

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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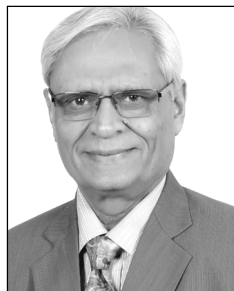
No. 11

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*One Is Saved When One Obeys
Christ's Command To Be Saved*

RECENTLY IN A BIBLE CLASS SOMEONE put this question: "How do I know I am saved from my sins?" I believe, this is a very important question for every one of us. Because if we are not saved on earth we will not be saved in heaven, since heaven is a place where only the saved ones will enter. So how does one surely know he is saved?



There are plenty of people who would explain this by saying that one's feeling is the evidence or the proof of one's salvation. In other words, they believe, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior then this brings good feeling into one's heart, because he feels that he had been forgiven. But the question is, how can one know if his feelings are right or wrong? One's feelings are the result of one's education or knowledge. Someone may feel happy upon learning certain news, but if he did not learn the truth or was misinformed, then his feelings would be wrong, and his happy feelings would not change the truth, like in the case of the rich fool about whom we read in Luke 12: 15-21. There is no place in the Bible where we are taught by a command or an example that one is saved by his feelings. In fact, the Bible teaches very opposite to this view. (Matthew 7:21-27). The emphasis of the Scripture is not on feelings but rather on doing what the Lord has said one must do to be saved. (Mark 16:16).

Then there are those who emphasize upon having an “experience” of a new birth. They believe, a person who have had some kind of a “supernatural” or a “miraculous” experience of a new birth is saved. This “experience of new birth” also include in it a mental acceptance of Christ as one’s personal Savior, which results in good feeling, but the real experience is brought about by an extraordinary sudden event, “better felt than told,” as they say, such as a dream or a vision, which later becomes a testimony of this so called “born again” individual. For instance, some time back, a young man, who claimed to be a preacher, while visiting with me, told me how he was saved. He said, “years ago I went to attend a meeting where the preacher was telling how Jesus died for our sins...he exhorted people to accept Jesus as their personal savior, and said that those who would want to be saved should raise their hands so that he would pray for them to be saved.... I accepted Christ and raised my hand, and after the prayer I felt I was saved...that night I could not sleep . As I laid in the bed my sins began to come before me one by one, as though I was seeing a movie...and then I saw Christ on the cross...and I began to cry...the following morning I felt so good and happy...” Many other such examples can also be cited. But all such “experiences” are based on one’s own thinking and imaginations. Stories like these may sound good, and men may want to hear them, but such have nothing to do with one’s salvation from sin and the real new birth as Christ taught in John 3:3,5. Christ there said, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” He didn’t teach one must have an experience of new birth, such as coming through a dream or a vision, etc., but rather He taught one must be born of the water and the Spirit. Which means one must be baptized in water, as the Spirit directs through God’s word. In Mark 16:16, Christ said, to be saved one must both believe and be baptized. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, said, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,” and Peter preached to people, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38).

Thus the Bible, God’s word, is very plain in telling us how we can surely know that we are saved. Just as we know that Christ died on the cross for our sins (Romans 5:8); He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3,4); He will come back one day to judge the

world (Acts 17:30-31); and many other things, by reading the Scriptures, and we believe the Bible contains God's inspired word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The same Bible also tells us that the Christ who died on the cross to save us from sin is the author of eternal salvation unto all those **who obey Him**, and not just believe in Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9). This definitely indicates that there are certain specific commands of Christ which must be obeyed to be saved. It is just that simple. As already observed, Christ the author of salvation, requires all who want to be saved to believe in Him and be baptized (Mark 16:16). The baptism for the remission of sins must be preceded by repentance of sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3); and confession of Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:36-38; Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10). Thus the assurance of salvation as promised and provided by Christ comes to an individual on the basis of one's faith in Christ and obedience to His commands, and not by faith only. (James 2: 24-26).

BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER

J.C. CHOATE



ONE OF THE DISTINGUISHING MARKS of Christianity is kindness. This is the ability to be sympathetic, forbearing, and to have a pleasant nature. Our Lord said, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:35,36). Paul exhorts, "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32). He even describes love as being kind: "Charity (love) suffereth long, and is *kind*; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." (1 Corinthians 13:4).

In reading these verses, and with an understanding of what Christianity is all about, then I believe that as Christians we are to be kind, considerate, sympathetic, benevolent, forgiving, and showing the love of God in our hearts and lives for all people, both toward those who are members of the church and those who are not. This does not mean that we have to be weak, indifferent to sin

and error, or to accept any and everything. Neither does it mean that we cannot condemn wrong doing or that we cannot offer constructive criticism. But it does mean that when we are dealing with any individual, having to do with any problem, then we must have the spirit of Christ and handle the situation with a desire to save the person rather than to win a personal victory over him.

Being kind to people would include one's attitude toward them, what one says about them, and the way one acts around them. With the right kind of spirit we can do much to impress others for good, showing a real concern for them. No one is driven away from the Lord by kindness but many people are hurt, hindered, and lost to the truth because of unkindness.

