and ascension back into heaven, The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise, a few days later, when the disciples, as we read, "were filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:1-4). Later, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they began to write God's will for all people, as The Helper, God's Spirit of truth, began to reveal to them. Thus, today we have the New Testament of Jesus Christ to guide us into all truth of God.

God speaks to us today by His Son Jesus Christ, through His New Testament. Whatsoever men everywhere want to know concerning God's will, it is revealed in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The word New Testament means "New Will, or New Covenant." The Bible contains two Testaments or Covenants. The first one, 39 books, are called The Old Testament, under which we do not live today. But the second, the New Testament of 27 books contains God's will for us today. Speaking of the two laws of the Bible, John wrote, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17).

The New Testament of Christ declares, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." That man is in sin, and needs Jesus Christ to be saved is the main message of the New Testament. It tells us too, what man need to do to be saved from sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). What kind of worship God desires from man toady (John 4:24), and how should one live for God on earth and prepare oneself to live in eternity with God forever. (Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 6:3-14; 1

Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 4:17-32).

But is man listening to God? The wise man, in one place, in the long ago , wrote in the Bible: "There is a way that seems right to a man , But its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 16:25). We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self willed and self-deluded souls. Their way is seemingly fair unto them, that is, it seems right to themselves. They please themselves with a fancy that they are going good in the way they are in, in their own opinion and practices they believe their way is right. The way of ignorance and carelessness; the way of worldliness and earthly mindedness of sensuality and flesh pleasing seems right to them. They pride themselves in their external performances, rituals, and blind zeal. This , they imagine, will bring them to heaven to live with God; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last. But it is the way of death. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

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## THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

**J.C. Choate**

*Lesson Four*

# Identity of the Church

HOW WOULD YOU SET out to locate a long lost friend? Naturally, you would gather all of the marks of identification and then begin the search. Only after finding the individual that matched every mark of identification, would you accept him as being the one that you were seeking. Likewise, there are many churches in the world. How can one know which is the right one, the genuine one? How can one know which one is Christ's church? You must take all of the marks of identification and compare the various churches with them. Only after you find the one that matches every mark of identification can you be sure you have found the right one. But what are the marks of identification? Where are they found? The Bible is the answer.

**1. Christ established the church.** *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

**2. It had its beginning in Jerusalem.** This is seen in Luke

24:45-49 and Acts 2:5.

**3. The date of origin was A. D. 33.** This is also based on Acts 2, with the church being established on the day of Pentecost.

**4. The church wore the name of Christ.** Speaking of the various congregations, Paul wrote, *"The churches of Christ greet you"* (Romans 16:16). He further says, in speaking to the church at Corinth, *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually"* (1 Corinthians 12:27). But what is the body? The church (Ephesians 1:22,23).

**5. Its members were called Christians.** *"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch"* (Acts 11:26). *"Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuaded me to become a Christian"* (Acts 26:28). *"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter"* (1 Peter 4:16). And finally, remember, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

**6. Christ is its only head.** *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18).

**7. There is but one.** *"There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling"* (Ephesians 4:4). But what is the body? It is the church (Colossians 1:18). Therefore if there is one body and it is the church, there is but one church.

**8. There are terms for entering the church.** These include faith (Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Acts 17:30), confession of faith (Romans 10:9,10), and baptism (Mark 16:16). Once one is saved he is added to the church (Acts 2:47). Also Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27; and 1 Corinthians 12:13 teach that one is baptized into Christ and his church. Through obeying these commands one is said to be born into the church or the kingdom (John 3:3-5).

**9. The worship of the church is peculiar.** Christians are to assemble on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to pray (Acts 2:42), to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) and to give (1 Corinthians 16:2).

**10. The doctrine of the church is based on the Bible only.** It is accepted without addition, subtraction, or substitution (Revelation 22:18,19). The Bible is the one and only creed of the church. Additional books or creeds are rejected.

**11. The organization of the church must be according to**

**God's plan.** Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23) and each congregation is to have its own elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). The Lord's church does not have any earthly head or headquarters and neither does it have national or international man-made organization.

**12. The mission of the church is three-fold.** Its work is to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15,16), to help those in need (Galatians 6; James 2), and to edify the members (Hebrews 3:12-14).

