

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

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

*“There Is Therefore No Condemnation  
To Those Who Are In Christ Jesus”*

BECAUSE ALL ACCOUNTABLE HUMAN BEINGS, who know difference between right and wrong, except little children, have sinned against God by entertaining evil thoughts in their heart or mind, and have fallen to the temptations to do wrong, the Bible declares that all have sinned and are under condemnation because of sin. (Romans 3:23). Sin separates man from God, and that separation is called death—spiritual alienation of man from God. (Isaiah 59:2). Man wants to reach God. He knows one day he has to leave this world. All want to go to heaven. To appease God, man renders his offerings and worships, and works of his own righteousness. The Bible says, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6). Again, “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.” (Acts 17:24-25). The inference is, there is nothing that man can do or give to God to make himself worthy of heaven.

Knowing the inability of man to make himself worthy of heaven, the loving God sent His Word from heaven to earth, allowed Him to be born in human flesh as Jesus Christ, the anointed Savior of



man. (John 1:1, 14). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). God so loved the world, because He has created man in His own image and after His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26-27). Man is God’s offspring. (Acts 17:29). He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9).

It was the love of God for humans that allowed His Son to be betrayed into the hands of His enemies. Again, it was the love of God that allowed men to crucify Him. Through His death on the cross, God made Him the propitiation or atoning payment for the sins of the world. (1 John 1:1-2; 4:10). When Christ was dying on the cross, God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. The Bible, in fact, tells us that on the cross, God had made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21).

Now, because God has done this great and amazing and wonderful thing, we read, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1). Further, it says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). When an individual gets into Christ, puts on Christ, he/she becomes a new creation or a new person; **Washed** of sins, because of the shed blood of Christ for sinners from the cross; **Sanctified**, or set apart to live for God; **Justified**, sins having been forgiven because of the propitiatory death of Christ; and **Preserved**, to live undefiled in a sinful world, by following in the steps of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:11; Jude 1; 1 Peter 2:21). In this relationship with God, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Man’s response and desire, therefore, should be to get into Christ as quickly as possible. How does one do that? The Bible says, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27). One should believe in Christ with whole heart and repent of all wrongs, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and live in Christ faithfully until death to be blessed not only in this life but also in the eternal life which is to come. (Revelation 2:10; 14:13). This is the Good News of God for man.

# IN CHRIST

J. C. CHOATE



THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT WE ARE BORN, physically, without sin. We are pure, innocent, and safe. Christ said that we as adults, having reached the age of accountability, knowing right from wrong, and having thus become sinners (Romans 3:23), must now be converted and become as little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3).

We who are sinners need to be saved because we have become transgressors of God's law. (1 John 3:4). Paul reminds us that "...the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

But how can we escape sin and death? How can we be forgiven, delivered, and transferred to a state of salvation? Christ says that if we believe and be baptized, He will save us. (Mark 16:16). When Peter preached to a large crowd of people, and they became believers and wanted to know what else they should do, he told them that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). We are told that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47).

It is our last step of initial obedience to the Lord—baptism—which transfers us out of the world and into Christ and His church. Baptism alone is nothing, of course, and will do nothing for us, unless it is preceded by faith in God and Christ, by turning from our sins—which is repentance—and by confessing our faith in Christ as the Son of God. Then on being baptized—buried in water to wash away our sins, in compliance with the Lord's instructions—We are told that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21). The water itself does not save us, but Christ saves because we have been baptized according to His will. As Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21, baptism is not for the purpose of putting away the filth of the flesh, or to take a bath, but it is done to bring about a good conscience before God.

The question then comes, "How can one have a good conscience before God unless he does what God has asked him to do?" Of course such a thing would be impossible, so it is necessary that the penitent believer be baptized.

Another way of putting it is this: when one is baptized

scripturally—buried in water and brought forth from the water to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3, 4)—he experiences the new birth of water and of the Spirit, being born again, spiritually (John 3:3-5). Paul explains it like this: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

To have salvation and to be a new creature, one must be in Christ, and there is just one way to enter Christ. The apostle Paul said, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that as Christ was raised up from the death by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4).

That’s what Paul was saying in 2 Corinthians 5:17, the newness of life is the result of being new creatures or new people in Christ. Again, he said, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27).

For example, when one puts on a coat, is he in the coat or outside the coat? Of course, he is inside the coat. So when one is baptized into Christ, that means he is in Christ, not outside of Christ. It further means that one is a child of God in Christ, not outside of Christ.

Those who say that they were saved at one point in time, and then later they were baptized, are saying that they were saved outside of Christ or without Christ. How can that be? If the scriptures teach that one must be in Christ to be saved, and that it is baptism that puts one into Christ, then that means that it would be impossible for one to be saved before baptism!

Again, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that we are baptized into one body, and he says, in Colossians 1:18 that the body is the church. In Ephesians 1:22, 23 he shows that the church is the body, and finally in Ephesians 4:4 he states that there is only one body.