One of the things that I see in the church that bothers me more than anything else is a lack of kindness among Christians toward one another. There is so much envy, jealousy, and hatred among us. Members often deal with each other with a viciousness that is unparalleled even in the world, and all because of some little petty unimportant thing. There are people in the church today that one dare not cross in the sense of disagreement or offering constructive criticism, or doing something that they would not like. The consequences would be terrible. If you have any problem with certain congregations it will be only to your own hurt. These brethren will try to cut you down, will use their influence against you, and will seek to destroy you if at all possible. This is not something made up or imagined but it is all too real to too many brethren. This is sickness and madness, not Christianity.

What is wrong with brethren when they conduct themselves like this? Surely they do not have the spirit of Christ. Such brethren have lost their love and concern for one another somewhere along the way and it badly shows. I admit that I don't agree with all of my brethren on various things but that does not mean that I must fanatically oppose them with the aim of hurting them and ruining them, I am sure that there are those who perhaps don't agree with me on everything but I would hope that they would still love me, be patient with me, and continue to work with me.

If we would but love one another, communicate with each other, and visit among ourselves to discuss our problems, and seek to work these matters out then I am sure much of our difficulty would be removed. With kindness for one another, a desire to understand each other, and the longing to always have a forgiving spirit things can be changed for the better. Of all people who should be practicing

these principles, as well as preaching them, it should be those of us who are members of the Lord's church. Let us try it for a change and see if it doesn't work.

Living with Difficult People

ANCIL JENKINS

He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach (Mark 3:14).

WERE THERE EVER TWELVE MORE different people than Jesus' apostles? Look at the extreme contrasts in their personality and disposition. They provide an excellent study in contrasts:

- *Peter and John* were so different. *Peter* is impulsive and quick to speak. Some view *John* as quiet and prayerful because he was "*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*" Yet, in reality, he had a fiery, vindictive temper (Luke 9:54). He and *James* angered the other ten apostles when they requested the best and highest positions in the kingdom.
- *Nathaniel and Thomas* present some differences. *Nathaniel* had little difficulty in believing (John 1:45-49). *Thomas*, wrongly called "Doubting Thomas," asked for more evidence (John 20:25-28).
- Few were more different than *Matthew* and *Simon* the Zealot. *Matthew* had been a despised tax collector, working for the Romans. *Simon* belonged to the Zealots, a group that was committed to overthrow the Romans and all who worked for them. In fact, Zealots pledged to kill every tax collector possible. If *Simon* had met *Matthew* anywhere but in Jesus' presence, he would probably have stuck a knife in the tax collector.

What a difference in these men! They were mixed with six others with equally distinct personalities. Not a one of them was perfect, so each brought to the group his own set of problems and difficulties. Put all twelve together and immediately they are suspicious and jealous.

Out of these men, Jesus molded and formed a group that fully committed themselves to His command and promise. He commanded them to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel. His one promise was that He would be with them (Matthew 28:18-

20). On the basis of this command and promise, they successfully accomplished His work (Colossians 1:23). Eusebius, an ancient secular writer, relates a story common to this time. He said that after the Great Commission the twelve met in Jerusalem and divided up the world. Each then made his way to carry out Jesus' command. Almost without exception, each of the apostles died in a foreign country.

If Jesus can provide unity and purpose to such a diverse group, is there not hope for us? If He can make of Jews and Gentiles one new man in Him, cannot He do the same for us (Ephesians 2:13-15)? Disagreements and misunderstandings among brethren should not discourage us. It should make us realize that we are human and different. Disagreements should not disrupt the church, since Jesus gave explicit instructions about how to handle them (Matthew 5:22-24; 18:15-17). Instead of being disturbed, let's trust His power to help us and to make from our differences a powerful and effective church to bear His name and continue His work. He has provided unity and purpose to His disciples before—He can do it again.

RETURN TO THE ABYSS

J. CURTIS MANOR

WILLIAM GLADSTONE, FOUR TIMES British prime minister and acclaimed as one of the all-time greats of mankind, once gave the following evaluation of the Christian religion:

“Christianity abolished (1) gladiatorial shows, and other spectacles of horrid cruelty to men; (2) human sacrifices; (3) polygamy; (4) exposure of children; (5) slavery; (6) cannibalism. Next, Christianity drove into the shade all unnatural lusts, and, indeed, all irregular passions. But the former it effectually stamped out as infamous. Next, Christianity established (1) generally speaking, the moral and social equality of women; (2) the duty of relieving the poor, the sick and the afflicted; (3) peace, instead of war, as the ordinary, normal, presumptive relation between nations.

“Here is a goodly list. I speak not of what it taught. It taught the law of mutual love. It proscribed all manner of sin. But the preceding particulars refer to what, besides saying, it did; besides trying, it accomplished. And in every one of these instances, except that of cannibalism, the exhibition of what it did is in glaring contrast, not with the barbarous, but with the most highly civilized life such as it

was exhibited by the Greeks and Romans, in the most famous ages of both.”