**13. Each Christian must live the faithful Christian life.** We can not love the world (1 John 2:15; James 4:4), but must produce the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). Only the faithful will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

These are some of the marks of the church. These are taken from the pattern, the Bible. Compare your church with these. For example, take the first four. Ask yourself, "Who established my church?" Was it established by Christ or some man? Then ask, "Where was my church established? Did it have its beginning in Jerusalem or some other place?" Continue by asking, "When was my church established?" If it was after A. D. 33 it couldn't be the Lord's. And finally, ask yourself, "What name does my church wear?" If it is not the name of Christ, then how can it belong to Christ? You could continue, but these are enough to help you see whether your church is of the Lord or of man. You can also compare other churches to these identification marks to determine if they are of God or not. I believe you will be able to see the difference if you'll be honest with yourself.

Should you find that the church you are a member of is not the one true church of the Bible, then let me urge you to leave it behind, learn the truth, obey it, and be added to the church that you can read about in God's word. Then you'll be in the one in which salvation is to be found.

(To be continued)

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## *If A Man Has Not Heard The Gospel Is He Lost?*

DEMAR ELAM

SOME PEOPLE SAY, "If a man has not heard the Gospel, he is

not lost." This kind of thinking is why we have not evangelized the world in our day. Many say, "Surely, if God is a loving God, He would not hold one who has not even heard what to do to be saved eternally responsible." Let us realize that God and man do not always view matters exactly alike.

One must realize that man is not lost because he has not heard the Gospel, but because he is a sinner. Paul said in Romans 3:10, *"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one."* *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). ALL men need the blood of Christ applied to their lives to be saved. *"... without the shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). Peter stated, *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ..."* (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The blood of Christ was shed to save all men from their sins. However, it is not until all of God's requirements are met that a man receives the blessings of that atoning blood.

We have long taught, and rightly so, that one receives the benefits of the blood by believing (Hebrews 11:6), repenting (Luke 13:3), confessing (Matthew 10:32, 33; Romans 10:9, 10), and by being baptized into Christ's death, where His blood was shed (Romans 6:3-8). These are the essential steps which finalize the "New Birth" spoken of in John 3:1-13. Can the man who has not heard be saved in heaven without experiencing the "New Birth?" If Jesus was correct (and He was), then one **cannot be** saved without the new birth, because Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he **cannot** enter into the Kingdom of God." Did Jesus really mean this, or is the man saved who has not heard?

The saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47), and Christ is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). The one who has not heard the Gospel is not a part of the church, the saved.

Baptism is required if a man is to put on Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*

Men should be careful about saying so readily that God is being unfair to punish people for their sins even though they have not heard. God has the divine prerogative and responsibility to deal with sinners as justice and righteousness demand.

Mankind imagines that sin is not bad enough for one to lose his soul over. Man views sin through human eyes, not through holy

eyes, as God does. God is a righteous God (Psalm 89:14; Jeremiah 23:5-8). Righteousness and justice demand that sinners be punished. Because of His divinity, God could not overlook one unrequited sin without ceasing to be God.

The cure for man's sinful state is the gift of His only begotten Son on the cruel cross of Calvary. That cure has been provided by a loving and merciful God.

Let us try to illustrate, in this way, the condition of a man who has not heard of God's provision for his salvation: Suppose a man has a terrible disease, and a cure has been provided for this disease, but the man does not have access to the cure. He dies! Did he die because he did not have access to the cure, or because he had the disease? To draw a parallel, those who say that the man who has not heard the Gospel is *saved* would say that the diseased man *actually did not die*, or that he died solely because *he did not have access to the cure*. But that is not the case at all. He died because of *the disease* he had. If the people who have not heard the Gospel are lost, it will not be because they have not heard of the cure (the Gospel), but because of the disease (sin) they have.

Why did Jesus give the apostles a commission to preach the Gospel to every creature? If people are saved *because* they have never heard the Gospel, the Lord made a mistake in giving the commission because *many who do hear will reject the message, thus sealing their doomed state*. Dare we accuse God of sending out a message of damnation?

No; men are not lost because they have not heard, but *because they are sinners*. In that sinful state, they are not a part of that group which comprises the saved, the church (or body) of Christ. This is why the commission was given. *Men are lost until they accept Christ and receive the benefit of His blood in their lives.*

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## *Myths Of Evolution*

BOBBY DOCKERY

MANY SCIENTISTS LIKE to describe the Biblical account of Creation as a "myth." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "myth" as: "an ill-founded belief held uncritically, especially by an interested group." In other words, a myth is something which

is not true, but is accepted as truth without question.

It may come as a surprise to many, but modern science often believes in myths. Scientists, especially when explaining the origin of life on Earth, hold ill-founded beliefs which they do not question. Consider some common myths of evolution.