But if the one body is the church, that means there is but one church, and if we are baptized into that body or that church, then there is only one way to enter the church: by being baptized! It is all so very logical!

Putting the points together, when we obey the Lord in baptism, we enter Christ and His church, being born of the water and of the Spirit, and at the same time Christ adds us to His church.

In physical relationship, that is, once we have been born into a physical family, we will always be in that family. We cannot be unborn.

We may be a faithful and loyal member of our family and receive the benefits of thereof, or we may live in such a way as to be disinherited, but we will always be the son or daughter of our father and mother.

The same is true spiritually. Once we enter Christ and His church or family, we will always be in Christ and we will always be members of that one family—but, we will be either faithful or unfaithful. As a child of God, faithful unto death, the Lord has promised to give us a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10).

If we are unfaithful we may be dis-fellowshipped in this world by the local congregation of the family, and we may finally be eternally lost, if we do not repent (Matthew 25:46). If we will repent of our sins and return to the Lord we will be forgiven and may again receive the benefits that comes to those who belong to the Lord. Read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 to better understand this spiritual family relationship.

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## *To the 3rd and 4th Generation*

DAVID TARBET

I HAVE WONDERED ABOUT THE statement found in Exodus 20:5 that God visits *“the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.”* There must be significance to the fact that God limits His wrath to the “third and fourth” generation, rather than extending it to the fifth, sixth, or tenth. I have decided that the significance lies in this: three or four generations live simultaneously, each influencing and affecting the other. The sinful behavior of one generation is reproduced in all generations contemporary with it. Children look to their parents, grandchildren look to their grandparents, and great-grandchildren look to their great-grandparents as role models. Each generation picks up the bad behavior patterns of the previous generation. Thus, God is justified in bringing His wrath upon the third and fourth generation because all of these generations imitate each other, participating in the same sins.

If sinful behavior has such an on-going and powerful influence upon children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, righteous behavior can also have a powerful influence. It is a serious mistake for parents to think their spiritual influence is limited to the formative years when their children are living “at home.” The truth is, parents

never stop having an influence for good in the lives of their children—even after they become adults. Have you stopped to think that grandparents have important godly influence over their grandchildren, too? And great-grandparents as well!

That is why all of us simply must continue to be faithful to the Lord and His church! The example we set will likely determine whether our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren are involved in the kingdom. In other words, the job of parents is never finished. They just keep on making an impact for good or for evil, long after their children have left home. So, be faithful to the very end—the lessons you teach by your faithfulness will be felt for a long, long time after you are gone!

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## TRAIN UP A CHILD

JACK HARRIMAN

THE WISE MAN SOLOMON SAID, “*Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6).

Training up a child in the way he should go implies that there is a wrong way as well as a right way. It also implies that if a child is to *go* the right way, he must be *trained* to go that way. Solomon said, “*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child*” (Proverbs 22:15), and “*A child left to himself will bring his mother to shame*” (Proverbs 29:15).

If we are to train our children in the way they should go, we must know the way ourselves. Jesus said, “*If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch*” (Matthew 15:14). Obviously, if we do not know the right way, we will not be able to train our children in the right way.

If we are to train our children in the way they should go, we must be going that way ourselves. The old saying “like mother-like daughter” and “like father-like son” is not far wrong. If we lead them to believe that money and pleasure are the most important things in life, they will. If we lead them to believe that physical things are more important than spiritual things, they will. Our values will become their values.

If our children are to go the way they should go, then they must be trained to go that way. The training of them requires true and

constant teaching. We must fill our children's minds with all that is right in respect to both God and man so that they will not be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Training also involves their practice—repetition. It is not enough just to instruct them, they must also practice it. Fathers and mothers must see that they do, so long as they are under our authority.

Do you know the way? Are you going that way? Are you training your children in that way?

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## *DANGERS OF DRIFTING FROM GOD*

DILLARD THURMAN

*TAKE HEED, BRETHREN LEST there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. 3:12-13). The inspired writer of Hebrews knew full well that it was possible to depart from God, and here he warns of its probability. The "impossibility of apostasy" idea had not then gained circulation. He not only warned against it, but cited instances where it had happened. These words were written to Hebrew Christians who then faced great trials for their faith in Jesus, and many were tempted to turn back to the law of Moses, which had been done away in Christ.

The Hebrew writer shows that Jesus Christ is our high priest, "*after the order of Melchizedek*" (Heb. 5:6). Knowing that this was a different priesthood than that of Aaron's, under the law given through Moses, he adds: "*The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*" (Heb. 7:12). He goes on to show that the old law was "*disannulled*" (Heb. 7:18) because of its weaknesses, and we today are living under a "*better covenant, which was established upon better promises*" (Heb. 8:6). Christ, by His death on the cross, became "*the mediator of the new testament*" (Heb. 9:15) and said, "*Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*" (Heb. 10:9-10). There was great danger for those who tried to go back to the old law, for: "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*" (Gal. 5:4).

