

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*“Jesus Christ Is The Same
Yesterday, Today, And Forever”*

SPEAKING OF CHRIST, in Hebrews 13:9, it says, “Jesus Christ Is the same yesterday, today and forever.” The object of the writer, as could be contextually observed, reading from verse 1, is to lead and encourage his fellow Christians not to be carried away from “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) by various and strange doctrines, but to be firm and resolute in their Christian profession. First, in verse 8 he tells them “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” Follow their faith and be steadfast in the profession of the faith they preached to you. Next, in the following verse, he reminds them that Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), is Himself the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that they should be steadfast and immovable in imitation of Christ, who ever lives to observe and reward their faithfulness.

In saying, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, he told them that Christ is the changeless one, because He is God (Hebrews 1:8; John 1:1), and changelessness is an attribute of the Deity. The changelessness of Christ means that the system He delivered is also changeless. His gospel (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) is the same; the plan of redemption He brought for humanity



is changeless (John 14:6); His purpose for humanity, His great love, His assurance of the resurrection and eternal life for those who believe in Him all are the same. (John 11:25; 14:1-3). He is the same yesterday and today and forever. **Some, however, think for Christ to be the same, He must work the signs and miracles today as He Himself and through His disciples did in the first century.** They err because they do not understand the purpose of miracles Christ and His apostles performed in the first century. But let me ask you: Did God in the beginning worked miracles? Indeed He did. He created all kinds of vegetations and animals by miracles. He spoke them into existence in the beginning. Can He do that today? Sure, He can, He is the Almighty. But is He doing that today. Of course, Not. Why? Because there is no need and no purpose. Likewise, in the beginning, God created first man from the dust of the ground, and the first woman from a bone taken from the side of the man. Is He doing that now? Can He still today make a man from the dust of the ground and a woman from a bone? Sure, He is able. But why is He not doing that today? Simply because there is no need and no purpose. Every living being now produces after its own kind, as God had set the order in the beginning. (Genesis 1:12, 28).

Likewise, when Jesus Christ came and began to preach, "The time is fulfilled, and kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). To make people believe in Him and His preaching He performed signs and miracles. He didn't have a Bible to preach from, as I have today, for the Bible was not yet written completely. He first chose twelve men to be His witnesses, whom he would send to preach the gospel to the world, after His death, burial and resurrection from the dead. He then, as He taught, worked many miracles before them so that by observing His great and marvelous works their faith in Him would be strengthened. We read, "And truly Jesus did many other signs **in the presence of His disciples**, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30,31). Once when their faith in Him had wavered, He told them, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." (John 14:11). Jesus performed signs and miracles in the presence of His disciples to convince them, who were to later go and preach His message to the world, that He was God in flesh on earth. This was the primary purpose of all the signs and miracles Jesus had performed before

them. Of course, others who had seen His great miracles were equally convinced and confessed, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2; 6:14).

As Christ was getting ready to return to the Father in heaven, He told His disciples, “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:25-26). A little later he told them, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:12-13). From these verses we learn, that the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles all things, and would bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus had spoken to them while He was with them, and He would guide them into all truth. When the apostles, after the ascension of Jesus, preached, they still did not have the complete Bible in written form available with them, it was being written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The gospel was revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit and they preached all that Jesus had commanded. But how would people believe their preaching? The Holy Spirit not only revealed to them the truth but also empowered them to work signs and miracles. (Acts 5:12). **Miracles, in the first century, served the purpose of revealing and confirming the truth. The truth they, the apostles were preaching and writing for us in the New Testament books.**

After His resurrection, when Jesus had met His disciples for the last time on earth, before His ascension into heaven, the record says, “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table ; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at

the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.**" (Mark 16:14-20). Notice, according to this account: the apostles were to go to preach the gospel to all the world. Those who would believe the gospel and would be baptized would be saved. The miraculous signs would follow the preaching of those apostles who would believe. As some of them really did not believe after the Lord Jesus Christ had risen. (Mark 16:14; Matthew 28:17) Some today misunderstand this passage of the Scripture, and think that Christ meant that all those who would believe in Him would be able to perform signs and miracles. But this is not what Christ had said. He said, all who would believe in Him and would be baptized will be saved. The signs, according to Jesus, were to follow the preaching of those believing disciples whom He was sending then to preach the gospel. As some of them did not really believe Him, He said, "these signs will follow those" and "those" were the disciples who would believe, to whom He was speaking and whom He was sending. Why not those fake healers today, who claim to have the same miraculous power the apostles did, drink deadly poison and pick up venomous snakes? Because Christ said those who would believe would also do that. They can't do nothing. Because those miraculous signs were not promised to all believers.

Signs and miracles were supernatural proofs by which the truth was established—shown to be genuine and authentic. As the disciples or the apostles went out and preached everywhere, the Lord was working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. This was the primary purpose of signs and miracles. Signs and miracles, performed in the first century A.D., by the disciples confirmed their preaching. Today we have the same confirmed word in the written form in the New Testament of the Bible. It doesn't need reconfirmation. The inspired and confirmed truth was written down, committed to record, by those providentially prepared men whom the Lord had selected. Now you and I have access to the truth that was revealed and confirmed. (John 20:30, 31; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Once the truth had been revealed and established by miraculous power, there is no further need for the exercise or use of that power. Jesus said all of the truth would be revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit. Further revelation of truth is impossible. (Galatians 1:6-9) The truth, which the apostles preached, was completely verified, and no man can further prove it. It can be

preached, but it was verified and confirmed and proved almost two thousand years ago, when the apostles lived. Today, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17).