#### **MYTH #1—The Assumption that evolution is Science.**

Though evolutionists frequently claim otherwise, both evolution and Creation are faith systems. Each is a matter of belief. Paul Erlich and L.C. Birch wrote in *Nature*, April 22, 1967: "Our theory of evolution ... is thus 'outside of empirical science' ... No one can think of ways in which to test it... [evolutionary ideas] have become part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training." In 1971, Dr. L.H. Matthews wrote in an "Introduction" to a new edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in London: "Belief in the theory of evolution is thus exactly parallel to belief in special creation—both are concepts which believers know to be true, but neither, up to the present, has been capable of proof." Evolution is clearly a matter outside the realm of science. Those who choose to accept evolution do so as a matter of faith, not because evolution has been demonstrated to be fact.

**MYTH #2—The Assumption that evolution is the Result of Beneficial Mutations.** For evolution to be plausible, it must have a mechanism by which it operates. Many scientists argue that it is through mutations that one organism changes itself into another. But it is inconceivable that mutations can be responsible for all of the 1.7 million forms of life on our earth. Mutations are very rare. Most are produced by abnormal conditions such as exposure to atomic radiation or drugs. It is estimated that a mutation will occur once in every 100,000 to 1-million instances. Dr. H. Douglas Dean, Chairman of the Biology Department at Pepperdine University, points out that it would take 100,000 favorable mutations for the tiny ancestral horse, Eohippus, to evolve into a modern horse! In light of the relative infrequency of mutations and the negligible percentage of them which are helpful, evolution is clearly impossible! Even Julian Huxley, the noted defender of evolution, admits that the odds of evolution having occurred through beneficial mutations are 1 in 1000<sup>1,000,000</sup>—1 followed by 3 million zeroes (it would take 3 large 500-page books just to print this number!). No mutation has ever been shown to have produced a new species, or even a new organ in a species! Only minor changes have



occurred, such as wing-shape or color. Mutations do not result in adding a wing to a cow or a backbone to a worm!

**MYTH #3—The Belief in Spontaneous Generation.** Life comes only from life. Yet evolution teaches that at some time in the distant past, non-living matter suddenly came to life. Drs. Fuller and Tippo, both evolutionists, in their text on *College Botany* admit: "...if one subscribes to this theory, he admits that the first protoplasm to appear on earth was a product of spontaneous generation.... In other words...spontaneous generation worked when the first living substance was formed, but probably hasn't worked since." Question: Is it conceivable that blind chance accidentally did in the "primeval soup" what the best scientific minds of the 20th Century have been unable to duplicate in the laboratory—create life from non-life?

Which is harder to believe: the Biblical account of an all-wise, all-powerful Creator, or evolution's faith in blind, blundering chance? Is the evidence for evolution credible...reliable...believable? Or, is it merely evidence that men have exchanged the truths of God for a lie, and that professing to be wise they became fools (Romans 1:22)?

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## *How Much Evidence Do We Need?*

ANCIL JENKINS

*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1). For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20). If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17).*

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED Bertrand Russell, a noted atheist, "Suppose you are wrong and God exists. What are you going to say to Him at the Judgment?" He replied, "Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence."

In reality, "not enough evidence" is the cry of the agnostic, not of the atheist. The agnostic is one who does not believe there is an adequate reason to believe in God. In many ways, he has less

moral courage than an atheist. If there is not enough evidence to believe in God, it is because God is either unwilling or unable to provide it. If either case were true, such a God would be unworthy of belief. The atheist is at least willing to make a decision and take a public stand. The agnostic is not.

Is there enough evidence? To some it may seem like circular reasoning to quote God's book to show the existence of God. Yet, this timeless book claims nature makes the first and most evident argument for His existence. Nature's claim is powerful. Isn't there a lesson in the fact that science, even from its beginning, has made no discovery that disproves God's existence? On the contrary, time after time it has given credibility to man's belief in Him.

The question of the origin of the earth has puzzled man for centuries. Only when men denied the truth of God's creation did man become frustrated. Discoveries have repeatedly refuted man's false claims. Although the "Big Bang" theory of the earth's origin does not completely harmonize with the Genesis account, it is a discovery that admits that the earth had a beginning. This Beginning powerfully indicates that a Force caused it.

The problem with belief is the heart of man. If a person is willing to believe in a Creator, there is a great weight of credible evidence. Jesus said that the one willing to believe will find evidence for this belief (John 7:17). The world's materialistic approach to our creation and existence has no place for the spiritual. It, on the other hand, has not proven that the spiritual has not or cannot exist.