## THE DECEPTIVENESS OF DRIFTING

Though many people do not deliberately turn against God, there are many who “*drift away*.” And even though the process of drifting is very slow, and hard to detect, still the end result is just as complete and fatal as rebelliously turning away. Since stationary relationship with God cannot be sustained, we must either draw closer to God each day, or we slip further away. We are better or worse, higher or lower, at the close of each day. If we are not progressing in righteousness, then retrogression eats as a cancer within. “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them ... How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?*” (Heb. 2:1-3). One does not have to openly rebel against God, or rise in denial of Him, to be lost. This end is more easily attained merely by neglecting Him and His will for our lives.

## DRIFTING IS A GRADUAL PROCESS

Notice that the Bible says, “*Lest haply we drift away*.” Deterioration is seldom noted as a sudden process. A dilapidated farm house often changes so gradually that the tenant is unaware of change until the building is beyond the point of justifiable repair. Soil erosion may be so gradual that the farmer is unconscious of any threat to his field until the worth of his land has been permanently destroyed. In like manner, spiritual erosion and deterioration within may be so gradual that we neglect a remedy until disaster confronts us.

The surface of a placid lake betrays no sign of movement or current. Yet the next morning may find a floating log on a distant shore. Drifting will not attract attention as will a sudden lurch, but the end result may be even greater. And in our spiritual affairs, no current may be detected on the surface, but an undertow can cause a drift that will take us away from God. Subtle influences and the pressure of temporal affairs may cause us to depart from the course of sound gospel preaching and practice.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF DRIFTING

The antediluvian people did not suddenly renounce their allegiance to Jehovah. Rather, it was by small departures that they drifted away, until finally a breach was widened that brought on a flood to destroy them (Gen. 6-9). Israel allowed small influences and social pressures to separate them gradually from God, until He allowed them to be taken away into captivity because of their



departure. When King Jereboam turned the people of Israel from God, he did so by the use of cunningly devised innovations which at first appeared to be small and harmless. Yet twenty-three times, Jereboam is branded as the one *“who made Israel to sin”* (1 Kgs. 12).

If “eternal vigilance is the price of freedom” in political affairs, then spiritual freedom is no less exacting. Thus, it is no wonder that God often warns us to *“take heed”* (Psa. 119:9; Eccle. 12:9; Acts 8:6; Heb. 2:1; etc.). Similar warnings are penned in God’s word by the apostle Paul, *“Let a man examine himself... Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves”* (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

### **LOVE OF THE WORLD CAUSES DRIFTING**

Possibly one of the most potent factors that promotes drifting from God is a desire to conform to this present world. Our innate desire to be accepted by our fellows easily leads us to the brink of compromise. We would like to be accepted by our religious neighbors, and therefore are tempted to “soft pedal” when straightforward Bible Teaching would offend. We desire to appear honorable in the sight of the world, and are tempted to lay aside the simple story of the cross and man’s need for salvation, in order to present a social gospel that will win friends but may fall far short of the pungent words of inspired men. We want the favor of neighbors and friends, and find it better to dodge an issue than to be faced with a situation as John faced, when he told Herod, *“It is not lawful for you to have her”* (Matt. 14:4). That cost him his head! It is convenient to salve our conscience with the idea that “times have changed,” and make no outcry against the lewd pictures depicted in daily papers and magazines, semi-nudity on the streets, pornography, sexual immorality and filthy language in movies and on television.

But friends, God still challenges us with, *“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”* (Isa. 58:1). He still demands of us, *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”* (2 Cor. 6:17). God’s people must forever remain *“a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14). Saints must still be taught, *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”* (Rom.

12:2). It is easy to drift with the world, but many times more difficult to brave the cruel chidings to take a stand for principles of truth and right! So, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 John 2:15). If you have a high regard for what the world thinks and says, then there is a grave possibility that you are even now drifting away from God.

### **SPIRITUAL IRRITABILITY IS A SIGN OF DRIFTING**

A symptom of drifting from God is found in spiritual irritability. When one becomes peevish and persists in bickering and strife to attain selfish whims and desires, it is likely he is drifting away from God. When plans and programs are championed to the hurt and neglect of others, or the whole work of the church is ridiculed or denounced, it is likely that the critic is growing more and more distant from God. This religious irritability becomes apparent in gossiping and in fault-finding. Such a one not only drifts away from God, but is constantly nudging others along the same road to destruction. If you find that Christians “rub you the wrong way,” you are drifting in the wrong direction!

