

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 48

May 2017

No. 1

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*“They Have A Zeal For God,
But Not According To Knowledge”*

AFFIRMING HIS INTEREST AND CONCERN in his own Jewish people, the apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans that his heart's desire and his prayer to God was that they may be saved, but then he said, “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”

(Romans 10:2). They were not consciously rebellious to God; in fact, they manifested an apparent zeal for God in their pursuit of the righteousness which they believed would come to them by obeying the law of Moses. (Romans 9:31, 32). However, they were not enlightened concerning the righteousness which God grants to all who will accept it in faith, Romans 4:16, even the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. (Philippians 3:9, KJV). It was their ignorance of the righteousness that comes from God which prompted them to continue in their vain efforts to obtain their own righteousness through their own religious and good works. They were not deliberately resisting God's will; they just did not understand what His will truly was. While it was commendable though that they had a zeal for God, but zeal without knowledge could be dangerous. It's like someone wanting to fly an airplane, without any knowledge of flying airplane. That would destroy both the airplane and the flyer. There is such a thing as a blind and misguided zeal.



In the religious world today there is a great deal said about the Holy Spirit; especially about the feeling many have concerning a direct leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Many believe that the Holy Spirit is working today, as He did in the past when the Scriptures were being written, directly and miraculously. This concept which so many have today concerning the Holy Spirit causes them to have a tremendous enthusiasm and zeal. Certainly, this is a response based upon their emotions rather than the revelation, as this zeal is without the knowledge of the written revelation of the Holy Spirit, as is evident in their preaching of contradictory and conflicting doctrines, which has produced confusion and division amongst the followers of Christ. They all claim to be led by the Spirit of God, but believe and teach differently, and are not consistent or in harmony with what the Spirit actually teaches through the Scripture.

The point is the miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit are no longer available to man today. The Holy Spirit works today by and through the written revelation of God's word, the Bible, and not directly or independently of the written word. "All Scripture" says 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." There was a time in history when men did not have the Scriptures, God's instruction to man, in its written form as we have the Bible today through which God speaks to all men. The writer of the book of Hebrews 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). The Son, Christ, while He was on earth, had chosen twelve men to be His spokespersons. To whom He had promised that after He would go back to the Father, He would send upon them the Holy Spirit, who would guide them into all truth, and teach them all truth and would remind them everything He had taught them while He was with them on earth. (John 14:25-26; John 16:12-13). This promise of Christ was fulfilled on the Jewish day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Christ from the dead. (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit was given to the apostles to enable them to speak in languages they had never learned (Acts 2:6-11); to give them power to perform miracles (Acts 2:43); to confirm the word and to make believers (Mark 16:19-20). This was during the time before the New Testament had been given to the Church in its written form. Once it was completed, however, then there was no

longer any need for miraculous works and revelation. So they ceased. That was to happen according to 1 Corinthians 13: 8-10, when the perfect would have come, that is, the perfect will of God as we have it today in the New Testament of the Bible, and James 1:25 describes it as “the perfect law of liberty”. We are, therefore, living in an age when God speaks to us by His Son Jesus Christ, through His New Testament. (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1). According to Romans 10:17 “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Both the Old Testament and the New Testament contain the revealed will of God for mankind. The whole Bible was written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 2:21). God gave the Old Testament law through Moses to His chosen people Israel, who lived before Christ’s death on the cross. However, after His death and resurrection and ascension to heaven, the New Testament of the Bible was written, which is God’s law for us under which we live today.

Surely no one can deny the essentiality of zeal in the life of the child of God. It is this quality that should move us forward with great energy and eagerness to do the will of God. But it is not enough to realize that we should be zealous, something must produce that zeal and fuel the fires of fervency in our daily walk with God, and that is the knowledge of God’s word, not a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit leads God’s children today by the written word of God in the Bible, and not separately, or apart, independently of the written word.** Thus it is most important that people read and study their Bible, meditate and learn to gain knowledge of the word of God, His will, and live by it. There are many who are zealously preaching Christ today and some are claiming that the Lord is performing many miracles through them. They are on Television, on radio, in large assemblies of people everywhere. They are no less zealous and sincere in their claims as those whom Christ described in the passage of Matthew 7:22-23 by saying, “Many will say to Me in the last day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” What was the problem? They did everything in their zeal, without realizing what the will of the Lord is. Many will diligently, selflessly and zealously serve the Lord, only to hear the Lord say, on the day judgment, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who

practice lawlessness.” What is lawlessness? That which is not done in accordance with the law, in this case the law of Christ, the New Testament. This warning of Christ should stop every person short and suddenly till he is sure beyond all possibility of deception that he truly is doing God’s will; and to do God’s will one must first learn His will from the book of His written revelation, The Bible.