The problem is that when one comes to accepting the evidence of God's existence, man must repent and commit himself. Belief in God requires humility. Man must acknowledge there is Something greater than himself. Man must admit his inability to understand or control his life. The lack of evidence is not the problem. Man's unwillingness to submit to God may be the greatest barrier to belief.

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## *Jesus Christ—Friend of Sinners*

CLEM THURMAN

JESUS IS PICTURED IN THE Scriptures as a true friend of sinners. He walked and talked with them so much that He was openly criticized by the scribes and Pharisees. Luke explains, "Now all

*the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*" (Luke 15:1-2). While others were overly concerned with their reputation, Jesus was "more" interested in what He could do to help people that needed Him. Thus the charge didn't bother Him that much when they said, *"Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"* (Luke 7:34).

The Scriptures declare, *"Friendship of the world is enmity with God"* (James 4:4). But Jesus could walk that fine line of being friends with worldly people without being friends with the worldliness in which they engaged. We need to learn to walk that same line.

### **GREAT PARABLES ABOUT THE LOST**

In answer to criticism that He was a friend of sinners, Jesus told three great parables in Luke 15. The first (Luke 15:4-7) was the story of a man with a hundred sheep, and one is lost in the wilderness. The shepherd was so concerned that he left the ninety-nine to go search for, and find, the one lost sheep. On finding it, he placed it upon his shoulder and brought it back to the fold. Then, rejoicing, he called together his friends and neighbors, saying, *"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."* Then Jesus added, *"I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine, who need no repentance."*

The next parable which the Lord told was that of the lost coin: *"Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:8-10).

Possibly the most loved parable Jesus ever told is that of "the lost boy," usually called "the prodigal son" (Luke 15:11-24). A young man leaves the comfort of his father's home and journeys to *"a far country."* There he wastes his funds, his friends forsake him, and he is reduced to feeding hogs in order to live. As he was eating hog-feed in the pig-sty, *"He came to himself"* and decided to return home and ask his father to make him a hired servant.

The father's concern for his wayward son, his welcome when

the young man returned home and his joyful words of welcome, all show the deep and tender feelings that Jesus had for sinners. Where can one find more beautiful words than these? *"Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found"* (v. 23-25). That his older brother resented the young man's return and protested the merriment did not deter the father. The party went on as planned!

It is in this parable that Jesus gave His most severe rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees for their criticism of His association with sinners. As Jesus explained to them on another occasion, *"They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:31-32). It is a very dark day in any religious man's life when he is not burdened for sinners. Our Lord gave us wonderful examples of how friendship with them can help us to *"seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10).

### **JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF SINNERS**

Not only is Jesus pictured as the friend of sinners, he is also shown to be the Savior of sinners. The angel announced to Joseph, *"Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21). John announced, at the beginning of the Lord's ministry, *"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). Jesus, Himself, defined His purpose on earth very clearly: *"The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

We should be exceedingly grateful that Jesus is the Savior of sinners, for *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). As the apostle writes later, *"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Not while we were righteous, not while we were trying to serve God, but while we were in rebellion to His will, God sent Jesus to save us from sin. Man cannot save himself, he must have a Savior. As the prophet described Jesus as our sacrifice for sin, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:6).

The cross of Calvary is the climax of the world's history, for we see in it God's love and His desire to save us from sin. The cross

is the reason Jesus came into the world. *"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil"* (Heb. 2:14). He died to overcome Satan and set us free. And He was raised to become our Mediator: *"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25). He shed His blood to cleanse us from sin and to keep us free from sin (1 John 1:7).

### **JESUS WAS MOVED BY THE VALUE OF A SOUL**

The first chapter of the Bible describes our beginning: *"God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). Of all of God's creation, man is unique. Only man is made in God's image. To show the importance of the "soul" of man, Jesus said: *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt. 16:26). Recognizing this priceless possession that God has given man, He desired that man might save it forever. The price He paid for man's redemption indicates the value God placed on man's soul. *"Ye were bought with a price"* (1 Cor. 6:20).

The concern of Jesus for lost mankind is graphically pictured in Matt. 9:36, *"He came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things"* (Mark 6:34). They were blind to God's love and their own spiritual need, so Jesus had compassion on them. The word "compassion" literally means to "feel with." Jesus felt their lostness, their lack of purpose. They needed a shepherd, and He became the Good Shepherd to them. Jesus later said, *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep"* (John 10:11).