It is interesting—no, horrifying—to watch the reversal of the progress that Gladstone cited, as modern leaders of thought succeed in undermining the world’s respect for divine authority. Note the current resurgence and clamor for respectability of “irregular passions” and “unnatural lusts” in the rise of homosexuality and hedonism; of polygamy, now in the guise of promiscuity and casual divorce; and of war, as a normal basis for a nation’s economic wealth. Given enough time and popularity, atheism would eventually succeed in restoring to mankind the full set of inhuman values that characterized the pre-Christian civilizations—including slavery and cannibalism.

And I think that not a single one of the God-hating activists who are trying so hard to restore such a world would want to live in it, if they should succeed.

FLY AWAY HOME

ROYCE FREDERICK

A SCIENTIST REPORTED THAT a manx shearwater, a sea bird, was taken by airplane from its home on the west coast of England to Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. In less than twelve days the bird was in its nest in England! It had flown 3,067 miles, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and averaged 255 miles per day!

E. F. G. Sauer experimented with a variety of warblers which migrate individually, not in flocks. The young warblers hatch in Europe, and—without any birds to lead them—they migrate to their destination in Africa to which they had never travelled! Sauer proved that these warblers navigate by the stars.

Evolutionists claim that all forms of life evolved by chance during millions of years. But chance cannot explain: (1) the marvelous design of birds, and (2) how birds are able to migrate. How could birds, by chance, learn to use the stars to calculate their position on earth and the exact direction of a destination to which they had never travelled? Men who navigate must first study mathematics, geometry, geography, astronomy, and navigation—then use tools such as a chart, map, compass, sextant, or electronic instruments. Even if a bird learned to navigate, how could that bird pass such knowledge to the next generation?

Birds and their abilities are convincing evidence of a wise and powerful Creator (Romans 1:20). *"God created...every winged bird according to its kind..."* (Genesis 1:21).

Mere chance cannot take migratory birds to their desired destination. Likewise, mere chance cannot take you or me to heaven. Our Creator gave us the Bible to guide us to heaven through Jesus (John 14:6; 8:31,32; Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 1:3). A sinner who is baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, and remains faithful to Christ, will reach the greatest destination of all—our eternal home with God! (See John 14:1-3; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26,27; Revelation 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.)

"DID GOD SEND THE STORMS?"

LEON BARNES

IT SEEMS STRANGE THAT WHEN anything good takes place we are quick to think we were responsible. Even the weather men laughingly claim the credit if we have beautiful weather for a few days. Yet I've never heard them take credit for storms or a tornado. They only want credit for the good. Usually we hear people looking at the devastation and destruction of a storm, declaring these to be acts of God. It is common to hear the question, "Why did God bring this storm on us? Is He angry with us for some reason?"

Certainly, God is capable of sending the storms. He sent the flood, which destroyed the old world in the days of Noah. He sent the earthquake that swallowed up the sons of Korah when they rebelled against Moses and his leadership. God sent the fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah when their wickedness became so great He couldn't bear it any longer.

We also know God sometimes allows Satan to bring storms upon people. In the book of Job God allowed Satan to send the tornado on the house where Job's ten children were gathered for a party.

But, it is equally true that many things happen in the world which are simple acts of nature, where God has not stepped in to intervene. The storms fall on the good and evil alike. They hit houses of worship the same as they do homes and businesses. Instead of this being a judgment of God upon us, it is far more likely an action of nature due to the world being corrupted by sin.

Even in times when nature has brought devastation, we must remember that God is able to bring good from the bad. He promises that all things will work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). The storm was not good, but God is able to bring many good things from it. He has opened the hearts of people toward each other. He has used the destruction to allow all of us to see the frailty of our own existence. Life is truly a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

We can escape the tragedies of this world only by going to heaven, the home of the soul, where there is no more death, decay, or devastation. Let us live daily for that goal.

Are We Alone?

OWEN D. OLBRICHT

THE BIBLE CONFIDENTLY AFFIRMS: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). The rest of the first two chapters of Genesis are concerned with life on earth and say nothing about God placing life on other planets. Based on Bible teaching we cannot confidently affirm that there is life elsewhere in the universe, and scientific investigation may indicate that the probability of life anywhere other than on earth is very unlikely.

Dr. Peter D. Ward of the University of Washington, a paleontologist who specializes in mass extinctions, and Dr. Donald C. Brownlee, a noted astronomer of the same university, in the book *Rare Earth* (Springer-Verlag, 2000), present evidence that points to the unlikelihood of life except here on Earth. Though not stated by the authors, arguments against life in other parts of the universe also may indicate the difficulty of life spontaneously beginning and evolving on planet earth.

These authors, according to an article written by William J. Broad of *New York Times* and carried in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, *"Perspective"*, give evidence that Earth may be the only planet in the universe that can support complex life.

Their thesis contradicts Dr. Frank D. Drake who in 1961 developed the Drake Equation that suggested that the Milky Way provided the capability of 10,000 civilizations. Later Dr. Carl Sagan raised the estimate to "a million alien worlds" and the probability of 10 trillion in the cosmos!