THE LAST DAYS

J.C. CHOATE

THE PROPHETS OF GOD SPOKE of the last days. Isaiah said, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2,3). Micah makes a similar statement in Micah 4:1,2.

Coming over to the New Testament, as recorded in Acts 2, we have the apostles gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had instructed (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). Then the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as promised in John 14:26. As a result they began to speak in the languages of those present from nations throughout the world. The people are amazed and think perhaps they are drunk, “But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh ...” (Acts 2:14-17).

The Hebrew writer declared, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1, 2). Also, Paul wrote Timothy, “This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their

own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affections, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Now as we can see from the several verses quoted, the various writers speak of the last days and of the different things that would take place during these days. First, we might ask what days are under consideration, when they were to begin, if we are living in those days now, what would take place during those days, and how long they would last.

Please note that the Old Testament writers spoke of the last days as being in the future. Then after the death of Christ, the writers of the New Testament speak of these days as being in existence. You will note that we quoted from Peter on the day of Pentecost, and he quoted from Joel, saying that that which was taking place at that time was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and he said that the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all flesh in the last days. Evidently the last days began with the death of Christ. In other words, there had been other great periods of time, such as the patriarchal age and the Mosaical or Jewish age, and with the death of Christ, a new age would begin, and that would be the Christian age. This would be the last great age before the return of Christ, and therefore that means that the last days refer to that period of time from the death of Christ until the Lord's return, which will bring to the end the Christian age and all things as we know them. That also means that we are living even now in the last days.

Other things would take place during these last days. It would be during this time that the apostles would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that the gospel would be preached for the first time in fact, that the church would be established, that the Christian age would flourish, that God would speak through his Son, Jesus Christ, that the New Testament would be given to man in written form, that Christ would come again, as well as many other great events.

Paul also warned that in these last days perilous times would come. It would appear from the things listed that would characterize this period of time that man has always had to content with these sins, but perhaps he had in mind that things would deteriorate to the point where these acts would be much worse than before. But whatever the state of man during this time, it should be remembered

that man is in sin, is lost, and is in need of salvation, and Christ is the one and only Savior. Let us therefore respond to him by faith and obedience so we can be saved and be a part of His family. In this way we can be saved and have the hope of eternal life and spend our life in an effort to take the gospel to the rest of the world.

Some take the last days to mean only “a few days” literally left before the Lord’s return, but actually the last days have been going on for almost two thousand years and how many more days it will include we have no way of knowing. The Lord could come today or it could be a hundred years from now, or a thousand years, but who knows? Only God knows (Matt. 24:36), but the point is, all of these days left before the Lord’s return, whatever their number, are said to be the last days. Again, regardless of the number of days we have left before the Lord’s return, they will be few in comparison to eternity. We need, therefore, to prepare for the Lord’s return, and with his coming the bringing to an end of these last days. At this point all will be resurrected, the heavens and earth as we know them will be burned up, the judgment will take place, the wicked will be cast into eternal torment, and the righteous will be taken to heaven to live with the Lord forevermore. All we have then are these last days to prepare for eternity. Let us use these days wisely. There will be no second chance.

IT MATTERS

T. PIERCE BROWN

HOW WE SAY A thing may matter almost as much as what we say. Jesus said in Mark 4:24, “Take heed what ye hear.” He said in Luke 8:18, “Take heed therefore how ye hear.” If the “what” and “how” are important with respect to the things we hear, they are equally important with respect to what we say.

We are sad when we note a relatively large number of preachers who are no longer speaking the Gospel truths as they once did. If it were merely a matter of saying the same truths in a better way, we could well applaud that. I confess that whereas my preaching has often sounded like, “You need to learn how to quit being so ugly,” it now is a little more like, “We all need to learn how to be more beautiful.” I heard of a young man who was trying to learn from a more experienced man how to be more romantic. He was told, “I say something like, ‘When I look into your eyes, time stands

still'." The young man said, "I think I got it." So, when he spoke to his girl friend, he said, "Your face would stop a clock." He may have had the general idea of the meaning of the phrase, but he had a lot to learn about how to say it. Paul expressed it in Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." We must never depart from speaking the truth, but it would be of value to many of us to learn to speak it in such a way that those who heard would feel that we really cared. The old expression may be trite, but true, "People will not care how much you know until they know how much you care."

FUTURE ASSIGNMENT

CHARLES E. COBB

"TOMORROW MAY NEVER COME." But, there will be *a future*. Our tomorrow on earth may never come to pass because we may die. Eternity, however, is in the future and this future is going to be witnessed by us all. An assignment *will* be made.