### **JESUS SAW THE POTENTIAL IN PEOPLE**

When Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, the Lord saw in the simple fisherman the character that was to be developed into the great apostle Peter. He saw what Peter could become. Although Peter made some mistakes, He did become what Jesus envisioned for him. He called James and John, sons of Zebedee, *"Sons of*

*Thunder*" (Mark 3:17), men of fiery disposition who wanted to call down fire from heaven on some who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54). However, they proved worthy of the trust of apostleship to which He appointed them.

One of the most interesting stories of the Scriptures is told in John 4. He opened a conversation with a Samaritan woman, who evidently was rather sinful, and revealed to her that He was *"the Christ"* (v. 26). Most "respectable" men would not even have spoken to the woman. But Jesus saw possibilities others could not, or would not. She went back and told the city, and all the people came out to see Jesus, and *"many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman"* (v. 39). They then said to the woman, *"Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world"* (v. 42).

Jesus also looked down on a sinful world and determined that man could be better, that we could leave sin and live for God. That is why He was willing to leave heaven and come to earth to die on that cruel cross. He saw the potential in us, when we could not even see it in ourselves. Take a fanatical enemy who *"laid waste the church"* (Acts 8:3), even helping to put Christians to death (Acts 26:10), and turn him into one who would say: *"For me to live is Christ... I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me... What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ"* (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:7). Because Jesus could see that kind of potential in you and me, He died for us, also!

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Again, John wrote, *"Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us"* (1 John 3:16). In talking with His disciples about His purpose in going to Jerusalem, where He had already revealed that He would be killed, He told them: *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Few passages describe better what He did for us, and why, as this one: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus was moved to action on our behalf. When we recognize the value of

souls, and see the potential in people who were created in God's image, we should be spurred to action as He was.

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## *Why Does God Allow Human Suffering?*

KEVIN L. MOORE

THERE ARE SOME THINGS God cannot do. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), He cannot be unjust (Deuteronomy 32:4), and He cannot do what is logically impossible. In order to bring about the greatest state of goodness in the world, God had to create some specific goods whose existence necessarily entails the possibility of certain evils. Human beings were designed with the ability to think and the freedom to choose. Although we often take these things for granted, anyone who has ever been a slave or a prisoner will tell you that freedom is one of the most precious commodities a person can have. Being a God of love (1 John 4:8), He does not force us to act against our wills, but grants us freedom. Freedom involves choice, and choice includes not only the possibility of making right decisions, but also wrong ones. It is **impossible** for God to have made man a free moral agent, and yet take away his capability of making wrong choices.

Now God has given us an instruction book to guide us in the right direction (2 Timothy 3:16,17), but when people disregard God's directives and make bad decisions, pain and suffering are often the result. It is man, not God, who has created slavery, whips, guns, bombs, death camps, liquor, pornography, and so on. The blessing of freedom, when it is misused, accounts for the majority of human misery.

Most people consider something to be good if it brings pleasure, and bad if it causes pain, but this is shallow and shortsighted. The imperfections of this world serve a purpose in allowing individuals to grow and develop into mature, responsible beings in a way that would otherwise not be possible. *"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Romans 5:3,4). God's desire for his creatures seems to be, not the suffering itself, but the positive and beneficial effects.

Pain, loss, and hardship also help to create an acknowledgement

of human weakness and a need for God in one's life. Pride and arrogance are self-destructive traits (Proverbs 16:18), but suffering has a way of helping us put things in perspective. It is said that when a man is flat on his back, the only direction he can look is up. *"My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"* (Psalm 73:26).

Life in this physical world is a brief, and necessary, preparation for eternity. The trials we face help us to avoid complacency and to look forward to that place where *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Revelation 21:4). More than a perfect world, God desires a loving relationship with His creation. Out of suffering, pain, hardship, and loss God can and will accomplish His good purpose (Romans 8:28-39).

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## Origins Of The Lord's Supper

NEIL W. ANDERSON

PASSOVER WAS THE OLDEST and most important of the Jewish feasts. This feast, observed on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage and identified the Israelites as God's people.

God chose Moses to deliver His people and sent plague after plague on Egypt in preparation of the Exodus. But still Pharaoh would not let God's people go. Before the 10th plague, Moses relayed God's instructions to the Israelites to sprinkle the blood of a lamb upon the doorposts and lintel of their houses. Their obedience identified their houses; thus, when the death angel went throughout Egypt to kill the firstborn, he passed over the homes of the Israelites (Exodus 12:21-28). The exodus followed.

After their deliverance, the Jews were required to keep Passover annually to remember this event. It was a weeklong celebration in which a family ate a special meal with bread baked without leaven. Unleavened bread reminded them about their ancestors leaving Egypt so quickly they had no time to bake their bread with leaven.