The authors of Rare Earth counter by pointing out problems with this theory. "Drawing on new findings in astronomy, geology and paleontology, the two argue that humans might be alone, at least in the stellar neighborhood, and perhaps in the entire cosmos. They say modern science is showing that Earth's composition and stability are extraordinarily rare. Most everywhere else, the right chemical elements are too rare in abundance, the hospitable planets too few in number and the rain of killer rocks too intense for life ever to have evolved into advanced communities."

Various problems are presented to uphold this conclusion:

1. The giant planets outside our solar system could not support complex life and have eccentric orbits that would create destructive chaos for smaller planets rather than shield them.
2. Jupiter is in the right position in the solar system to absorb or fling into space killer rocks that could bombard the earth. Another such planet in another solar system would be rare.
3. A planet closer to the center of a galaxy where the star population is far denser would make life impossible because of cascades of comets, intense radiation, and explosions of galactic interiors as well as the presence of X-rays, gamma rays, and ionizing radiation.
4. Complex life would also be impossible at galactic edges because of inadequate quantities of elements like iron, magnesium, and silicon.
5. A planet bigger or smaller than earth would rule out plate tectonics which keep planetary temperatures even enough to recycle carbon that makes life flourish.
6. "Whole galaxies are metal-poor and therefore probably devoid of animal life... Only spiral galaxies like the Milky Way and its nearby neighbor in Andromeda appear rich in metals, and even then, only in their inner regions. In contrast, elliptical and irregular galaxies...are barren."
7. An exact orbit of a planet the right distance from its star is necessary to ensure it will retain water as liquid and not vapor or ice.
8. A inhabitable planet must have a moon the right size and distance to minimize change in tilt of the planet to ensure climatic stability.
9. An adequate amount of carbon must be available to maintain life but not an excessive amount that would cause a planet to be overrun with life.
10. A proper balance of ozone and oxygen is necessary to make complex life possible.

These are some of the many factors essential for life as we know it here on earth. The proper combination of all these on a planet somewhere in the cosmos would be very rare.

Except for the heavenly realm where life is different than here, there may not be life elsewhere in the universe and especially life as we know it here on our planet Earth.

You Can Trust The Bible

SALVADOR B. CARIAGA

THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE who wonder if the Bible as we have it today can be trusted. They ask, "How do we know that someone a long time ago did not rewrite or change it?" Perhaps you too have wondered the same. In this brief article, we would like to reassure you that the Bible can be trusted.

First of all, the Bible itself claims to be the Word of God.

Religious people did not just make this up. The great Apostle Paul declared, "*All scripture is inspired by God...*" (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus assured His disciples that "*It is not you who speaks, but it is the spirit of the Father speaking through you*" (Matthew 10:20). Peter admitted that "*No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*" (2 Peter 1:21).

Second, Bible manuscripts discovered from as far back as the third century have been consistently the same through the years. True, there are some minor differences, such as spelling, missing words, and even a few missing sentences. However, they are minor and have not altered the saving message of the Bible. Today, we have over 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts available, an unbelievable number, considering how old the Bible is and the kind of persecution it has gone through.

The third reason for trusting the Bible is the life-changing message in its pages. It offers hope, faith, peace, joy, and salvation. It provides shelter in the time of storm, strength to the weary, and light to those in darkness. The Bible has served millions of people through centuries and generations. It has helped them overcome persecutions, trials, and tribulations. The Bible has led them to victorious living.

You, too, can draw power, strength, and wisdom from the Bible. Read it, study it, and meditate on it.

A Meeting At The Rock Pile

MICHAEL L. KING

UPON THE ARRIVAL OF THE Israelites at the Jordan River prior to making their grand entrance into the promised land, God gave instruction for one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to pass over the Jordan before the ark of the Lord. While in the midst of the Jordan each man was to gather a stone, place it on his shoulder, and deposit it along with the other eleven near their encampment at Gilgal. The significance of these stones was that when their descendants would ask about the pile of stones they could recall that their ancestors were delivered from Egyptian bondage, had the Red Sea opened for them, were provided for in the wilderness, and passed over the Jordan on dry ground to dwell in a land that flowed with milk and honey. The desired end for the monument and the retelling of the story was, *“that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God forever”* (Joshua 4:24).

The monument of rocks attested to God’s greatness and mercy for generations to come, so that love, respect, appreciation, and worship to the God of Israel might be preserved for their posterity. What are we as church leaders, faithful Christians, parents, etc., leaving as a monument to the goodness of God toward self, country, family, or to the church? Will our extended family come to know God because of the high esteem we had for Him? Are we allowing God’s goodness to flavor the lives of progeny yet unborn? Will our “rock pile” attest to our faith in, and dedication to, God for the working of His mighty hand in our lives, touching distant generations with an eternal impact?