### **LACK OF SPIRITUAL APPETITE DENOTES DRIFTING**

When one displays a lack of spiritual appetite, in that there is no longer a hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it means another person is drifting away from God. Such a diseased person may go for days without spiritual food, and will absent himself from divine appointments with little remorse. If he attends, one hour of service a week seems sufficient. The rest of the time his Bible lies unopened on the shelf. He becomes one of a number (whose name is legion), who do not allow spiritual things to interfere with “living a Christian life.” Such folk have become insensible to the danger of *“departing from the living God.”*

### **RELIGIOUS IDLENESS PORTRAYS DRIFTING**

Religious idleness is probably the most common and noticeable of all the symptoms of drifting away from God. Anything lifeless will drift with the tide, and the restless tide of life will surely not move one closer to God! It takes vitality and activity to stand against this influence. As a dead fish drifts with the current and the live fish swims against it, so the dying Christian drifts with the world in idleness, and the live saint will fight against the pressures. Those afflicted by religious idleness will never display zeal and energy, but

will be lulled to sleep by impersonally criticizing any who strive to do the work of the Lord.

### HOW CAN WE PREVENT DRIFTING?

The remedy for this situation lies in awaking to the need to correct the situation. We must become aware of the disastrous plight of drifting away from God. *"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:14-16). The remedy for drifting from God is found in our being alerted to the condition and apprised of its dangers. We must then take corrective steps. If we have drifted away from God, we must realize that we can never drift back to him! It will only be by diligent action that we may be able to return to the Lord. *"He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Heb. 11:6).

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## Gospel Is Good News

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Most evening news programs on our televisions contain most of the bad news of the world. A small percentage of news reports may contain relatively good reports, but they are rare, indeed. However, there is a wonderful and beautiful message of hope and joy in the precious proclamation of the life and death of our Lord. Verily, the gospel is great news of a risen Savior who has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). This powerful story of love and peace is truly glad tidings to warm our hearts and give us reason for life in the here and now (Mark 10:30). This, alone, should block out the dreary gloom so rampant about us.

Christians have a wonderful Savior who cared enough to leave the bliss of glory (1 John 4:14) to die at Calvary so that we could be redeemed. He shed His blood on the cross to make it possible for us to escape the penalty sin brings (Rom. 6:23; 1 Pet. 2:24). That is the best news the world could ever hear! The gospel also provides us with our dearest friend (John 15:13) to brighten our day and defeat any pessimism that would cloud the sunshine of our existence. In deepest sorrow, heartache and loneliness, our Master cares: *"Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you"* (1 Pet. 5:7). What glorious news!

*There's not a friend  
Like the lowly Jesus.  
No, not one!*

Children of God also rejoice in our relationship with Jesus as the Master Teacher. He knows what is in man (John 2:25), and, as a result, He can guide us into the verdant path of holiness and integrity with the wonderful words of life (John 6:68). Nicodemus declared, *"Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God"* (John 3:2). And when officers were sent to arrest Jesus, they came back empty-handed, saying, *"Never man so spake"* (John 7:46). Jesus was truly "A man sent from God with teaching beyond compare." The gospel is the good news because it brings comfort to soothe broken hearts and to wipe away our tears. In Isa. 38:5, Jehovah told a very sad king, *"I have heard your prayers. I have seen your tears."*

*"The God of all comfort"* (2 Cor. 1:3) will sustain us in grief and loss. Till the end of time, He will be with us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). There really is a lot of good news available. Why not turn off the gloom and doom of television reports and open up the Bible and find the power of God to lead you and calm your troubled soul? There is true satisfaction when we surrender our very being to the glad tidings of truth. When we learn to serve the Lord in the beauty of godliness, new vistas of radiant sunshine flood our lives with positive thinking and joyous service. What a friend we have in Jesus! May we never overlook our tremendous blessings in Christ.

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## *If Christ Has Not Been Raised*

HARVEY PORTER

CHRISTIANS AT CORINTH HAD BEEN confused about the resurrection of the dead. In the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to them Paul masterfully gave arguments for Christ's resurrection and the bodily resurrection of all mankind. The pagan religions had no definite doctrines concerning life after death. Christianity was alone in giving hope and certainty for life after death; and it still is.

Paul wrote, *"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our*

*preaching is useless and so is your faith"* (1 Corinthians 15:12-14).

Paul began this treatise by saying that it was of *"first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"* (verses 3 and 4). The essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is His death, burial, and resurrection. This is the key to the message of the whole Bible. Paul emphasized that His death was *"according to the Scriptures"* and that He was raised *"on the third day according to the Scriptures."* These facts were the fulfillment of God's age-old plan for salvation of the whole human family. This was a very deliberate act on the part of Divinity to save all fallen sinners. It was not an uncontrolled set of human circumstances.

It appears that the Corinthians were saying that Jesus was raised from the dead, but no one else would be. Paul countered by saying that if there is no resurrection for all, then even Jesus could not have been raised. He later states in this chapter that Christ is the *"first-fruits"* of those who are raised from the dead, that after Christ's resurrection there are more to come.