During the Passover celebration, the father presided over the family meal. Every year he retold the Exodus story to his family as a reminder of how God saved Israel from Egyptian slavery. The



celebration included the family singing Psalms 113-118 and generally closed with the singing of Psalm 136.

## **LAST SUPPER**

It was fitting that Jesus, who would deliver God's people from the bondage of sin, used the Passover meal to teach His disciples the significance of things to come. The Last Supper began on Thursday evening. After eating the Passover meal, Jesus introduced new meaning to the moment as He took unleavened bread and fruit of the vine to establish a memorial to His death, burial and resurrection.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' " (Matthew 26:26-29 NKJV).

After the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine, they ended the Passover meal as families had done for centuries, they sang a hymn.

The Lord's Supper reminds Christians of their deliverance from sin through Christ's sacrifice in much the same way that the Jewish Passover was a memorial to Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Through partaking of the Lord's Supper, Christians share in Christ's victory over death. His death brings together the memory of the cross and the hope of His coming.

Christianity arose out of Judaism. For centuries, Jewish worship was marked by symbols prophetically shadowing things to come. In Christ, those prophecies were fulfilled and the symbols took on new meaning.

Jesus took the unleavened bread and wine that were available from the Passover and turned them into a simple, universal memorial to His body that would be sacrificed for them. Four inspired passages describe this event: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-30. Matthew's is the only first-person account.

The disciples were familiar with the practice of taking the bread, offering thanks, tearing the bread into pieces and giving to those around the table. This is precisely what Jesus did as He instituted

the Supper. Then using a figure of speech, He said, "Take, eat; this is My body [which is given for you]."

Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and with another metaphor said, "This is my blood." Then He told His guests to drink. In this simple act, Jesus connected God and man in a new covenant. The Jews were familiar with the importance of blood covenants (Hebrews 6:16-22). The forgiveness of our sins came through the shedding of His blood, and the cup is a constant remembrance of His sacrifice.

## MEMORIAL

As often as we partake of the bread and fruit of the vine, we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Each Lord's Day, as we commune, we look backward to the crucifixion, inward with self-examination and forward as we await His second coming. Jesus explained to His disciples that He would not feast with them again until He does so in His Father's kingdom (Mark 14:25).

More than a century ago, John L. Brandt wrote about the significance of the Lord's Supper: "All other institutions which were in existence when Christ was on earth have perished, yet this simple ordinance is still celebrated; and the Scriptures state that it will be celebrated—proclaiming the Lord's suffering and death—until He comes again to drink it new with us in His Father's kingdom."

Christ is our Passover. His blood cancelled our sins. Each Lord's Day we renew our appreciation for the Savior as our focus is changed from the past to the future. Through the simple observance of the Lord's Supper we "proclaim the Lord's death" to all the world.

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# *A CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION*

RON OWENS

WE BOW OUR HEADS. She takes my hand. It is the thing we do with our children whenever we gather around the table at home. Join hands. Connect. But now, though it is my wife's hand I hold physically, this communion I am drawn into spiritually places my one hand in the hand of my God and the other hand in the hand of His family.

I go back almost 2,000 years and remember a moment. Yet, the moment is now. It is not ancient or stale or distant. It is vibrant and fresh and close. Someone makes comments, reads a scripture, leads a prayer. I am compelled to feel a cross and a crown which make communion possible. For the moment my cross has been laid down. My crown still awaits me. Now I am merged in communion, the place where sacrifice and service revel in salvation. The Lord has set the table and made a place there for me. He says, "I have eagerly desired to eat this with you." I say, "I have too, Lord. I have too."

Another at the table says, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." How right he is! This is the moment, the center of worship, the purpose of life, to be in communion with God. It is public yet intimate, congregational yet so very personal. Those who do not know Him see only a tiny piece of bread and a small cup of grape juice, hardly real sustenance. Those who do know Him see so much more. Through glasses of faith and a window of hope, love takes on shape and clarity in the body of a risen Lord and the blood of a dying Lamb. And He whispers.

"Take the bread, it is My body. Take the cup, it is My blood. They remind you of My presence and they fill you with My love. In the remembrance of this moment, in the bread and fruit of the vine, our hearts will come together. I am yours and you are Mine."

Communion. The table where all are made equal. The place where each has a place. Crosses must be carried. Crowns will be worn. But they are both about communion. Jesus went to the cross so that we could sit at the table. The crown is laid up for the time when we can share completely in His glory, His inheritance and His presence forever, where we can eternally participate in the feast.