Jesus has called upon His followers to look to the future and not be unduly bound to the present. "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (Matthew 6:20).

A glorious future of joy beyond compare, of rest beyond description, of life that never ends is promised for the faithful Christian, the servant of God, who lives today.

When sorrows come, sickness intrudes into our lives, disappointments seem to multiply, and darkness appears to ever prevail, the faithful Christian can look beyond these hurts to the future that Jesus has promised.

There is, however, another future that will be in store for a growing multitude of people. "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment*" (Matthew 25:46). Sent away to punishment in infamy and shame, away from all that is holy, all that is good, all that is joyful and pleasant will be the future that awaits all who "*obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Men look to the future for different reasons. There *is* a future awaiting all of us, without exception. What will be your future? What will be your assignment?

What Is The Significance Of “Jehovah” As God’s Name?

BOB PRICHARD

NAMES ARE IMPORTANT. It is difficult for us to conceive of things apart from their names. The many different names for God in the Bible describe and demonstrate His character. “Jehovah” (usually rendered “LORD” in the King James Version) appears often in the Scriptures. *Jehovah* means “the Eternal One, the Unchangeable One, the One Who was, and is, and is to come.” When Moses met God in the burning bush, he asked His name. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). God spoke as Jehovah, the self-existent God.

The Hebrew people came to consider one particular name of God His personal name. Scholars call this name, derived from four Hebrew letters, the “tetragrammaton” (from “tetra,” four, and “gram,” letter). The Jews were so concerned about using this name in vain that they would not even pronounce it when reading the Bible aloud. (They substituted “Adonai,” meaning Lord.) As a result, the proper pronunciation of the original Hebrew is unknown. Most scholars say “Yahweh” or “Yahveh” is likely the proper pronunciation, although Jehovah has been used since the sixteenth century.

The Bible stresses the importance of respect for God by emphasizing the importance of the name of God. Solomon said, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10). The psalmist said, “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name” (Psalm 111:9). (By the way, “reverend” refers only to God in the Bible, and never to man.) Isaiah spoke of “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15). Jesus told His disciples, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9).

The third commandment warns, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Although this

commandment is part of the old covenant, the need for respect for the Lord's names continues. Paul wrote, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (1 Timothy 6:1).

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

JERRY BATES

MANY CHRISTIANS THINK WE NO longer have a temple, which is true as far as a physical building is concerned. However, we do have a temple, albeit a spiritual temple. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul wrote, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you."* Notice Paul said we as Christians compose the temple of God. Spiritually, God dwells in us individually and corporately in the church. This means that no physical building makes up the temple; thus, we must not somehow think of the church building as a holy place. The people of the ancient world were very familiar with temples. Jerusalem had the Jewish temple, and every pagan city had many temples, especially Corinth. What are some lessons we can draw from the fact that the church is the temple of God? The church is the meeting place of God and man. In Exodus 29:42, 43 Moses wrote that God would meet man in the tabernacle. When the temple replaced the tabernacle, the temple became the meeting place. Since the church is the new temple, the church is now the meeting place of God. Thus, we must be in the church, not a physical building, but the spiritual church, in order to meet with God. If we want to meet God, then we must be in the church.

The church is also the dwelling place of God. We have already noticed that the Spirit of God dwells in us. A similar statement is made in Ephesians 2:22, *"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* *"...For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people"* (2 Corinthians 6:16). God wants to have fellowship with man, and we should want to have fellowship with God. However, if we are going to have fellowship with God, then again, we must be in the church.

The church is also a place of worship. In 1 Peter 2:5 Peter wrote, *"You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a*

holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." It was in the temple that the Jews went to worship God and to offer their sacrifices. Likewise, we worship God and offer spiritual sacrifices in the church. *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him"* (John 4:23). God wants His servants to worship Him, yet in order to worship Him we must be in the church. Notice the importance of the church. If we are going to meet God, have fellowship with God, or truly worship God, then we must be in the church. This makes the church extremely important, does it not?

How do we enter the church? *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The body is the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23); thus, we are baptized into the church, the place where we meet God.

We also must realize that *"If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, whose temple you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:17). This is a most solemn warning. This becomes plain when we consider how serious God was about keeping the Old Testament temple pure. God gave very specific instructions regarding how to build the temple and who could enter the temple. All the vessels of the temple had to be sanctified with blood, and the priests had to be cleansed. God commanded that all should *"reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord"* (Leviticus 10:30). *"But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord"* (Numbers 19:20). If God was this concerned about keeping the physical sanctuary holy, how much more concerned is He regarding the holiness of His spiritual sanctuary.