Paul argued next that if Christ was not raised, then the message the church preached was vain or useless. This means that the early church preached the resurrection of Christ. This formed the heart of the message of Good News, which we call Gospel. This is the best news a world of constantly dying people could possibly have. Young and old are dying every hour of every day, all over this planet. The one thing man needs to hear and wants to hear is that we can live again. And the best part is that we can live in the presence of the forgiving, loving Father and the Savior who died for us to make all this possible. It is hard for me to understand why the world has so often rejected this truth. It is even harder to understand why Christians who supposedly have embraced Christianity live as though this life is all there is. Some seldom worship, study, pray, or give to the Lord. Many never talk of eternity, and yet we all know that this is *"of first importance."*

Paul followed by saying that if their preaching of the resurrection of Christ was false, then their faith was useless also. Faith is based upon the message preached. In Paul's Roman epistle he wrote, *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."* Faith is not all that mysterious. God tells us what we must believe, and we either accept it or reject it. If we accept, then we *"live by faith."* Our whole life is guided, comforted, and upheld by our faith. And at the very heart of this faith is the strong belief that we shall live again

after these few days, and that we shall live either in heaven or in hell. Jesus also revealed this fact, along with the doctrine of resurrection. It is a package revelation. You have to take justice along with the love of God, punishment along with reward.

Paul closed this section of this great chapter by saying, *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”* We are not to be pitied, dear believer. It is those who do not believe who have no hope. We do, because He lives!

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## DIGGING SPIRITUAL HOLES

BYRON NICHOLS

IN MATTHEW 25:14-30 WE READ THE parable of the talents. You will remember that Jesus told of a certain master giving three servants different amounts of money, the amounts varying in relation to the ability of each one. One was given five talents (or portions of money), another was given two, and the third received one. If you will recall, each of the first two servants wisely handled the master's money, even to the extent of doubling it.

But then, there was that fellow who had been given the one talent. His handling of his master's money resulted in no increase whatsoever. Notice the master's rebuke: *“You wicked and slothful (lazy) servant, ...”* The master later refers to this one as *“the unprofitable servant”* (verse 30).

Question: What was it that the servant had done that was so bad? Answer: Nothing—absolutely nothing. That was the problem. Instead of trying to make a profit for his master, he just went out and dug a hole in the ground and buried the master's money.

The master trusted them all; he placed his confidence in them. He was giving them an opportunity to prove themselves worthy of his faith in them. He didn't stay there and look over their shoulders to see if they were handling the situation just like he would do it. Instead, he went away and gave them the opportunity to make their own decisions.

Before leaving, the master let the servants know clearly what he expected of them. There was no lack of instruction or communication. Each one could know just as well as the others exactly what the master wanted him to do. All that was necessary was to pay attention to what the master said before he left.

It is also noteworthy in verse 19 that it was only after *“a long*

*time*” that the master returned and asked for an accounting by each servant. He gave them ample time to do what was expected of them. They were allotted sufficient time to start out wrong and end up right—they had plenty of time to make some mistakes and still correct their course of action and present an acceptable profit to the master upon his return.

I believe the fact that the master was gone for “*a long time*” is a definite indication that he did not expect or require significant results immediately. It seems that he understood that things require an adequate amount of time in order to be accomplished.

Even a rather casual reading of this parable shows that these servants were not in competition with each other. The master had not made a contest out of the situation. It was not a matter of who was more capable than the others, but rather it was a matter of who was faithful in following instructions and trying to do the will of the master. The servant who received two talents of money received the same praise and commendation as the one who had received five. They deserved equal recognition—they had both done the same thing, that is, they both did the best they knew how to do with what they had.

The master did not require fantastic results. Verse 27 shows that he would have been satisfied if the servant who was entrusted with the one talent had just put the money in the bank and earned the interest on it. That wouldn’t be much of a return now, and it would not have been too much then either, but it would have at least been an improvement over digging a hole in the dirt and depositing the money there.

In verse 24 we read the report to the master by the servant who buried the money. He said, “*I knew you to be a hard man ...*.” Obviously, this was only an excuse, not a fact. There is nothing in the text to indicate that the master was hard or demanding, except for the fact that he did demand obedience. There is no evidence of harshness or unfairness on his part.

Jesus wants us all to see that He is portrayed by the master in the story, and that we, as His followers, are the servants. Let’s be sure to carefully read the parable with this in mind.

We can all be successful servants, stewards. Our Master is not a hard taskmaster, but He has made it clear that “digging a hole” and burying our spiritual talents will not be acceptable. He definitely is demanding that every servant of His be busy using his/her talents in an effort to increase the size of the Master’s estate. May all of us

rejoice in our role as His servants and do our very best to faithfully use what He has entrusted to us, and not bury it in fear of failure. He wants us to succeed, and He has promised to help us be successful.

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## He Turned His People Back to God

BOBBY G. WHEAT

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF you became king at the age of twenty-five years and you had the responsibility of turning your people away from their idolatry to serve the only true God? How much pressure would you feel in this responsibility if you knew that a nation of distantly related people was about to be destroyed for committing the same sins as your own people? How hard would it be to accomplish your task if your father, the king before you, had been unfaithful, had in fact been partly responsible for the terrible situation in which your people now found themselves?