In our passing this way, our “stones” of verification of love and appreciation could be: intensity of Bible study, earnestness of prayer, loyalty to the body of Christ, our having submitted to the cleansing of our soul in baptism, our commitment to leadership in God’s cause, our confidence in handling reversals, sickness and death through faith.

Whatever your “stone” may be, it should be a mark of pleasure, happiness, victory, gratitude, and respect for the Almighty! This occasion for the Israelites was a positive and happy one, as should be the totality of the Christian’s sojourn upon this earth.

There is another “rock pile” which denotes the opposite. It was

a monument of warning, failure, and rejection in the midst of Israel. Achan had stolen spoils of war and had hidden them beneath his tent floor, becoming a curse to Israel. Their military prowess became tarnished, and failure pervaded God's mighty nation of people. The great leader, Joshua, held hearings to determine the cause and responsible person, for he knew that there was *"sin in the camp."* "When the determination was made as to Achan's guilt, he was reprimanded for having *"troubled us,"* and told that *"the Lord shall trouble thee this day"* (Joshua 7:25). This marked the beginning of the construction of yet another "rock pile!" *"And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, the valley of Achor (trouble) unto this day"* (Joshua 7:25,26).

Which of the two "rock piles" best describe our life? Does our life serve as a faith-builder for others through the honor and esteem we give to God for His goodness toward us, as well as toward mankind in general, showing that He is very much alive within our hearts and adored by us? Could it be said that our life is better depicted as an entombment where the many opportunities for serving and doing good to the glory of our great God have been laid to rest? When people pass by and gaze on the monument of our life, do they shake their heads in sadness, realizing "what could have been," or do they applaud the greatness of our God because of what they have seen in us? Dear friend, is your life's objective for it to be a tribute, not trouble; a gift, not a grave; and a monument of might, instead of a misuse of mercy?

Following Christ in Israel Today

JOSEPH SHULAM

WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH (that is, the Christ). John 1:41
As a Jew, I had a hard time believing that the person Christians call Jesus is the Messiah. Everything works against a Jew who entertains the possibility of developing a relationship with Jesus. Many times a Jew finds that all those people who are the closest to him will be horrified and hurt if he confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and The Son of God .

As a result of centuries—old prejudices sometimes even Christians have unfounded suspicions about the sincerity of a Jew who becomes a faithful and dedicated follower of Jesus. Christians from non-Jewish background have as many preconceived ideas about Jews as Jews have about Christians. The preconceived ideas continue dripping their poison even after a Jewish person confesses the Messiah. They continue to drip, drip from the very folklore, history, and the culture of Western Christianity.

One time a person asked me, “What is the biggest barrier that has to be removed for Jews to accept Jesus ?” Christian “history” is the biggest barrier to the relationship of Jews and Gentiles with Jesus, or Yeshua, the Messiah. This in effect is what the “Restoration Movement” is all about. It is an attempt to clean the well and start drawing clear water from the wells of salvation.

Yeshua, meaning “salvation,” was a popular and meaningful name among Jews of Israel in the first century. (Yeshua is the Hebrew name that was transliterated in Greek as Jesus, then changed in English to Jesus. There are several rabbis and others who were called Jesus in the first century.) But there is only one Jesus, the Son of God, who died in Jerusalem for our salvation. The Messiah came for the Jews, and it is God’s will that the Jews accept their own Messiah because he is the only way of salvation for all mankind.

Being a born-again Jew who knows his Messiah and living in the modern city of Jerusalem is about the highest privilege that a person like me can have. My parents came to Israel in 1948 with a large wave of immigrants that crossed Europe by rail, sea, foot, and air, to re-establish the Jewish nation in the land that God had promised to Abraham and his seed. I was raised in Jerusalem as a secular Jew.

When I found the Messiah, I also found the heritage that my forefathers lost when they were taken captive out of the land by the Romans. When I preach that Jesus is the Messiah, the only true hope of Israel, I feel the blood of Isaiah, Zechariah, and Peter running through my vessels.

Many times I visit the biblical places in Israel with friends who come to visit Israel. Every time I feel a deep connection with God, Jesus the Messiah, and the Land. I know that the salvation of my soul is in the hands of Good Shepherd, Jesus, the Son of God. I know that the message that I preach to Israel is the same message the holy men and prophets proclaimed in the narrow streets of the

city of the great kings of Israel.

These feelings, coupled with the promises of God to the prophets of Israel about the Messiah, and with the words spoken by Jesus and his apostles, give me a strong awareness of my relationship with God in forming the future of God's Kingdom. You see, my dear brothers and sisters, I know that what—ever happens to me personally I have been doing God's will! I have a coalition with the Master and a part in accomplishing his will for the peoples in the Middle East—and the world.

A few months ago one of Israel's most distinguished old statesmen asked me what practical benefit I get from my faith in Jesus Christ. I answered that the most practical thing that I get from my faith is the strength to carry on with dignity in times of adversity. This is a direct benefit of believing in a "dead and living" savior who is not an Olympian god but a Jew who could overcome sin. This man wanted to know more about this power to face adversity and come out victorious.