Communion. Ultimate communion. For while I am focusing on my bond to the One, I recognize my connection to these ones. "Is not the cup of thanksgiving a participation in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

I am grateful for this cup of thanksgiving and bread of participation. And so I evaluate myself, my place in this "one bright chain of loving rite." I recognize the body of Christ. In spirit, I see

Him on Calvary, dying for my sins. "Jesus, keep me near the cross." Physically, I see Him sitting in the pews around me, in the faces of those with like precious faith. "Blest be the tie that binds." We are connected. I remember His prayer that night "... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us that the world may believe that you sent me." Connected by covenant.

It is the new covenant in His blood. "If you love me, you will obey what I command." It is the new commandment in His body. "Love each other as I have loved you." I connect with God, with my brothers and sisters, and with myself. This is who I was meant to be, a being connected to the will of God, dedicated to His glory, bonded to His family, reaching to the lost. For this precious moment I realize that to be me is not to be me. To be me is to be a vessel in which Christ can live. To be me is to do God's will, so that the commandment is done, the covenant is kept, the connection is fused, and the communion is complete. In this memorial feast, the sustenance is gained for dealing with another hour, another day, and another week as the body of Christ to the glory of God until He comes.

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## *The Controversial Christ*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY of the Lord caused a sword of separation within some families (Matt. 10:32). When Christ comes upon the stage of life, the human scene must give attention to His claims. One cannot remain neutral in regard to the Man of Nazareth. Jesus plainly reminds us of this in these forceful terms: "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth*" (Matt. 12:30).

Why was our blessed Redeemer such a controversial character? To be perfectly honest, Jesus Christ was "*a stone of stumbling*" and a "*rock of offense*" to many in the Roman Empire (Rom. 9:33). Why? It was prophesied of Him: "*He is despised and rejected of men*" (Isa. 53:3). He was despised by the Gadarenes because the people thought more of their swine than they did of their souls (Mark 5). The Master Teacher offended the Pharisees because of

His blunt rebuke of their traditions and customs (Matt. 15:7-12). There was even *"division among the people because of him"* (John 7:43).

### **His Perfection Made Others Uncomfortable**

To be in the presence of the Son of God made anyone else's fame pale into nothingness. His speech, action, attitude and endeavor formed a matchless framework of beauty. The scribes waned in power when Jesus unfolded the Scriptures. The righteous pretense of the Pharisees disintegrated in the marvelous purity of the Messiah. The arrogant claims of the Sadducees were easily put asunder by one clear word of logic by the Savior (Matt. 22:23-33). Since very few people enjoy being "upstaged," Jesus was hated. Even the Roman ruler, Pontius Pilate, realized that, *"for envy the chief priests had delivered him up"* (Mark 15:10).

### **His Salvation Was Spiritual, not Temporal**

*"Hosanna"* had become a popular cry of deliverance among the Jews by the time the Lord Jesus walked Palestinian soil. Since the days of the Maccabees, it was a term of release from bondage, physical bondage, and meant simply: *"Save us, we pray."* In the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mark 11), throngs lined the road and cried, *"Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* But, however brilliant the palm-strewn road may have seemed, our Redeemer was a bitter disappointment to them that day, because He came not to save Judaism from Rome, but to deliver sinners from Satan's way. His kingdom was *"not of this world"* (John 18:36), and those coming to Him for loaves and fishes went away distraught!

### **He Embarrassed the Socially Elite**

The Savior's propensity of eating with sinners caused a revolt in the upper echelons of society (Mark 2; Luke 19). Jesus had come *"to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10), but the doctors of the law were upset with the practical application of that mission. It also bothered them intensely when large crowds came to hear Jesus teach, because He had not gone to one of their schools (John 7). The piercing logic by which Christ nailed their hides to the wall was constantly embarrassing to them (Mark 12:24,34; John 8:39-40).

Jesus unveiled their evil hearts of selfishness in the person of *"the older brother"* who cared nothing for his brother (Luke 15) and their ritualistic piety in the story of the priest and the Levite who *"passed by on the other side"* (Luke 10). No wonder they were offended by Jesus and sought to kill Him! Of course, they could have repented, but that would have called for more humility than they could muster! Are there any sadder words in the Bible than John 1:11? *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."*

### **The Perfect Savior Had Many Enemies**

It is hardly conceivable that anyone who was as wonderful as Jesus Christ would have had as many enemies as He did. As our minds retrace the beautiful life He lived, the perfect pattern He set, we are amazed to recall the fact that many in His day coldly rejected Him. How could anyone spurn such unselfish love as His? Yet, it remains a sobering, heart-breaking fact that thousands of His day turned a deaf ear to Heaven's will, expressed so beautifully in Jesus, the Son of God.