Hezekiah was a man in such circumstances. He became king of Judah when North Israel was in trouble from the Assyrians. His own people had repeatedly broken their covenant with God and worshipped idols, the gods of the Canaanites. They worshipped on the hills of Judah, against the explicit instructions given to them by God through Moses. Hezekiah's own father, Ahaz, had been responsible for replacing the altar in front of the temple with a replica of a pagan altar in Damascus. The people worshipped the bronze snake which Moses had had made according to God's instructions in the wilderness. Judah was herself oppressed by the Assyrians and constantly troubled by the Philistines.

Scripture tells us that Hezekiah was equal to the task before him. Early in his reign, exhibiting great courage, he began to set things right. In Second Kings, chapter eighteen, we read that Hezekiah removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones of the illegal altars, cut down the Asherah poles, and broke up the bronze snake. We are further told that Hezekiah stood up to the Assyrian king and refused any further payment of tribute, and that Judah under Hezekiah finally defeated the Philistines.

Can you imagine the pressure on this young king? I seriously doubt that all of his subjects were happy at the destruction of their altars for worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth. Nor were they pleased when the bronze snake was broken up. And is it possible that some



of Hezekiah's fellow Jews would have resented his decision to resist the Assyrians? Might they have been afraid of the consequences to Judah of such a rebellion against this powerful nation? Yet, Hezekiah persisted in doing the right things to lead his people back to God and the path of righteousness.

Does any of this mean anything to us today? Absolutely! I would suggest that, if you are a parent, an elder, a preacher, a teacher, a leader of people in any capacity today, you have the same task before you as did Hezekiah. The nation, in some cases even the church, is full of corruption and idolatry. Sinful lifestyles are the norm, not the exception. There are not many today who genuinely call on the name of the Lord. Christianity is held up to ridicule and scorn, in part because of the failure of many who claim the name of Christ to live up to the obligations of that name. We need Hezekiahs today, men and women who will stand up and face the people around them with the challenge and the example of doing right.

There are two keys to Hezekiah's success which need to be included in our arsenal for the fight against Satan's forces. First, Hezekiah **removed** the things which came between his people and their God. He broke down the pagan altars and places of worship, and he smashed the sacred stones and the bronze snake. We need to do the same thing today. Too many of us are worshipping at the man-made altars of greed, pleasure, personal success, and entertainment. Anything which comes between a man and God is an idol for that man, and God would have it torn down. This obligation weighs most heavily on parents, who have the great task of teaching children to decide between what is right and wrong, what is important and trivial, what is spiritual and ungodly.

The second key is expressed in 2 Kings 18:5,6—"*Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel... He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses.*" Hezekiah **trusted** God! Humanly, we have a tendency to look, not to God for direction and encouragement, but to ourselves and to other men. Sometimes we even tell ourselves that great, sweeping changes are no longer possible, considering ourselves too weak to take the steps to bring them about. Hezekiah looked to God. Whether it was in facing his own people as he tore down their idols and unauthorized places of worship, or in facing the wrath of the king of Assyria and all his mighty hordes. Hezekiah looked to God and trusted that God would help him. Scripture tells us that Hezekiah's trust was not misplaced: "*And the Lord was with him;*

*he was successful in whatever he undertook” (2 Kings 18:7).*

Let us be people of moral integrity, of strong backbone, of great courage. Let us look at examples of great leadership, like that of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and draw from them the lessons we need to turn our families, the church, and our nations back to God and His righteous path!

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## *God’s Whole Counsel*

HOLLIS MILLER

SELDOM DOES A SINGLE WORD, phrase, or sentence exhaust all the Bible has to say about a subject. For example, Paul instructed the Philippians to think about certain positive things, but the balance of biblical teaching makes it plain that Christians are also to think about other things (Philippians 4:8).

Timothy was instructed by Paul to teach brethren that the love of money is a root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). By this, however, the apostle did not mean that a Christian should not pursue acquisition of necessary material things. Elsewhere in the New Testament Christians are taught to work that they might have excess to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). Paul himself was a tentmaker in order that he might earn money to support himself. Loving money and being sufficiently frugal so as to have means of livelihood in whatever society a Christian may live are not equal to each other.

Some teachings of the Bible are meant to express general principles by which the Lord’s people are to govern their lives. The principles are not to be forced to the point of absurdity. I have never met a Christian who believed his or her bank account should be opened to every fraudulent, slothful individual who might ask to borrow from it (Matthew 5:42). Total abandonment of good judgment in handling requests for loans could easily disable one with regard to discharging other Christian responsibilities, such as having the funds to care for one’s own (1 Timothy 5:8).

The teaching of Jesus that His disciples are to turn the other cheek is a principle of human relationship, and not a command that Christians must permit evil men to do to them whatever they choose to do without objection (Matthew 5:39). Paul resisted Elymas as well as the servants of the high priest who struck him on the mouth (Acts 13:8-11; 23:1-5). It is obvious that the apostle did not

understand the teaching of the Lord to mean that he should say or do nothing.