Who Should Be Baptized?

J.C. CHOATE

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT we read of at least 11 cases of conversion to Christ. Some of these were of individuals and others included large crowds of people. We also read of several families being converted to Christ:



Lydia and her household and the jailor and his household obeyed the Lord, as recorded in Acts 16. We also read, in Acts 10, of the Cornelius and his family being converted.

There are those who believe in infant baptism, with parents dedicating their babies to the Lord and then having immersed in water (the Greek Orthodox practice) or having water sprinkled on their heads (the “baptism” of the Roman Catholic church and the various Protestant denominational groups who have this practice). Authority for infant “baptism” is based on the idea that there would have been some infants or the children in the households or families that were converted to the Lord, and if so, the conclusion is drawn that infants and children would also have been baptized. On the surface, that may sound like a good argument for infant baptism, but it is not.

When we study the scriptures we learn who is counted as a sinner and who is not, those who are safe and those who are lost, those who are subject to baptism and those who are not. An infant is safe, being without sin. Jesus said, “of such is the kingdom of heaven”. He also said that one must be converted and become as little children to enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3). From these statements we must conclude that when the Scriptures talk about a family being converted, only those who were proper, subjects for baptism were baptized. Even though there might have been infants or young children in the family, they would not have been baptized along with the adults because they had not sinned and thus they had no need for baptism at that point in their life. Once they became old enough to know right from wrong, and to

choose the wrong, and when they were mentally mature enough to understand the Lord's will for them, and the need of salvation, then at that point they could be and should be baptized. The same is true today.

The gospel of Christ is directed to those who can hear, understand, and obey the Lord's will. We are told that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Christ commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel so that those who would believe and be baptized might be saved (Mark 16:15,16). Again, He said that they should go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). But whom do you teach? Those who are old enough to hear and understand the truth, old enough to repent of their sins, old enough to confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, old enough to be baptized or immersed in water for the remission of their own sins. (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21).

Who are you? What is your age? Are you reading what I am writing? Do you understand what I am saying? If you do, and if you have not obeyed the Lord in repentance and baptism, then you need to do so as we have already pointed out.

The Bible is the word of God and it is directed towards those who are able to read and understand it. The gospel is to be preached to those who are able to hear it and understand it. The Lord wants those who know and understand His will to decide for themselves what they will do. This does not include babies and little children who are too young to understand God's will and to obey Him. If such obedience was actually required of babies all of them would be hopelessly lost until they reach maturity, because it is impossible for them to learn what the Scriptures require and to believe the Gospel and obey its commands. God has never required of anyone what cannot be done. Babies are safe.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

GERMAINE CHARLES LOCKWOOD

THE WORLD FAMOUS ARCHAEOLOGIST, William Foxwell Albright, wrote:

"Biblical Historical data are accurate to an extent far surpassing the ideas of any modern critical students, who have consistently tended to err on the side of hypercriticism."

The Hittites

The Hittites are mentioned about 40 times in the Bible. In the 1800's critical scholars said that the Hittites had never existed. However, when archaeologists investigated the ruins, of cities in Turkey, they found the records of the Hittites. Archaeologists and linguists worked hard and long to be able to translate the writings of the Hittites. The critics were wrong, while the Bible is right. The British Orientalist Archibald Henry Sayce wrote:

The mention of *"the king of the Hittites"* in the account of the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (2 Kings 7:6) was declared to be an error or an invention; but it was only the ignorance of the critic himself that was at fault.

The Writings of Moses

Critical scholars believed that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible. They believed that Hebrew was not written until after about 800 B.C. At Ras Shamra, Syria, a French expedition found a temple library containing writing in several languages. There was material in an alphabetic Semitic language from the time of Moses. Sir Flinders Petrie found alphabetic inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadem in Sinai, which date to the time of Moses. You can understand that Spinoza and other critics of the Bible were very wrong. The Bible is right.

More than 17,000 tablets have been found at Ebla, Syria. They are from 2250 B.C. and earlier. Archaeologist Clifford Wilson analyzed this find in his book: *Ebla Tablets, Secrets of a Forgotten City* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books. 1979).

Sargon

In the Bible, Sargon was mentioned as King of Assyria (Isaiah 20:1). Sargon's name was not found in ancient literature. This caused critical scholars to say that Sargon never existed. They believed that the Bible was wrong. P.E. Botta excavated near the ancient capital of Assyria, Ninevah, from 1842 to 1845. What he uncovered was Khorsabad. In this city, Botta found the palace of Sargon. The critical scholars were proven wrong. There was a king of Assyria named Sargon. The Bible is right. Isaiah had recorded that Sargon, the king of Assyria, had sent his army to capture the city of Ashdod (Isaiah 20:1). On the walls of Sargon's palace was found recorded the same event. The Bible is right.