We must be careful to keep God's temple or sanctuary holy. We do not defile it by physical impurity as in the old temple, but we can defile it by spiritual impurity. Such would include continually practicing any sin, especially sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:19,20) or bringing any unauthorized practice or service into God's sanctuary.

Another sin which defiles God's temple is division. This might be surprising to many, but Paul wrote, *"But you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"* (1 Corinthians 3:3) Certainly,

nothing carnal or worldly should enter the sanctuary. Yet, it is not at all uncommon to hear of divisions in the church, strife, envy, or jealousy among brethren. When we allow divisions and strife to enter the church, we are defiling God's temple, and God will destroy us (1 Corinthians 3:17).

When we defile the temple, God will no longer dwell in it, and we are left alone with no place to meet God. Surely, we do not want that to happen; therefore, we must be certain that nothing unholy enters the church. *"Because it is written, Be holy for I am holy."* (1 Peter 1:16).

The Nuts and Bolts of Pornography

LOUIS RUSHMORE

THE WORD "PORNOGRAPHY" MEANS, "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). It comes from the compound Greek word, "pornographos," "porne" meaning "prostitute," "whore" or "harlot" and "grapho" meaning "to write". The word "pornography" entered the English language in about 1864. It is no wonder, then, that the word did not appear in the earliest English translations of the Bible, which predate 1864. Although subsequent translations of the Bible do not include the word "pornography" either, biblical instruction definitely warns against it.

First though, let's attempt to quantify "pornography" so that we can see more clearly the scope of its reach and affect. Generally, pornography is typically categorized as "soft porn" and "hardcore porn". Hardcore pornography is a worldwide exploding epidemic, but so-called soft pornography has already completely saturated especially western culture to the point that nearly everything advertised is marketed with some degree of sex appeal (e.g., hamburgers, jewelry, clothes, cars). Movies, music videos, video games, magazines, books, and the Internet are awash with soft and hardcore pornography. Pornography of some degree is so plentiful that it is not uncommon for children or adults to come in contact with it even involuntarily. As long as pornography continues to be big business (billions of dollars annually) and to appeal to the baser side of humanity (mostly to men but to many women, too), it will continue to reshape both individuals and society in the mold

of wickedness away from the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2 NKJV).

In addition, pornography desensitizes men and women about the interpersonal, reciprocal sexual relationship that God designed for one man and one woman alone within the bounds of God-approved, lifelong marriage (Genesis 2:24, 25; Matthew 19:4-6, 9). Pornography hijacks the true beauty of physical intimacy between a husband and a wife (Song of Solomon 4:5; Proverbs 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5), relegating it merely to compassionless physical activity with no moral significance, which furthermore, has as its only object carnal pleasure. Through pornography, men and women and children are degraded to the status of tools as though they were mere inanimate objects with no greater value. Pornography changes individuals adversely and has scandalously altered western culture, too.

Some estimates state that up to 10% of the Internet is comprised of pornography, and that 25% of web searches daily are for pornography. High percentages of men and women to a lesser degree engage in pornography regularly through various media and find nothing wrong with consuming it and being consumed by it. The plague of pornography cuts across all demographics (e.g., race, politics, religions, education levels, economic brackets, etc.); no one is immune from its allurements or from its pervasiveness. Frequently prepubescent children encounter some form of pornography innocently, which happenstances can never be entirely undone.

Pornography is an ancient vice with pictures, statues, huge rock carvings, and writing depicting nudity, intercourse, and sexual perversions. Only contemporary technology and media have modernized the venues and the ease with which pornography is viewed. The devices have changed, but mankind is the same—corrupted through the same three avenues of sin by which men have always been allured (1 John 2:16). Pornography is infectious and resistant to expulsion; it dulls the perception of reality and has altered the conscience of the world.

Biblical principles would have us expunge from our lives pornography and be on guard against its appeal. For instance, Jesus said, *“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your*

whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:28,29). Our Lord's words strike at the heart of pornography—"lust" He also indicated the nature of viewing women in such a way; it is a precursor to the physical sin of adultery. Then, Jesus underscored the seriousness of lust with the hyperbole (exaggeration) in such instances of gouging out one's own eye if that's what it takes to avoid that sin. Visual sexual excitement outside of marriage is forbidden!

From the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:28,29 above as well as from Mark 7:21-23, it becomes clear that one does not have to perform explicit, physical acts to commit sin, but one can commit sin internally—within his or her own mind. *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."* However, we also commit sin when we approve the sinful activities of others (Romans 1:32), and no truly pious person would dismiss as spiritually inconsequential various gradations of public undress to fornication, adultery and every conceivable manifestation of carnal debauchery. **We cannot approve of sin and remain innocent ourselves!**

We must *"flee sexual immorality"* (1 Corinthians 6:18), which implicitly would preclude our appreciation of it acted out by others. We must bring *"every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5), and we must choose to *"meditate" on "anything praiseworthy"*. *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things"* (Philippians 4:8).