The secret, I told him, is to die and rise to live again like Jesus did. "You see," I said, "I am a dead man. All my living now is done by God's power and for him. I enjoy the good things of this world, but the world is not the matrix of my existence and life." Since that time we have met for lunch several times. His attitude has not changed about Christianity, but his attitude toward Jesus is changing.

Living is Jerusalem as a follower of Jesus today is like living in a time bubble in the first century. One can find all the factions that existed in first-century Jerusalem still walking the streets and acting just like they did 2000 years ago. They do not call themselves by the same names, but they have the same ideas and behavior.

One can sit on top of the Mount of Olives and visualize the night in which Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem..." One can find the congregation the Judaizers and the Hellenizers making the same arguments set forth in the first century. In fact, the Jerusalem of the First century is being resurrected sociologically and archaeologically and, I believe, spiritually. Living in Jerusalem as a follower of Jesus the Messiah is like being in a laboratory that examines the spirit and events that took place here in A.D. 30.

It is hard for tourists to see this aspect of life. Concentrating on the "Holy Places," they do not have much contact with the peoples of Israel. For those who live here, Israel is not an old battleground of historic events that changed the world. Israel is the present battleground where followers of the Messiah are fighting a war for

the spiritual survival of Christianity and for the salvation of Israel.

In using the word “war” I am not being overly dramatic. It is my conviction that unless we see our faith as a war (a very biblical way of looking at it) then we will not get the full blessing of what it means to be Christians. Jerusalem makes us constantly aware that our faith in Jesus the Messiah has given us a part in the eternal war between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, justice and evil. Jerusalem and Yeshua (or Jesus) the Messiah will always be the arena for this war. It is our privilege to live and fight until He comes again! We call on you to join the battle in your place and in your setting because the victory will be ours.

The Simplicity of Mark 16:16

WAYNE JACKSON

IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL FACT OF Bible interpretation that those passages which are most crucial to one’s salvation, are the easiest to understand. That is why Mark’s account of the “Great commission” is so incredibly simple. One of the great mysteries of modern “Christendom” is why certain clergymen have so obscured this wonderful text: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who disbelieves shall be condemned” (16:16).

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE PASSAGE

Because Mark 16:9-20 is missing from two of the oldest Greek manuscripts, and from some of the early versions, and because of certain perceived problems in the continuity between 16:9 ff and the preceding context, most textual critics today question the genuineness of this text, i.e., they dispute that it was a part of Mark’s *original Gospel* (see Robertson, Metzger, etc). It must be noted though, that some of these men concede that the disputed segment reflects the inspired teaching of Jesus (Grassmick, 194). But the integrity of the text has been ably defended by some respectable scholars (e.g., Burgon, Scrivener, McGarvey, Lenski) W.R. Farmer has recently argued that Mark was the author of 16:9-20, having penned it before the composition of the Gospel record, adding this section afterward. We will not consume space discussing this issue here, but we cannot resist pointing out that most of those commentators repudiate the longer ending of Mark’s Gospel, nonetheless feel compelled to write their comments all the way

through verse 20! Some can't figure out what to do with it. In his debate with N.B. Hardeman (1938), Ben Bogard rejected the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, and yet in his encounter with Aimee McPherson (1934), founder of the Foursquare Church, he appealed to it mightily!

THE CONDITIONS MENTIONED

Two conditions of the divine plan of redemption are mentioned—belief and baptism. These are preliminary to the reception of salvation. Surely even the most amateur student can see that these items are but representative of the fuller complement of requirements. There is, for example, no reference to repentance, though this change of disposition, which results in a reformation of life, is clearly requisite for redemption (LK. 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30). Nor is the “good confession” included (cf. 1 Tim.6:13), though it is combined with belief elsewhere (Rom. 10:9-10). It is common in the New Testament for a writer to emphasize certain terms for salvation without citing the entire catalog of requirements (cf. Jn.3:16; Acts 17:30; 1 Pet. 3:21). How wonderful it would be if those who argue for “salvation by faith alone” could learn this principle.

THE ORDER OF OCCURRENCE

It is quite important that the New Testament student recognize the order in which the divine conditions are listed in Mark 16:16—the reason being the biblical sequence is totally at variance with certain sectarian theories. For example:

(1) Some insist that salvation comes first (having been predetermined by God before the foundation of the world), baptism is next (in the scheme of those who practice infant baptism), and faith develops later.

(2) Others (e.g., the Baptists) place the salvation after faith, yet before baptism. They allege that faith is the initial act of obedience, which then produces pardon. Subsequent to that, they argue, baptism is administered to those who so choose; it is a mere “outward sign of an inward grace.”

(3) Catholic theology contends that baptism is administered first (to infants), salvation (from “original sin”) being thus procured; faith comes along eventually.

Each of these theories is hopelessly at odds with the facts. Any attempt to scramble the terms only results in manifold confusion. The Bible does not say: He who has been saved eventually will

believe and may be baptized. It does not state that he who believes is saved and may be baptized. It does affirm that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; that is the order.