Belshazzar

In the Bible, the book of Daniel recorded that Belshazzar was king when the Medes and Persians took Babylon. Hitzig, a modern liberal, wrote in his commentary on Daniel that Belshazzar never existed. This was because ancient historians wrote that Nabonitus was the last king of Babylon. However, archaeology have dug up clay tablets in the ruins of Babylon that stated that Nabonitus entrusted the kingship to his son Belshazzar, while he went to Tema in Arabia. Belshazzar was king when Babylon fell, just as recorded in Daniel 5. This also explains why Belshazzar proclaimed Daniel to be the third ruler in the kingdom (Daniel 5:29). Instead of second. Daniel was third after Nabonitus and Belshazzar. There is evidence that Belshazzar was the son of Nitocris, who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was at least the “*son of*” Nebuchadnezzar in the sense of being his successor. The critics were wrong in saying that Belshazzar never existed. You can see that this was based on ignorance and not believing the Bible. What is even worse is that some still have been teaching such falsehoods. The Bible is right.

Ancient Israel and the House of David

Scholars of the “deconstructionist” approach believed that the history of Israel before the Babylonian captivity is fictional. Philip R. Davies presented this view in his book: *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’* (Sheffield, England; JSOT Press, 1992). However, in 1993, an inscription was found in a stone stele by archaeologists at Tel Dan. “House of David” and “King of Israel” are in the inscription written in paleo-Hebrew script of the ninth century B.C. It shows that the Kingdom of Israel, the Kingdom of Judah and King David are historical. You can read about this in “David Found at Dan,” in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1994, pp. 26-39, and in *Biblical Dan* by Professor Avraham Biran (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994, pp 274-278). The “deconstructionist” scholars’ faith is fictional, but the Bible is historically accurate. Yes, the stones cry out! Those who claimed that King David never existed, are wrong,

William Dever, professor of Near Eastern archaeology and anthropology wrote an article: “Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey,” in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March /April 2000, pp. 28-35,68. Among the archaeological evidences of early Israel, he presented the Victory Stele of pharaoh Merneptah from about 1210B.C. Written in stone is the name “*Israel*.” Yes, early Israel as a people existed

historically at that time. The postmodern deconstructionists revisionists are wrong. The Bible is right.

Politarchs

IN the book of Acts in the New Testament, Luke called the rulers of the city of Thessalonica, “politarchs,” in the Greek language (Acts 17:8). Critical scholars called this a mistake, as no officials were known to have been called by this title. However, at least 17 inscriptions have been found in Thessalonica using the title “politarchs.” Again archaeology has proven the critical scholars wrong in their ignorance. The Bible is right.

The Book of Acts Is Accurate

Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939) had accepted the views of F.C. Baur, Tübingen school of criticism, against the book of Acts. But his work as an archaeologist in Asia Minor showed him that the critics were wrong, and the book of Acts is accurate. He wrote:

...but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor.

The Gospel of John

Critics F.C. Baur and Van Marten speculated that the Gospel of John was not written until after A.D. 150. However, fragments of the Gospel of John have been found that date “early 2nd century.” The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown that the Gospel of John fits the language, the geography, the culture and historical context before A.D.70. The destruction of Jerusalem destroyed all that, making it impossible for people living after A.D. 150 to have correctly gotten all those details.

Archaeologist W.F. Albright wrote:

In the same way, the form-critical school founded by M. Dibelius and R. Bultmann a generation before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has continued to flourish without the slightest regard for the Dead Sea Scrolls. In other words, all radical schools in New Testament criticism which have existed in the past or which exist today are pre-archaeological, and are, therefore, since they were built in der luff (“in the air”), quite antiquated today.

Conclusion

Modern scholars were not present when the events happened that are recorded in the Bible. Too often critical scholars have based

their conclusions on presuppositions, assumptions, conjectures, philosophy and egotistical unbelief. On the other hand, the science of archaeology has shown the Bible to be historically accurate. Dr Nelson Glueck, a leading archaeologist, wrote:

As a matter of fact, however, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Bible reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.

Voltaire, the French skeptic said, "In less than a hundred years the Bible will be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth." Voltaire died in 1778. The hundred years has long ago passed, but the Bible stands. Voltaire's house in Paris has been used for many years by the Bible Society.

Thomas Paine wrote a book which he said would destroy the Bible. Payne died in 1809. The Bible stands stronger than ever.

Isaiah wrote:

A voice says, "call out." Then He answered, "What shall I call out?"

All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:6-8).

THE ROMANS AND CHRIST

HENRY C. BOREN

THE PRINCE OF PEACE BROUGHT peace between men and God, but as for relations between individuals, what he brought, often, was "not peace but a sword." Acceptance of Christ in all ages has demanded commitment to an ideal and to a whole new way of life; and this, in turn, has sometimes led to friction within family, community, and nation.

In certain important ways, the demands of the Christian commitment were more wrenching to the Roman contemporaries of the Apostles than to twentieth century citizens of Western countries today. One reason for this was the very religiosity of the

Roman people. The great Roman orator Cicero and their revered historian Livy spoke for Romans when they declared their people to be the most religious in the world. (One supposes they knew of the Jews but dismissed them as merely superstitious).