We need to police ourselves to view the world and its enticements, not through the corrupted lenses of ungodliness, but instead as Almighty God views them. **We need to screen the television shows that we watch, the movies to which we go or view, our use of the Internet, the places to which we go, our music (lyrics and videos), and the companions with whom we spend time.** It may be necessary for us to reevaluate what we perceive as beautiful to coincide with what God deems as lovely and honorable.

SELF-CONTROL

BILL NICKS

“AND EVERY MAN THAT STRIVETH in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 9:25). This passage is an allusion to the Olympic games, familiar to all athletes. The principle of self-control is still a major factor in athletic contests today.

At the 1992 Wimbledon tennis finals, Andre Agassi became the champion for the first time in his career at the age of 22. Over and over again, amidst the grueling and demanding physical and mental stress of meeting world class players, he showed marvelous self-control, both mentally and physically. In spite of 37 aces from his towering opponent, he continued in the finals to struggle, finally winning the championship cup in five sets. Overwhelmed with emotions that had been under control during this draining match, he collapsed on the ground and wept when the last point had been won.

If athletes can succeed by exercising self-control, we as Christians can take a lesson from their lives. This is what Paul is telling us in 1 Corinthians 9:25. If they can do it to win a corruptible championship cup, we can also exercise self-control for the everlasting crown of life.

We are *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* with inborn desires and propensities. A successful Christian life cannot be gained by ignoring the need to restrain our capacities. We have the capacity to control our tongues, or “speak roughly,” as did Rehoboam, son of Solomon. By taking the wrong advice from younger men, he plunged Israel into a division which meant 10 of their 12 tribes would rebel under Jeroboam, never more to be a part of Israel, but to be swallowed up in Assyrian captivity. The Christian is told, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one”* (Colossians 4:6). Every Christian should regularly read James 3—extremely valuable information on how to control that little member which *“boasteth great things.”* *“Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell”* (James 3:5ff). Many homes have been broken,

and churches divided, because members could not control the tongue. Self-control is the factor which makes the great difference. Divorced couples often admit, too late, that “we could have worked it out if we had tried harder to communicate.” *“A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous (harsh) words stir up anger”* (Proverbs 15:1).

Controlling the temper is closely allied to controlling the tongue. *“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city”* (Proverbs 16:32). *“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few”* (Ecclesiastes 5:2). *“He that is soon angry (quick-tempered) dealeth foolishly”* (Proverbs 14:17). *“He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly”* (Proverbs 14:29).

THE STONES CRY OUT

WAYNE JACKSON

DURING THE PAST SEVERAL years, a number of very significant archaeological discoveries have been made in Palestine which provide further confirmation for the historical accuracy of the Bible.

- **Excavations at Shechem, where the book of Genesis says that** Abraham built an altar to God (12:6,7), reveal that an organized community existed there nearly 4,000 years ago—at the time of the patriarchs.
- A dig in the central region of Palestine produced a stone tablet with a Phoenician inscription bearing the name of Ekron, the city where the Ark of the Covenant was taken after being captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:1-10).
- Archaeologists were sifting through a 2,000-year-old garbage dump at Masada in southern Israel. They unearthed a wine jug inscribed with the name of King Herod. It was the first object ever found bearing the name of this famous king (Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptizer).
- Israeli archaeologists digging in Tel Dan in the Golan Heights unearthed a piece of a stone from an ancient monument

(called a stele). It contained an inscription, in Aramaic, containing the words “King of Israel” and “House of David.” Many liberal critics had doubted that David ever lived—he was reputed to be merely a “myth” from Israel’s ancient past. Liberals have been forced to acknowledge that the Bible was right regarding the historicity of the great singer of Israel.

- An ivory pomegranate came to light which was purchased by Israeli authorities for \$550,000. This artifact is now believed to be the first relic ever found from Solomon’s temple (likely one of the decorations, see 1 Kings 6). It bore the inscription: “Holy to the priests, belonging to the temple of Jehovah.”
- The book of Joshua represents the city of Hazor as being destroyed by the Hebrew invasion of Canaan. The city was burned by the Israelites (Joshua 11:10,11). Excavations have demonstrated that the city was indeed destroyed by fire at the time of Joshua.