When the teachings of the Bible are permitted to explain themselves in the larger context, the whole counsel of God will then be every Christian's guide.

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## ***The Flood: Not Local, But Global***

BILL NICKS

THOSE WHO ARGUE FOR A local flood in the days of Noah, as recorded in Genesis, are usually believers in evolution. To sustain their theory, they must reject the obvious supernatural act of creation, as well as the supernatural events connected with the flood.

Peter says, *"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"* (2 Peter 3:6). The word "overflowed" is from the word **kataklysmos**, from which our English word "cataclysm" is derived.

The flood was a great hydraulic and tectonic upheaval, in which the waters underneath the earth were *"broken up"* (Genesis 7:11) and the *"windows of heaven were opened."* In this supernatural act, the Lord split the crust of the earth with waters beneath the earth, which caused, along with rainfall for 40 days, waters to raise the ark and cover the mountains.

By observing the words of the inspired writer Moses, we may gather these simple facts which show of necessity that there was a global flood.

1. If it were a local flood, Noah could have moved to a higher ground, and animals could have fled away from the waters.
2. The text says the mountains were covered *"fifteen cubits upward,"* which means the waters prevailed above the highest mountain more than 22 feet. This could not have been a mere local flood. All flesh died in the flood except those in the ark.
3. The token of God's covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood was the rainbow, which we may still view today as a symbol of God's faithfulness. But this would be meaningless if it were a local flood, because this kind of flood is still common in our world of the 21st Century. See Genesis 9:8-17. But God's promise is sure—there will never be another global flood. Rather, the world will one day be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12).

There is a God in heaven (Daniel 2:28), who created the “*heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). The flood was a supernatural intervention into the natural laws of the earth, just as was the virgin birth of Christ and His resurrection from the dead.

It is best to take the Bible at face value, accept it as the Word of the living God, and believe it with all your heart. That kind of faith will lead one to salvation in Christ and eternal life in the world to come.

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## Is Conscience a Safe Guide?

BASIL OVERTON

*“THERE IS A WAY THAT seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 16:25). There are many who think that it does not matter what one believes or does in religion, just so he follows his conscience. But this philosophy exalts one’s conscience above the Word of God; this philosophy makes one’s conscience his guide instead of the Bible. Instead of conscience being a *safe guide*, it must be *safely guided* by the Word of God. Conscience approves or disapproves, as it has been instructed. If conscience has been instructed wrongly, it may approve of things that are wrong, or even disapprove of things that are right. A misguided conscience can mislead; this is often the case.

Surely, almost all of us have had the experience of honestly taking the wrong road in traveling, going several miles, feeling all the time that we were on the right road. Just to *feel* that we are right in religion does not *make* us right. We have to check the “road map” to heaven—the Bible—to find out what is really right. If we do not do this, and instead just follow conscience, we thus exalt conscience above God’s Word.

Conscience must be properly instructed by God’s Word before it can guide correctly. If one travels in his car on the wrong road, he turns around when he discovers his error, and proceeds to find the right road. He would surely not get angry at the person who told him he was on the wrong road, but would likely be grateful to him.

Friend, do not depend on the guidance of your feelings; look in God’s road map, the Bible, and see if you are on the right road. *“For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:13,14).

# THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

JOHN THIESEN

EVER SINCE THE FALL OF Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from God by sin. It is this separation which has created the need for a priesthood to represent us to God.

## PRIESTS ARE MEDIATORS

A priest is a mediator who stands between God and sinners. His job, from the earliest times, has been to offer up sacrifices to God in order to make propitiation for sinners and to pray on their behalf to God. For example, Moses' brother Aaron was a priest. Every year, when offering up the sacrificial atonement animals both for himself and for all Israel, he laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all the sins of Israel before releasing it to carry the iniquity of the nation into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). No one could take this priestly authority to himself, but only those called by God for the purpose. *"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron"* (Hebrews 5:4). Among the Jews, only Aaron and his sons were set aside for this holy work. It was important that the priest be a merciful person in order properly to approach God on behalf of others.

Even before God set up the Israelite nation, he had priests operating in the world. Melchizedek, for example, who came out to bless Abraham following his victory over the kings, was called *"the priest of the most high God"* (Genesis 14:18). During that same pre-law period, Moses' father-in-law was known as "the priest of Midian" and offered sacrifices to God with Moses, suggesting he may have been a priest authorized by God (Exodus 3:1; 18:12).

## GOD'S PRIESTHOOD TODAY

Our High Priest today is Jesus Christ the Son of God, *"set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Hebrews 8:1). At God's right hand, *"he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). The sacrifice He offered for our sins was His own blood on the cross. This supreme sacrifice of Himself supersedes all previous sacrifices offered in the world, which were only a shadow of His. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14).