The Roman religion was intimately a part of - not just involved with - family life, the army, the state. Nothing important was done in the state without seeking the proper omens, the Roman's most important festivals were religious. To neglect or otherwise offend the gods was a heinous offense that might bring down grievous disaster upon all. For Romans, then, a decision to become Christian, with all that meant, did not come easily.

It was not that the Romans were on tolerant of new religions. In the time of the middle to late Romans Republic, in the two centuries before Christ, many new cults entered Italy and found devotees there to support their rites. In the late stages of the titanic struggle between Rome and Carthage, led by Hannibal (218-201 B.C.), for example, the goddess Cybele, the Great Mother, was brought in from Asia Minor with official sanction, and soon even given a temple on the Palatine hill, within the sacred boundaries of the city. Immigrants and traders probably brought in such gods and goddesses as the Dea Syria and the Egyptian deities Osiris and Isis. It was the soldiers who imported the rites to Mithra, which were exclusively male. This god, derived from Zoroastrianism and related to the sun-god, was to become the chief rival of Christianity in Rome two centuries later. Rome might indeed somewhat restrict such cults: thus, no citizen was permitted to become a self-castrated "gallus," priest of cybele, and most Oriental cults were not allowed shrines within the sacred boundaries. These cults, however, did not represent such a threat to established religion as did Judaism and Christianity, for they were not exclusive. One could worship Isis and still not neglect the household gods or the official state rites. The Jews and Christians denied the very existence of the gods; that is why both groups were sometimes attacked as "atheists."

In the time of the Roman Empire - that is, after 27 B.C. - the cult of the emperor tied religion in with the state even more closely, and for all citizens of the Empire, not just Romans. The concept of the ruler as god was very old, perhaps first asserted by the Pharaohs of Egypt, Long before even Abraham and the patriarchs. More recently, Alexander the Great and his successors in the Eastern Mediterranean countries they dominated had claimed deity also, and the Jews had run afoul the consequences in the second century

B.C. in the time of the Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria, as mentioned in the book of Daniel

Julius Caesar claimed descent from Venus and Mars; near the end of his life his genius was worshipped, and at his death in 44 B.C. he was officially declared a god. His successor, Augustus, usually accounted the first emperor (27 B.C. - A.D. 14), though he made few claims for himself, nurtured the cult to Caesar, his father by adoption, and built a temple to him in the Roman Forum. The Emperor Gaius or Caligula demanded to be worshiped as god in his reign (37-41); but for his untimely assassination he would have provoked the Jews to rebellion. They did rebel a few years later (66 A.D.), under Nero. Though some of the emperors later refused worship in life, all were acclaimed gods at their deaths.

In many ways the worship of the Caesars became the single most characteristic religious act of individual Romans—or provincial—everywhere. This worship was more than a mere religious practice; it was an act of simple patriotism. Such obeisance helped to ensure the continuance of the celebrated peace that Romans rulers had brought to the world.

Thus the stage was set for conflict. The Roman government would inevitably oppose and eventually persecute any such exclusive religion as Christianity, especially if it was also intensely evangelistic so that it spread rapidly. Any Roman who turned Christian had to turn his back on his whole heritage, including possibly his family and certainly his state. He knew that ultimately it might cost him dearly - perhaps his life.

Small wonder that the relatively few who made that Commitment were dedicated people. They were able to endure the short but bloody persecutions at Rome under Nero in the 60's and under Domitian, in the 90's, just as Christians in the provinces were subjected to varying degrees of persecution from time to time. When for the first time an effort was made to stamp out Christianity throughout the entire Empire under Decius (249-251) they could endure that, too. It was a time of turmoil, this third century, with civil wars, barbarian invasions, plague, and economic chaos; Christians were blamed for all: they offended the gods.

After several decades of attempts to crush the new religion only resulted in its spread, one of the most relentless emperor—persecutors, Galerius, struck with a dread diseases, proclaimed tolerance for Christians in 311 A.D., as did Constantine a year later after he gained control of the city of Rome while fighting under a

Christian symbol. The latter, the first Christian emperor, made Christianity an easier commitment. Except for some later outbreaks, the great struggle between Christ and the pagan gods of Rome was ended.

Faithfully Free Or Fearfully Furtile?

LARRY DEASON

VIEWING LIFE FROM A HUMANISTIC, self-centered perspective results in futility and meaninglessness. As one man who sought fullness of life without God realized and, in wisdom, wrote:

So I hate life because the work that is done under the sun was Grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

The renowned and oft-quoted existentialist-philosopher, with lucid and astounding honesty, penned the following:

I find that I am alive and it sickens me.

Seeing life as it is defined and described in God's Word, the Bible, leads one to life that is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who said:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

One can only have lasting life in fullness and freedom in Jesus Christ. To realize and receive life in Jesus is to share in God's own eternal life, love, joy, peace, and freedom. Selfism, whether disguised in philosophical license or theological legalism, can never be fully alive or thoroughly free. Those who are captives of Selfism's religious legalism or slaves of humanistic license may be set free by mankind's great Liberator, Christ Jesus.