In a time when more and more critics are attacking the Bible as an authentic work, it is refreshing to note that the spade of the archaeologist is increasingly testifying to the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. One is reminded of Jesus’ statement (in another context) that *“the stones cry out.”*

Did The Universe Just Happen?

BERT THOMPSON

IMAGINE THIS SCENE. You have just purchased a new Cadillac limousine, and you are showing it to a group of your friends. You explain to them how the metal was molded into fenders, bumpers, tailpipes, etc. You point out the slick chrome trim, along with the tires made of a combination of rubber and steel belts. You open the door and show your friends the beautiful sculptured interior of carpet, and teak-paneled doors. There is a digital clock, windows that go up and down at the touch of a button, emergency blinkers, rear-window defroster, and a host of other conveniences. One of your friends remarks to you what a beautiful car you have. You reply that you are indeed proud of your new car, since it cost you approximately \$85,000!

Then, one of your friends turns to you and asks, “Who made

this car?" Without so much as a moment's hesitation, you reply, "No one made the car; it just happened." Can you imagine such a thing? Your friends would have you committed for a mental disorder were you to suggest such a scenario. And rightly so. It is obvious to all sane people that the beautiful piece of engineering we call the Cadillac did not "just happen."

Yet this universe you live in is infinitely more complex than a Cadillac limousine, but you are being asked every day to believe that it "just happened" by accident. The universe is composed of over 2,500,000 galaxies. There are over 25 sextillion stars known to exist (and that's as far as our most powerful telescopes can see at the present time). Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, is over 100,000 light years in diameter. Light travels 5.87×10^{12} miles in one year. In 100,000 years it would travel 5.86×10^{17} miles. Our nearest neighbor, the Andromeda Galaxy, is over 750,000 light years away. That's 4.4×10^{18} miles!

The sun which heats our galaxy is poised in space at 93,000,000 miles from the earth. If it were just 10% closer, it would literally burn everything to a crisp. If it were just 10% farther, eventually temperatures would drop so drastically that life as we know it would perish. The moon, which is precision-placed at 240,000 miles from the earth, would cause 35-50 foot tides over the earth twice a day if it were moved just one-fifth closer.

The earth is traveling around the sun at a speed of 70,000 miles an hour, or 19 miles per second. The solar system itself is traveling through space at a speed of over 600,000 miles per hour, in a path so large it takes an estimated 220 million years just to complete one orbit. If the earth traveled at only 35,000 miles per hour, our seasons would be doubled, and the intense summer heat would bake the earth, while the intense winter cold would freeze it. The earth's troposphere contains exactly 21% oxygen. If it were just a little smaller, say 10-15%, man and beast would die due to lack of breathable air.

All of these things are infinitely more complex than a Cadillac limousine, yet we are asked daily to believe that organic evolution is true, and these things just happened by chance. If we cannot believe that the limousine "just happened" by accident, by what kind of logic do we then say that our great universe "just happened?"

The Bones Of Caiaphas

HERSHEL DYER

CHARLES H. ROBERSON, professor of Biblical Archaeology, used to say to those of us in his classes, "Where archaeology touches the Bible, it has always confirmed it."

The recent finding of bones in a box at Jerusalem, labeled "Joseph, son Caiaphas," has stirred the Biblical world. Have the archaeologists, in this ornate ossuary discovered a little over a mile south of the temple area, come upon the remains of Caiaphas, who condemned Jesus to death? (See Matthew 26:57-66.)

That Joseph was the name of the High Priest at Jesus' trial and that the family name was Caiaphas tends to be confirmed by the Jewish historian Josephus. He speaks of "Joseph, who was called Caiaphas, of the high priesthood" being replaced by Jonathan, a brother-in-law of Caiaphas (Antiquities of the Jews, book 18, chapter IV, paragraph 3).

The bones are those of a man about sixty years of age. A coin found in a neighboring ossuary was minted in 42 or 43 A.D., during the reign of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1). That the bones in these casket-boxes were interred in the first century seems certain. Little reason remains, therefore, to doubt that the ossuary inscribed, "Joseph, son of Caiaphas," could be and probably is what remains of the High Priest who was determined to put Jesus to death.

With this done, the historicity of this character associated with the life and death of Jesus will be all the more settled. Archaeology will once again have touched the Bible and confirmed it.

Bible believers are always thrilled at the finding of tangible bits of evidence that supports their faith. The accuracy of the Scriptures as to historical names, peoples, cities, etc. has many times over been enhanced by archaeology—the science of the pick and spade. While most of us have obtained a trust in Scripture that does not depend upon these discoveries, we are, nevertheless, grateful for them. This is especially so when these cause rational persons to view sacred Scripture in a more credible light.

How Is A Christian Different From The Non-Christian?