Under Christ, their High Priest, all Christians function as sub-priests, *“an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices consist of: (1) Praise and thanks of our lips; (2) Doing good to others; (3) Sharing with those in need (Hebrews 13:15,16); and making intercession by prayer for all people and authorities (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

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## *The Kingdom In Prophecy*

FRANK CHESSER

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH are one and the same (Matthew 16:18, 19). The kingdom was to be established during the lifetime of Jesus' contemporaries (Mark 9:1). It was *“at hand”* in the first century (Matthew 4:17). It was to come *“with power”* (Mark 9:1). That power was to come with apostolic reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Gospel that was to usher in the kingdom was to be preached first in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

These promises join and culminate in Acts 2, resulting in the kingdom, or church. Jesus is presently reigning on the spiritual throne of David, in the kingdom, or church of the living God (Acts 2:29-33). At the second coming, the world will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10), and Jesus will deliver the kingdom, or church, back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Thus, the concept of a thousand year reign in a physical kingdom is only a figment of man's imagination.

The Old Testament anticipates the kingdom. God's promise to David regarding his kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16) transcends the old physical kingdom of Israel to enjoy ultimate fulfillment in the universal spiritual kingdom, the church. This is not human guesswork. This truth is verified by David's own statement in Psalm 132:11 and the plainly stated fulfillment in Acts 2:29-33. This text explicitly declares that Jesus is now reigning on David's spiritual throne, which is the kingdom or church of the New Testament. As people obeyed the Gospel, they were added by God Himself to that very church and thus, they submitted themselves to the Kingship of Jesus (Acts 2:47).

Isaiah 9:6,7 is an undeniable prophecy of the coming of Christ. This text promises that Jesus would sit *“upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment*

*and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isaiah 9:7).* This prophecy has absolutely nothing to do with a physical kingdom, throne, rule, and a thousand year reign.

The Jews of the first century had that concept of the kingdom, and Jesus denied it for the three years of His earthly ministry. He stressed time and again the spiritual nature of His kingdom as described in John 18:36. Again, Acts 2 makes it plain that Jesus is sitting on the throne of that very kingdom and has been since the first Pentecost following His resurrection.

Daniel 2:44 prophesies of the establishment of the kingdom *“in the days of these kings.”* Who were those kings? Nebuchadnezzar’s image consisted of four basic parts: head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; and legs and feet of iron, mixed with clay in the feet (Daniel 2:31-33). Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that these four parts represented four kingdoms, commencing with Babylon as the head of gold.

The Babylonian kingdom was followed by the Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom, and finally the Roman kingdom. It was in the days of the kings of this fourth kingdom that the Lord’s kingdom would be established. This harmonizes with all the other passages on this subject. The church or kingdom was indeed established during the rule of the Roman kings in the first century on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2).

What is the law of this kingdom? Jeremiah prophesied of its spiritual nature (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Hebrews writer quoted this prophecy and applied it to the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-13). Consequently, Jesus is now reigning over His kingdom (church) and is ordering its worship, work, and practice by His law revealed in the New Testament.

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## *Fearfully And Wonderfully Made*

GENE CARRELL

WE VISITED IN A HOME where a sweet new baby had come to live. This little bundle of potential just slept right through our visit, but had he been awake, he likely would not have greeted us with anything more than a burp. With Christian parents, he will grow into an understanding of God’s will for his life, and after boyhood, when he comes into manhood, he perhaps will himself become the father of yet another generation.

I couldn't help but think that if all the billions of sperm cells and egg cells from which the world's population originally grew were gathered in one place, they would occupy a space equivalent to no more than that of a single thimble. From that single thimble-full, a world has been populated, and each individual in that populated world is delicate piece of machinery which has no equal in the universe. Each one comes equipped with a marvelous brain which can direct all its activities, hands, feet, eyes, the ability to heal itself when it gets scratched up, and the potential for creating other human beings like unto itself. It is little wonder that the Psalmist said, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14).

Nothing gives greater evidence of the skill of a workman than the observation of his handiwork. I find it inconceivable that men could observe the creation and declare that there is no Creator. Beyond that, if a lumber yard of raw materials could supply the essentials for but a few houses, how could a thimble-full of raw materials supply the essentials for the populating of a world? Call me naive, but my integrity will support no other conclusion than that which says that an omnipotent God caused this world to come into existence.

Albert Einstein once said: "The most beautiful thing we can witness is the mysterious. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." He further said, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." What he was telling us was that we dare not blind our eyes to the things that are there. We have to face reality, and if the greatest of human minds cannot make a city from one lumber yard (not enough materials), then how could a world of people spring from a thimble-full of materials?

Dr. O.A. Battista, a man of science, put it well when he said: "The more I examine God's magnificent handiwork, the more facts I unearth about the elusive wonders of His universe, the more I realize that He is present and working in it all. With all my heart, I am proud to proclaim 'I believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of all knowledge.'"

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