OBSTACLES TO FREEDOM

There are numerous barriers to freedom. These hindrances can rob us of God's gracious and abundant provision of life that we have in Christ. Three major thieves that plunder our freedom in Christ are ignorance, conceit, and fear.

Ignorance of Jesus as the Light of the world, and as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, can keep us in darkness. And the gloomy darkness keeps us from the radiance of God's freedom and love. Jesus is the wisdom from God that dispels ignorance. He is the truth that sets men free.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light to shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Conceit can keep us enslaved to our selfish egos. Arrogant pride can cause people to presume that they have need of nothing outside themselves. This is the deception of humanism and the disguise of legalism. Narcissism's preoccupation with one's own self is the ultimate of arrogance. I'm reminded of the young man's reply to the question, *"Are you consumed with pride?"* He replied, *"I used to be conceited, but there is nothing wrong with me now."* How blind one can be! We would like to think that selfish pride is restricted to those who are of the world; those that are arrogantly wicked and evil. But consider this religious man. He is so legalistically consumed with egotistical pride and conceit that while praying to God, (obviously deluded by his own selfish arrogance), he said:

"... God, I thank you that I am not like all other men...."

This man was so full of himself that he looked down on everybody else. He was so blinded by his conceit that he could not see himself as God saw him; Jesus said that this man was not justified in God's sight. The cocky arrogance of this self-righteous man is in sharp contrast to the other man in Jesus' parable; the other man was humble and broken before God. The humble man was exalted before God. Selfism's haughtiness and snobbish conceit rob one of his freedom in Christ. Ignorance and conceit are the two deadly foes of the freedom that God's grace brings to those who would follow Jesus Christ. The final foe of freedom that I want to mention is fear.

Fear, Anxiety, Worry, Consternation. These are thieves that cheat us out of the joy of God's freedom. Fear can keep us in bondage; trepidation is a type of enslavement in itself! But fearful anxiety can keep one in confinement: confined and captive to sin—that is, selfishness, and death itself. This is why Jesus came and identified with dying humanity:

...so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

A person who seeks to live life apart from God, the Creator and Controller of all things, can never be free from fear. The real self-righteous legalist cannot live free from fear because he is never sure if he really *"measures up"* to the rules and regulations. Even the most devoted can fall prey to the deception of legalism's fear.

The most sincere can, innocently, become slaves of religious legalism and its subsequent phobias.

Ten years ago I met such a sweet and lovely lady. She sat in a class that I was privileged to teach. We were studying from the Book of Galatians and were discussing the great themes of grace and freedom. After the first lesson she asked if she could talk to me; she had a few questions that she wanted clarified. The following week, after the second class, she invited me home to her daughter's house where she was visiting. We had a wonderful dinner that evening. While the daughter was finishing up in the kitchen she told me that her mother wanted to speak to me. I went into the living room where this stately lady sat. I settled down in a chair adjacent to her's, waiting for what I presumed to be some casual after-dinner conversation. Sitting tall and elegantly, she spoke to me with a strong voice and said, *"Do you know what you have done for me?"* Having no idea what she was alluding to, I replied, *"No, I don't. What have I done for you?"* Looking me straight in the eyes she confidently answered, *"You've set me free!"* I immediately knew that she was referring to the knowledge that she had learned in the classes concerning God's amazing grace and everlasting love. The following letter from her daughter will relate to you the rest of the story:

For many years my Mother has been involved with the church in one way or another; as secretary, helping with the finances or administration. As far as we knew, she had a steadfast faith and was happy in the Lord, growing in knowledge and understanding. What we didn't know was that she believed you had to obey God...or else!! Her participation over the years had grown out of a sense of duty, not because of her love for God. So many times she wondered if she would ever be good enough to get to heaven. She had been living in fear of losing her salvation because now that she was older and couldn't "earn her way" would she make that heavenly home after all? Oh, the Blessed relief of learning what true love of God's grace were all about. It lifted a great burden from her heart to know that she really is living and walking in the light and is covered each day by the blood of Christ. Finally, after thirty-seven years as a Christian follower, she can know that her salvation is assured! And she found the joy of the Lord at last. There had been many times she had wondered what was the use of getting out of bed to face another day of guesswork: "Will I make it to heaven? Have I wasted all these years? What can

I do for God at my age? ...will He accept me now that I can no longer do any works for him?" But now, in the absolute joy of knowing that God loves her as much, even more than He did before, she has found new hope and direction in her life and happiness beyond compare. Praise God for his eternal Love! May God bless you for bringing to my Mother the wonderful truth of the gospel and teaching her about the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus.

Free at last! This precious soul had been spiritually crippled for thirty-seven years. Her freedom and its joy had been robbed from her because she had been taught legalistic religion rather than a heart-love response to the saving grace of God. This lovely sister died the following year. For the faithful Christians even death becomes a doorway to gather freedom; liberated into the glorious presence of God! According to God's own Word she is *"at home with the Lord."* She went to be with her Lord in great joy and peace, resting in his marvelous grace and love that had set her free...free indeed!