During the time that Jesus walked this earth, the hatred and animosity of the Pharisees was expressed in various forms. And we are all familiar with the crowning achievement of their hatred-coupled with the sanction of the Roman rulers -yes, the cruel crucifixion of the Lord. Jesus was unwelcome at birth, opposed throughout life, and when He died, the highest ambition of many had been realized. Why did He offend? Why was He rejected? (Gal. 5:11; Rom. 9:33; John 1:11).

### **His Focus Was on Eternity, not this World**

I would like to suggest, first of all, that Jesus was rejected by many in His day because He emphasized the SPIRITUAL above the TEMPORAL. The Jews of that day looked for and expected an earthly kingdom. They had read the Old Testament prophecies of a coming King who would sit on David's throne. This Messiah was to be born *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (1 Tim. 6:15). But, due to their emphasis on material value's, they failed to realize that the kingdom of Christ would never be an earthly empire.

As we follow the life and teachings of Jesus, as revealed in the Scriptures, we can see plainly the misconceptions the religious leaders of that day had. On one occasion, Jesus had to hide Himself because the Jews were trying to make Him a king by force (John

6). Even the close disciples of Christ seem to have had a misconception of His Lordship. But Jesus made it plain that He was not a rival of Caesar for earthly power when He stated: "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36).

One of the saddest scenes in all of the Bible is that when Jesus tells His followers of His spiritual, rather than material, emphasis. The record states, "*Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?... Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with Him*" (John 6:60, 66). So great was this falling away by the masses that He asked the intimate few, the twelve apostles, "*Will ye also go away?*" (v. 67). What changed the attitude of the people? At one time they had praised the name of Jesus as the Christ. But now, in their apparent disappointment, they turn away and follow Jesus no more.

### **Jesus Exposed Error and Hypocrisy**

Jesus was rejected as the Christ because He would not be a temporal king. He exalted the spiritual above the material. In the confrontation with the devil, Jesus made clear His spiritual emphasis. Christ Jesus was rejected by many in His day because He condemned the religious customs and traditions of the prominent Jewish sects. He accused them of "lip worship" while their hearts were far from Him. He labeled their worship as vain because it was according to the doctrines and commandments of men (Mark 7:6-7; Matt. 15:8-9). He called the Pharisees "*hypocrites*" (Matt. 23). Christ was not offensive primarily because He preached positive truths—it was His exposure of error that caused men to reject Him.

One of the aims of Jesus, in His teaching which is found in the Scriptures, was to uproot human religions with their elaborate ritualism, pomp and pageantry. Because He condemned their religious practices, the Jews refused to accept Jesus. There are those today who are offended when error is condemned. They do not seem to think that a person can have "*the mind of Christ*" (Phil. 2:5) and still be critical of any modern religious doctrine or practice. But one must condemn error, wherever found, if he is to be Christ-like. Jesus was not a master compromiser. His aim and purpose was to uphold truth and overthrow error.

## Preaching Christ and His Word

Paul gladly preached "*Christ crucified*" in order that brethren would stand solidly in the power of God rather than in the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 2). No one has ever had the impact on the world that Jesus of Nazareth did. Soldiers sent to arrest Him returned empty-handed, saying, "*Never man so spake*" (John 7:46). No king, soldier, poet, musician, scholar or president can even be compared with the only perfect One who ever lived—our Friend and Redeemer, Jesus the Christ! Exalting the Savior and His word should be the magnificent obsession of every child of the heavenly Father!

The Scriptures offer confirmation of this commitment to the Master Teacher: "*The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and they are life. . . Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. . . The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John 6:63, 68; 12:48). Some liberal theologians, through the years, have tried to separate allegiance to Christ and loyalty to His word. But the Scriptures do not allow this arrangement. The MAN and the PLAN are forever bound together, because Jesus gave the plan in His word. "*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?... If ye love me, keep my commandments. ... You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you... Do whatever he commands you*" (Luke 6:46; John 14:15; 15:14; 2:5).

Just professing devotion to Jesus, while failing to do what He says, is the deepest hypocrisy. Folk who claim deep piety and rich spirituality while making light of Christ's authority are insincere to the core. Usually such people have a disdain for brethren who demand absolute allegiance to the Lord and His cause. We must have the happy combination of genuine loving obedience. The grace of God and the gospel of Christ go hand in hand. Paul constantly preached "*The gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24), and so should we. If we would honor Jesus as the Christ, we must honor the word which He gave us.