JOHN THIESEN

AFTER HEARING FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, king Agrippa responded: “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*” (Acts 26:28). We do not have a record of Agrippa ever becoming a Christian, but his statement brings up an important question: “**What does it mean to be a Christian?**”

Let’s suppose that Agrippa had become a Christian. What changes would have taken place in his life? Furthermore, what changes are required today in order for a person to be a Christian?

In some ways, Christians are like most ‘typical’ or average people, so that they do not have to change *every* activity after their conversion. Many continue working on the same jobs, side by side with non-Christians. They operate the same kinds of businesses, have some of the same hobbies, go fishing, ski, camp out, quilt, sew, collect stamps and do woodworking, the same as many other people. They mow their lawns, plant flowers and vegetables, paint and listen to music, etc.

WAYS IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE DIFFERENT

However, Christians are different in one important respect: all that they do is done with an eye toward pleasing God. They do not divorce their faith in Christ from their daily activities. To them, being a Christian is a full-time way of life. **Christ is their life.** Along with Paul, they say: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20). In every area of life, they include Christ. For example:

- **Being a Christian involves doing good to all men, both to fellow-Christians and to others.** “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10). Christians are in the forefront in good works, giving to the needy, orphans, and widows. When their neighbors are in difficulty, they rush to assist them. This they do in the name of Christ, giving

thanks to God through Him (Colossians 3:17).

- **Being a Christian is a way of working and being an employer.** He strives to “*provide things honest in the sight of all men*” (Romans 12:17). Christians make good employees because they always are looking out for the best interests of their employer, doing service to him as if doing it to Christ, being aware that their Lord is looking and that they must on the last day give an account to Him (Ephesians 6:5-8). If, on the other hand, a Christian is an employer, he deals with his employees with fairness and compassion, knowing that he has a Heavenly Master to whom he must also give an account one day (vs. 9).
- **Being a Christian is a way of a new life style.** From the time that he entered Christ, a Christian no longer involves himself in the riotous, ungodly lifestyle so common in the world around him. He does not participate in alcoholic drinking, drugs, riotous parties, and immoral behavior, nor does he entertain himself with unclean movies, videos, or pornographic web sites, even though his former companions in these activities disapprove of the changes in his life (1 Peter 4:1-5). This is because he knows that “*because of these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6).
- **Being a Christian is a way of worshipping God.** The Christian looks upon his body as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 12:1). Therefore, he is in constant, daily contact with God in prayer and praise (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18; 1 Peter 2:9). A Christian does not have to be begged, cajoled, or shamed into attending the worship assemblies of the church. Quite the contrary, because his very purpose in life is to give glory to God and to serve His Son Jesus Christ, he welcomes every opportunity to assemble with fellow Christians to worship. He is a worshipper of God “*in spirit and in truth*” as are **all** true worshippers (John 4:24), obeying from his heart that form of worship commanded by God.

Truly, being a Christian is a way of life, touching every aspect of daily behavior and manifested in the way he treats others, works, does business, plays, and worships God through His Son Jesus Christ.

IS A WOMAN INFERIOR TO A MAN?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT A WOMAN is nothing more than a servant to a man, even though he is her husband. She is good only to bear children, to keep the house, and to prepare the food. Some religions teach that a woman cannot be saved in the body of a woman. She must first be reborn as a man.

In rejection of this thinking, the “Women’s Liberation Movement” which has swept through the developed nations of the world declares that woman is in every way the equal of man. Not only does this movement seek to establish equality, but its ultimate goal is to gain power for the women of the world to upset the established authority of men. This attitude has created a sense of competition between women and men which results in enmity and bitterness.

Our concern is to learn what God has to say about the role of woman and her relationship to man. Neither the pagan view nor the Liberation Movement is directed by God. But in the Bible we can clearly see the work, the role, and the position of woman, as God intended it to be.

Is woman inferior to man? In the first book of the Bible—Genesis—we see the answer to this question: God had created the universe and living things. Last of all, He made man. Then He *“brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him”* (Genesis 2:19,20).

The words, *“a helper comparable to him”* tell us what God intended woman to be: **a companion, a helper capable of matching man.**

In order to bring woman into existence, *“...the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made (the original language literally says, ‘He built’) into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”* (Genesis 2:21,22).

When Adam saw the woman God had made he said, *“This is*

now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23).

The concluding comment in the Genesis text is, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (V. 24).