Who's Who In Hell

JOHN STACY

MOST OF US CAN REMEMBER that in our high school yearbooks there was a section entitled, **"Who's Who."** The same book holds true with most collage yearbooks. There is a book entitled, **"Who's Who in America."** In it are the outstanding men and women in various fields of endeavor. But I wonder how many of you know that the Devil has a list of who will be in hell! In Revelation 21:8 we find this list, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."* Now a cursory glance at these groups of people might cause us to think that we certainly won't be on the Devil's list. But look again!

First, the apostle John lists the *"fearful."* The word here means the *"coward."* In the latter part of the first century Christians were put to the test through severe persecutions. Many were forced to call Caesar Lord and God and thus deny Christ. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12, *"If we endure with him we shall also reign with him."*

If we deny him, he will deny us." There were many cowards among the early Christians who would not stand up for Christ; The Christians life is likened unto a battle in the scriptures with Christians being the soldiers. In 2 Timothy 2:3,4 Paul said, *"Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ, for no soldier in service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath enrolled him to be a soldier."* Friends, Jesus wants all who would follow him to be with him on the front lines in the thick of the fight, he wants his people out of the grandstands and into the arena! Where are you?

Secondly, we find the *"unbelieving"* listed. This word means, *"faithless."* Certainly this refers to the pagan or non-believer. But it also applies to faithless Christians. These are described by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:5, as holding a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. When Jesus says get into the arena and fight, they say we can't. They have no faith in Christ. Does this describe you?

The third word is *"abominable."* This word means *"defiled."* John said in Revelation 21:27, *"And there shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth."* Jesus said in James 1:27, *"Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this ...that a man keep himself unspotted from the world."* Are your garments free from sin?

The fourth word is *"murderers."* You say you would never kill anyone. But in 1 John 3:15 John, said, *"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."* "Do you hate someone?"

The fifth word is *"fornication."* This word refers to sexual relations outside of marriage. You say you would never be guilty of this. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, *"But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart."*

The Sixth word is *"sorcerers."* This word means *"one who misuses drugs and one who practices magic."* "With all of the drug selling and addiction today we must conclude that many still fall into this category.

The seventh word is *"idolatry."* Many who claim to be Christians are still falling down to idols. Paul in Colossians 3:5 said, *"...covetousness is idolatry."* Yes, idolatry is still with us in the form of covetousness. Are you an idolater?

The last word is *"liars."* Solomon said in Proverbs 12:22, *"Lying lips are an abomination."* Not only can we lie with our tongues, but

we can lie with our lives. In Titus 1:16 we read, *“They profess that they know God but by their works they deny him...”* Are you a liar?

All of these groups of people are high on the Devil’s list and will live their eternity in hell!

Christianity Is Not A Sect Of Judaism

ROGER E. DICKSON

THE JEWS IN ROME WERE FAR REMOVED from the events of Christianity in Palestine. Therefore, when Paul arrived in Rome, they were interested in what he had to say. They said, *“But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere”* (Acts 28:22). On the other hand, the Jews in Palestine who knew Paul, accused him of being a ringleader of the *“Christian sect.”* Tertullus falsely accused Paul before Felix, *“For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”* (Acts 24:5). It seems that the farther one was from Rome the more distorted the information became. One can only imagine the misconceptions that were in the minds of the Roman Court before whom Paul would have his case presented. Everything they had heard about Christians was certainly a distortion of what was actually true.

It was Luke’s task, therefore, to present to Roman Court adequate information that would clarify Paul’s Christian beliefs, as well as, the belief and behavior of all Christians. It was a common misconception among Roman rulers that Christianity was only a sect of Judaism. To such uninformed rulers this would be a natural misconception. They knew little or nothing about Jesus or Christianity. Throughout Luke’s defense, therefore, a clear statement is made that Christianity was not a subversive or heretical split from the Jewish religion. Though Jesus and Christianity arose out of the Jewish nation, it was a prophesied movement that was based upon a prophesied Messiah

A. The Old Testament Scriptures Prophesied of the Messiah

Jewish Scripture (the Old Testament) prophesied that the light of the gospel should go to all nations. This would include the Gentiles.

In quoting Isaiah 42:6 (see Isa. 49:6), Paul stated, *"I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles..."* (13:46,47). The early Jewish Christians, evangelists, as Paul, turned to the Gentiles, not only because of prophecy, but also because of Jewish opposition to the gospel event. Paul quoted Old Testament prophecy to the Jews in Rome concerning Israel's rejection of the gospel. *"Go to this people and say: Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceived; for the heart of this people has grown dull."* (Acts 28:25-27; see Isa. 42:1,6; 49:6) Since prophets prophesied that Christianity would bring hope to all nations, it cannot be said that Christianity was a sect of Judaism.

Luke argues that Christianity was a prophesied movement that would originate from the Jewish nation because the Messiah would come from Israel. However, it was a movement to all nations of the world. Paul's calling and life only manifested what God had always intended. And what God intended to happen was that the apostles be witnesses of Jesus *"in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the world"* (1:8).