THE GRAMMAR

In the grammar of the Greek New Testament, there are rules by which the order of events sometimes may be determined. For example, both “believerth” and “is baptized” in the Greek New Testament are what grammarians call “aorist tense participle.” (A participle is a word that has the characteristics of both an adjective and a verb). The aorist tense has to do with a specific kind of action. Though there are exceptions, the aorist participle “ordinarily” expresses action that occurs prior to that of the leading verb in the sentence. In Mark 16:16, the leading verb is “shall be saved,” The full flavor of the affirmation, therefore, is this; “He who, having already believed and having already been immersed is the one who shall be saved.” Note Lenski’s clear statement: “Both acts [belief and baptism] would precede the future act sothesetai [shall be saved]”. There simply is no question about the matter: both belief and immersion are requirements for salvation.

SECTARIAN EVASION

Due to the fact that some religionists are so saturated with the notion that salvation is by “faith alone” (a doctrine alien to the New Testament, and specifically repudiated therein; see Jas. 2:24), they resort to various interpretative contortions in an effort to evade the transparent instruction of this passage. Typical of this maneuver was prominent Baptist scholar, A.T. Robertson, who, in his massive Grammar of the Greek New Testament, asserted that sometimes grammar must yield to theology. Indeed! And so, relative to Mark 16:16, Robertson, in his Word Pictures, wrote:

The omission of baptized with “disbelieveth” [16:16b] would seem to show that Jesus does not make baptism essential to salvation. Condemnation rests on disbelief, not on baptism.

Quite frankly, that is pathetic. After introducing the person who “believes not,” why would it be necessary for the Lord to list additional items of rebellion, in order to emphasize the unbeliever’s state of condemnation? Besides, elsewhere the New Testament warns of the consequences of rejecting baptism. Such, according to Luke’s record, is an indication of the disposition that repudiates the very “counsel of God” (Lk.7:30).

THE TERMS DEFINED

Since this text represents such a crucial matter (the salvation of one's soul), it is imperative that due consideration be given to the specifics mentioned. Let us, therefore, examine the key items.

(1) **Belief**—in many religious systems, what one believes is relatively irrelevant. For example, in Buddhism one need not even believe in a personal God! by way of vivid contrast, Christianity is a religion grounded in history. Its validity depends upon whether or not God is real, whether or not he sent His Son, and whether or not Jesus of Nazareth is that Son. To be a Christian one must subscribe to these historical realities (cf. Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24). One cannot, for instance, merely believe that Jesus was “nothing more than a perfect man,” as the Watchtower cult alleges, and have a valid faith. And how could one possibly possess a “faith” which acknowledges Christ as an historical figure, but which repudiates the fact that he was virgin-born, or that he was resurrected from the dead? The “faith” of modernism is no faith at all!

It is very difficult to fathom how some in the church today can contend that one may become a Christian without even understanding the components of what it takes to undergo this process. How can one become a Christian, for example, without believing in the very conditions specified in this passage? Does it make any sense to contend: “He who believes [not in the necessity of faith and baptism] and is baptized shall be saved”? And yet, there is a growing number in the church who contend it is not necessary to understand the purpose of baptism in order to be saved.

(2) **Baptism**—what is baptism? It is strange that there should be confusion in the religious community on this important theme.

First, the word means to “dip” or “immerse.” The ancient Greeks used the term of a sinking ship. In the Greek OT (LXX), baptizo is rendered “dip”—in contrast to “sprinkle” or “pour” (see Lev.14:15-16). The procedure involves a burial in water and a resurrection therefrom (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). The first recorded change in the mode of baptism was around A.D.251, when Novation of Rome, being ill, had water poured on him in his bed. Eusebius, who records the incident, questioned whether such was even “baptism”(VXLIII).

Second, as Mark 16:16 indicates, baptism was authorized only for believers (infants thus being excluded) (cf. Acts 8:12; 18:8). There exists not a single passage in the entire New Testament that even remotely hints that babies were administered the ordinance of baptism.

Third, the focus of the rite was to bring a person out of the state

of sin (Acts 2:38;22:16:Eph 5:26; 1 Pet 3:21), and introduce him into a relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). This transition into Christ also affiliated one with the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-5), or the “body” of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col 1:18,24).

(3) **Salvation**—The term “saved” depicts the result of one’s sincere obedience to the gospel plan. It is the equivalent of “forgiven,” “redeemed,” “cleansed,” etc. It reflects the assurance of pardon from God for all past sins, and the hope of deliverance at the conclusion of a faithful life (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thes.5:8 1 Pet .1:9). The notion that one’s salvation is so secured that he cannot be lost—no matter what he does—has no biblical basis (Gal.5:4; Heb. 3:12; 2 Pet.2:1).

CONCLUSION

Thus stands Mark 16:16 in all of its power. It cannot be dismissed by textual critics, nor rationalized by a sectarian clergy. It is profound, yet simple. It is demanding, yet refreshing. It must be practiced, and then proclaimed—so help us God.