From the facts of this creation scene, we can learn several things:

- Adam was created *first*; therefore he was first, before the woman.
- Whereas Adam was made from the *dust of the earth*, woman was formed, or built, from *a bone taken from the side of Adam*. She was, therefore, literally, a part of man.
- The bone was not taken from his head, that she should rule over him, nor was it taken from his foot, that the man should trample the woman; rather, it was taken from his side, that she should be *a partner with him*.
- God made man and woman literally as two halves of a whole. Without both halves, there can be no reproduction of humanity. Therefore, *both halves are of equal importance* and necessity in their contribution to the continuation of the race.
- God intended that the two individuals—the man and the woman—*leave other family members* in order to form a new family unit.
- The man and the woman were to be joined together so that they became "one flesh"—*two halves of one whole*.

So, from the beginning God formed woman to complete man, to be a helper together with him. In the development of their lives, their family, their work, and their relationships with God and with other humans, the woman was designed to fit together with the man, so that their lives would be complete. In truth, she was literally of the very essence of man, in no way inferior, or of lesser quality or value.

CHRISTIANITY

The Gospel for All Cultures

ROGER E. DICKSON

IN THE DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANITY that Luke makes in the book of Acts, he informs us that the early disciples went first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. After the initial establishment of the church,

the disciples preached to the Jews only (Acts 11:19). However, Jesus stated that the Gospel would be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47). In Luke's defense, he proves that this was carried out in the lives of the disciples. He presents cases of how this mission was accomplished. He records evidence of how God miraculously communicated to the disciples that the Gentiles should receive the message of the Gospel.

A God that would be the one true God of all humanity would reveal Himself so as to establish a religion that was applicable to all men for all time. True Christianity is this type of religion. Because it is applicable to all men is proof that it has been truly revealed from the one true God.

Luke's central argument is to uphold Jesus and the church as the means by which the brotherhood of humanity can be accomplished. The fact that there is one God and one Lord Jesus Christ establishes a foundation upon which all men can be religiously one. The church, therefore, is a brotherhood into which all cultures of the world can come and serve the one true God. It is a brotherhood that will establish peace between men of all cultures of the world. Only the God of heaven could have established such a community. This is Luke's argument.

A. The Gospel Went To The Samaritans. Luke first records how the Gospel went to the Samaritans, whom the Jews socially rejected. *"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them"* (Acts 8:5). As a result, *"... multitudes with one accord heeded those things which Philip spoke. ..."* (Acts 8:6). *"When they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized"* (Acts 8:12).

B. The Gospel Went To The Gentiles. In Acts 10 and 11 Peter and six Jews went to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius. While they were in the house of Cornelius, God poured out on this Gentile household the gift of the Spirit (11:15-17). When Peter and his witnesses returned to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem first contended with Peter about his going into the house of a Gentile. They protested, *"You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"* (11:3). However, Peter explained to them the vision which he had where God told him that He had made all things clean (10:9-16). The voice of the vision stated, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common"* (10:15). Peter followed the instructions of the vision. He went to the house of a Gentile and preached the Gospel. When the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem heard Peter's

defense, they said, *“Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (11:18).*

C. The Gospel Went To The Gentile World Through Paul. Paul was personally called by Jesus on the Damascus road. The purpose of the calling was to send Paul to the Gentiles with the message of the Gospel (Acts 9:15). Throughout his ministry, therefore, Luke records incidents where he fulfilled this special ministry.

When the unbelieving Jews rejected the Gospel in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas told them that they were turning to the Gentiles. He said to the Jews, *“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, **behold, we turn to the Gentiles**”* (Acts 13:46). Luke also records, *“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.”* (13:48).

The same thing as the above happened in Corinth. When the unbelieving Jews opposed Paul and blasphemed, *“... he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. **From now on I will go to the Gentiles.**’* (Acts 18:6). As a result, many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized (18:8).

When the Jews in Rome rejected the Gospel, Paul said to them, *“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”* (Acts 28:28).

Luke’s argument on behalf of Paul and Christianity was that the Gospel was for all the world. It was not for the Jews only. In fact, the Old Testament prophets had prophesied that the Jews would harden their hearts against the Gospel (Acts 13:47; 28:26,27; see also Isaiah 6:9,10; 42:1,6; 49:6; Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2). This hardening of hearts would spur the Gospel on to the Gentiles throughout the world.

The fundamental truths upon which Christianity is based are necessary for salvation. Such truths are applicable to all cultures of the world. They are truths which are not culturally linked; that is, **they are not truths which are identified by or characteristic with any one culture of the world.** Because the fundamental beliefs of Christianity are such is evidence that Christianity was revealed by the one true God. The fundamental beliefs of Christianity which are revealed in the books of Luke and Acts are those truths that are necessary for salvation. They compose the simplicity of the Christian faith. They are God’s directions for godly living and holiness which are applicable to all cultures of the world for all history.