B. The Jews Opposed Christianity

The early disciples were regularly opposed by the Jews. Luke records that, *"they opposed the things spoken by Paul"* (Acts 13:45). Paul said that since *"you reject it [the gospel], and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46). In fact, the Jews *"raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region"* (Acts 13:50). In Corinth also, the Jews *"opposed him and blasphemed"* (Acts 18:6). Again Paul said, *"From now on I will go to the Gentiles"* (Acts 18:6). The synagogue of Jews in Ephesus was no different. Luke records that *"some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the way before the multitude..."* (Acts 19:9).

Christianity was not a part of Judaism as the sect of Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes or Zealots. The vast majority of nation Israel, or Judaism, totally rejected this Jesus as their Messiah. They crucified Jesus (Acts 2:36; 3:14,15). In fact, the religious rulers of Jerusalem commanded the apostles *"not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"* (Acts 4:17). Luke thus argues, How could Christianity be a sect of a religion that so vehemently fought against it? Christianity, before, was not just another sect of Judaism. Christians, including Paul, believed what they did because of the fulfillment of prophecy and the miraculous events surrounding one called Jesus.

Are You Prepared For Death?

ELWOOD HOLT

BEFORE A BIG BATTLE, a Christian soldier said to his comrade, "You are detailed to go to the front, while I am to remain with the baggage. Let us change places. I'll go to the front; you remain in camp." "What for?"—asked his companion. "Because I am prepared to die and you are not." The exchange was made.

I am wondering today how many of us would be willing to risk our lives for our friends? How many understand the value of one human soul? David said after the death of Absalom, his son, "Oh Absalom, my son Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died for thee." He would gladly have given his life for his son because he knew that he had died in rebellion, and unsaved. It is sad to see souls going into the presence of Almighty God every minute of the day, unprepared to stand before the wrath of the Great Judge. It is still sadder to see members of our own families going into the great expanse of eternity, inadequately equipped for that life. It makes us want to do something for them, but we can't. After they are gone we cannot call them back. Nor can we obey the gospel for them. There is no such thing as "baptism for the dead." In I Corinthians 15 when Paul mentioned "baptism for the dead" he was showing the power of the resurrection and telling us how to get ready for it. He says that baptism prepares us for the dead, and, if the dead rise not, why be baptized at all? It is a very beautiful argument in favor of what God commands the alien sinner to do, but it has been perverted, like other passages, and men have sought to justify a baptism for people who went on out of this life unprepared.

It would be wonderful if we would properly evaluate life—if we would stamp timely things with their true value. Too many of us are too busy doing this or that, seeking this fortune and that, until we have no time for the winning of our friends and loved ones to the cause of Christ. But, what can such ill-gotten gains profit us in the last days? The wise man said, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath" (Proverbs 11:4). Riches cannot buy salvation. Many parents have gained vast fortunes but lost the souls of their children. When we have a deep passion for human souls such as our Saviour had for us, we will drop everything else in favor of helping someone else see the marvelous light as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Man is unhappy until he embraces truth. Men grope through life seeking

contentment. They gain their power, their riches, their prominent places of prestige, their homage, but their hearts are as troubled and turbulent as ever. You could give a man half the universe, and he would quarrel with the holder of the other half. He thinks that he needs all the universe to himself. But, that would not do either. He would still be an unhappy creature. David comprehended it better when he said, "My soul panteth for God, for the living God." There is that in man which the knowledge of the living God only can satisfy, which having God, has all things in him. God has given man two eyes, two ears. If he loses one he has another on which to depend. But, the Father has given man only one soul. If he loses it, he is lost forever. Is our soul slipping away? Will it one day be out of reach of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation? Are we, by carelessness, indifference, too much business, and other frivolous excuses, losing the souls of our children? Like parents—like child. Faithful parents—faithful children. Saved parents—saved children. Lost parents—lost children. "Would to God I had died for thee!" May these terrible and tragic words never escape our tormented hearts. We can do something about our souls now. We may not be able to tomorrow. We can dedicate our children, our friends, our loved ones to the Lord now. They may be beyond our reach tomorrow.

The soldier who switched places with his comrade did so because he realized the tragedy of a lost soul. Do we? I wonder if we do. Jesus loved us so much that he laid down his life for us. "Greater love hath no man" than this, he declared. Seldom will one die even for a friend. Jesus died for us while we were his enemies. Surely out of hearts of gratitude we want to so live as to please him. Jesus said, I will come back for you (John 14:1-5). Are you ready to go?

DOES GOD REQUIRE WORKS?

ALLEN WEBSTER

THERE IS NO WAY TO EARN OUR SALVATION by works of merit separate from God's wonderful grace. Paul said, "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). No man has a right to go about to earn his salvation and then boast that he has done so. The New Testament teaches that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). There are many who take this to mean that man can be saved by *grace alone before and without any works of*

obedience. Is this a fair handling of the Word of God?

Faith is demonstrated by good works. James said, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? ... Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (2:14, 17, 18). Faith without works is dead (2:20). Paul said we are saved by faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6). The rich, young ruler came to Jesus with the question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). Jesus did not tell him that he did not have to do anything. He told him to "keep the commandments." The Lord said on another occasion, "If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).