There Is But One True God

MAXIE B. BOREN

FROM THE VERY OPENING VERSE in the Old Testament, the Bible attributes the existence of all things to the creative genius and power of Almighty God. *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). Notice further what the Sacred Record declares: *“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth ... Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”* (Psalm 33:6,8). *“In six days the Lord made heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them”* (Exodus 20:11). *“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens”* (Proverbs 3:19). Think of a being so great! Such knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and power that was necessarily involved in the creation of all things is awesome! It is nothing less than overwhelming to ponder! The finite minds of mere men just cannot fully comprehend the infinite wisdom and power of God. But one thing is for sure ... the true and living God should be truly exalted in the hearts of all

humanity! People of every nation should stand in absolute amazement of the One who has always been, and is now, and will always be the Supreme Sovereign of the whole universe!

The Psalmist of old wrote, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard”* (Psalm 19:1-3). Yes, by observing the design and beauty of all that surrounds people the world over, there can be no doubt that there was indeed a Master Designer and Creator. Every day and every night the evidence of this truth can be seen in the natural world in which we live. There is no way it could have just happened by blind chance! The prophet Jeremiah penned these words, *“Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You”* (Jeremiah 32:17). *“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created... Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heaven”* (Psalm 148:5,13).

No wonder then, that one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, named Paul, indicted the ancient Gentile nations for their calloused hearts. He wrote, *“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but... professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever”* (Romans 1:20-24).

Sadly, those words written by inspiration so long ago are applicable to what is going on in many parts of the world even today. Because many people have chosen not to believe in the one true and living God, but in gods made with hands (idols), or in creatures God has made. Please note that wherever Paul went during his first century lifetime, he rebuked idolatry of all kinds: To the people of Athens, he said,

Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'for we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:22-29).

And again at Ephesus, and throughout the western part of Turkey, this same apostle declared, *"they are not gods which are made with hands"* (Acts 19:26).

In view of all the above, I would today implore people everywhere to turn away from any form of idolatry, to the true and living God who created all things. Read and study the Bible, which is His revealed will to all humanity the world over for all time. Let it be your source of spiritual information; let it be your guide and counsel in life. It is God's Word! It not only tells you of God's creative power, but it tells you of His power to save your soul from sin, which is the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ! The same apostle who was quoted earlier in this article wrote *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe"* (Romans 1:16). *"Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

BELIEFS OF ATHEISTS

BASIL OVERTON

God exists, or God does not exist!

AGNOSTICS SAY THEY JUST DO NOT KNOW whether God exists or not. But, the position of agnostics is only a denial that man can decide between believing God exists and believing God does not

exist. It is my belief that agnosticism and atheism are both unreasonable.

One who does not believe God exists is called an atheist. But, an atheist *does believe* some things; he has a kind of faith.

1. An atheist *believes* there is no God. If he should say he knows there is no God, he puts himself in an extremely awkward position. To know there is no God, one would have to know everything, because if there were just one thing he did not know, that one thing might be that God exists! So, at best, an atheist can merely *believe* there is no God. He cannot *know* there is no God without knowing everything!

2. An atheist *believes* that matter has always been here, or that it came into being without any intelligence being involved. Regardless of which of these an atheist believes, his belief forces him to also believe that matter brought into being the present order of things, including all living things.

3. The atheist *must believe* that lifeless matter not only became alive without any intelligence to direct it, but he must also believe some of that matter not only became alive, but it also became *conscious* of itself, including man with his brains and his beliefs. These beliefs of men include both the theistic concept (believing in God) and the atheistic concept (not believing in God).

According to atheism, matter brought into being the concept that there is a God! An atheist has to believe that mindless matter, after it got here somehow, then somehow developed into living forms, and that matter developed brains in some of these living beings including human beings, and then worked out atheism in the brains of atheists, and theism in the brains of those who believe in God.

4. If an atheist *believes* there ever was a time when nothing existed, he must also *believe* that something came out of nothing! It seems that even an atheist would find that hard to believe!

5. To *believe* his position an atheist also believes in spontaneous generation of life from non-life. Scientists say life could not have always existed on the earth. So, according to scientists life had a beginning. Life coming into being from non-intelligent, non-living matter by spontaneous processes would be a greater miracle, and harder to *believe* than to *believe* that God exists and that He created matter and life!

6. An atheist has to *believe* that the order, symmetry and balance of nature came from mindless matter.

7. To be an atheist one has to *believe* that consciousness arose from a chance-produced combination of non-conscious matter. He

has to *believe* that the “creator” of consciousness was not merely unconscious, but non-conscious, matter!

8. An atheist has to *believe* that human minds like his own, with which he does his believing, came from what was mindless and therefore thoughtless! Atheists have to *believe* that all their thoughts come from what was without thought!

9. An atheist has to believe that mindless matter became intelligent enough to deny that intelligence had anything to do with its existence and its becoming intelligent. He also has to believe that without any intelligence being involved, non-intelligent matter became intelligent enough to say that this whole colossal universe was brought into being without intelligence and that it is not governed by intelligence!

It is not surprising that David wrote: “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1).

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I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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