Have you submitted to God? Why not let your faith lead to repentance, confession, baptism, and faithful, dedicated Christian living (Romans 10:10; I Peter 3:21; Titus 2:12; I Corinthians 15:58). You cannot be saved by grace alone.

THE SIN OF WORLDLINESS

W.A. HOLLEY

THE WORD **WORLDLINESS** REFERS to those of this world who are devoted to the pursuits of worldly pleasures (as hedonism which teaches that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life), as opposed to the teaching of religion or spiritual affairs as taught in your Bible (Titus 2:11-12; I John 2:15-17).

When the Bible teaches that we should not "love the world," the meaning is not that we should not love the planet earth with all its beautiful oceans, streams, beaches, sunrises, sunsets, and the like. Rather it is our responsibility to protect our environment as much as possible.

The sin of worldliness can destroy our nation and world. Ancient history reveals the fact that many great and powerful nations passed into oblivion because they refused to follow the way of God Almighty (Romans 1:18-32; Acts 14:15; 18; 17:22-31). The Assyrian, the Babylonian, and Roman empires are excellent examples of what happens to nations when God is not permitted to rule in the world which He created (Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 44:24; Jeremiah 10:12; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 10:6). God still rules in the kingdoms of men whether we wish to recognize it or not (Daniel

4:17, 25, 32; 2:21; 5:21). Humanism, like Communism, is doomed to absolute and utter failure because God who created the world and man has been left out. Man cannot direct himself (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; John 14:1-6). We shall discuss various and sundry sin-problems which should catch our readers' attention.

(1) Fornication and adultery have become very popular. Hundreds of both men and women are telling their experiences to nation-wide audiences. One famous ball player claims to have been involved with 20,000 women. Another says he was involved with 1,000 women. The sin of fornication and adultery are sins against God (Genesis 39:9; Proverbs 6:29, 32). One can become so callused till sexual sins become a way of life (Proverbs 30:20).

Elizabeth Taylor said she believes in marriage. Well she should since she has been married eight times. In many churches divorces have become quiet common, so much so, till little attention is given to it anymore. Elders, preachers, and other church-leaders tend to sweep it under the rug. But we can be certain that God will not forget our sins at the Great Judgment (II Corinthians 5:10). More and more of those claim to be Christians are drinking and divorcing and remarrying. Here is one way the world gets into the church (See Ephesians 5:25-30; James 1:26-27). We are strong and weak at the same time depending on how we solve our problems.

(2) Pornography represents one of our greatest evils. Magazines and video cassettes are regularly brought into the home where husbands and wives and children are exposed to the worst kind of vulgarity. These items are sold almost everywhere. What is pornography? It is "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement" (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary). It is no wonder that young boys and girls become active in sexual activities so early. In many instances their parents have taught them to so engage. What a shame!

How can one have a clean, pure, holy mind if he continues to fill it with garbage and trash and filth?

(3) Many Christians are watching too much television. Many miss the assembly in order to watch their favorite program. Which comes first television or the Lord's Day assembly? (Matthew 6:33; Psalm 37:25).

Television could have been a great force for good, but, alas, it has become an all-consuming power for evil. For example, television promotes violence. You don't think so? Listen to this: "Before television was belately introduced, they monitored rates of inappropriate physical aggression among children first and second-

graders. After two years of television, the rate increased 160 percent, in both boys and girls ..." (Birmingham Post-Herald, April 9, 1993). A study of the effect that television has on violence shows that from 1945 to 1974 the white homicide in the United States increased 93 percent; in Canada, 92 percent. Learn a lesson: A 14-month-old child can adopt behavior it has seen on television, because it cannot distinguish fact from fiction. It thinks television tells him how the world really works. If someone gets in your way cut him down or blow him away. Parents, do not permit television to become your permanent baby-sitter.

(4) Worldliness is shown in the popularity of various sins. More and more teenagers say yes, to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. As a result violent crime is up 560 percent; illegitimate births up 419 percent; divorce up 400 percent; and teenage suicides have doubled.

Parents, it is past time for you to perform your duty to your children. Children need good, godly examples on the part of their mothers and fathers (Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:17-21; Proverbs 22:6; II Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Parents, go to worship with them, sing and pray with them; You will never be sorry. Parents, do you have no feeling of responsibility toward your own children? Training children must begin when they are young. An old oak tree cannot be successfully trained. Parents, your child needs academic, moral, and spiritual training. All bad habits must be given up; it is better to lose the anchor than the whole ship.

(5) To overcome worldliness set the finest example before your friends, your children, your business associates. Honesty is a virtue needed by all, but being strictly honest is a constant battle. Integrity is not a percentage proposition—either you have it or you don't.

Put your faith and trust in God Almighty. God is or God is not. The Bible is true or it is not. God created the heavens and the earth or He did not. The church described in the Holy Scripture is the true church or it is not. The plan of salvation presented in the New Testament is God's Plan or it is not. God has a divine pattern for worship or He does not. Truth is truth or it is not.

God requires responsible people everywhere to believe and obey His gospel or He does not (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; Hebrews 5:8-9; I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:6-10). We sincerely urge all our readers to help us make the world in which we live a better place for all people everywhere.