

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Wise Men Came Seeking Jesus

ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, the Bible says, "Behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2: 1-2). The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was in fulfillment of many prophecies that were recorded hundreds of years before in the Old Testament of the Bible. Prophet Micah almost seven centuries before the birth of Christ had foretold, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be ruler of Israel, Whose going forth are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2). Isaiah, another prophet of God, had declared, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14). The word **Immanuel means God with us**. When Jesus was born God entered the ranks of humanity, became a man in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, and paid the penalty of human sins, laying upon Himself, in the person of His Son, the iniquity of us all. (John 1:1, 14; 3:16). Isaiah had also predicted, that the child Who would be born as God's Son will be



a King Who would rule in His everlasting kingdom forever. (Isaiah 9: 6-7). Thus Isaiah had foretold Jesus' virgin birth, and Micah had predicted the village of His birth, Bethlehem.

The Old Testament Scriptures which were originally written in Hebrew language were translated later in Greek language in about 250 B.C. The wise men who came from the East, perhaps Arabia (Genesis 25:6) to worship Jesus, were scholars and philosophers or astrologers. The Greek Bible describes them as Magi, which was a priestly caste during the Persian rule many centuries before the birth of Christ. The presents they had brought, i.e. gold, frankincense and myrrh were the product of that country. They, the wise men, while in their country had seen an extraordinary star, such as they had never seen before, which they took to be an indication of an extraordinary person born in the land of Judea, over which land this special star was seen to hover in the nature of a comet or a meteor rather, in the lower region of the air. This differed so much from anything that was common that they concluded it to signify something uncommon and of a great significance. Based on their study of the Old Testament Scriptures, which also predicted, "A Star shall come out of Jacob; A scepter shall rise out of Israel..." (Numbers 24:17), they concluded that the King of the Jews, The Immanuel, about Whom they had been reading in the Scriptures has been born. So they set out to meet Him. We do not know their number, or how many were they, the conjecture that there were "three", as commonly believed, rose from the fact that three kinds of gifts are mentioned which they had offered after they had found Jesus.

Those men were surely wise, because as soon as they had seen the extraordinary Star they lost no time but set out to look for the new King, following the Star. It must have taken a long time for them to journey sitting on animals and going through the jungles and rough and mountainous terrain. But nothing discouraged them. They were wise, because in seeking Jesus they were following the Star, the guide, God had provided them. It was a light set up by God to lead them to Christ. The Bible says, "... the Star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the Star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." (Matthew 2:9, 10). Even today the wisest way of finding Christ and what He requires of men to learn from Him and what He teaches them to do is to go directly to His New Testament in the Bible and read or hear from it. Because there are

many false things being taught in the name of Christ today which are not found in the Bible, and have nothing to do with Christ and His teaching. For example, what must one do to be saved (Mark 16:16), of what church must one be a member of (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Acts 2:47); and how should one worship Him acceptably (John 4:24; Matthew 15:8, 9). In His sermon on the mount Jesus taught, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27). To be wise one should not only hear or know about Christ, but must do what He teaches. The rain and the floods and the winds are the words of a figure of speech to describe the coming judgment day. (John 12:48). Often people want to go to men and to books written by men to learn about Christ and His teachings, but those who go to the real source, the Bible, God has given us as the guide for all spiritual matters, to learn about Christ and His teachings, are certainly wise.

Another notable thing that we learn from those wise men is that when they observed that the Star they were following had stopped going any further and came to stand where the young child was, they went inside the house where, "they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him." (Matthew 2:11). Notice, they didn't worship Mary. Because the wise men knew that Mary was just another human being who was used by God to bring His only begotten Son into the world. (Matthew 1:18-25). No doubt, Mary was a God-fearing and God-loving person, that is why God could use her for such a great and wonderful task. But certainly she was not "the mother of God," or an individual as holy and sinless as Christ was. The wise men, therefore, worshiped Jesus, the Son of God, and offered their gifts to Him. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:15-17 said, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."



WHO IS A CHRISTIAN ?

J.C. CHOATE

NOT ALL PEOPLE WHO claim to be Christians are Christians. This is seen in the religious world itself to those who have their eyes open. Surely, there are not many beliefs, many ways to be saved, many churches, many ways to worship, many doctrines, many ways to heaven, etc.

There is but one belief, one way to be saved, one church, one way to worship, one doctrine, and one way to heaven. So it means that all who accept that one way are Christians and those who do not are not Christians even though they claim to be.

Who is a Christian? This is a very good question. It is a Bible question and therefore has a Bible answer. We will now point out a number of truths from the Bible that will identify the Christian.

1. A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ. How could one be a Christian if he did not follow Christ? Listen : "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16 : 24). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10 : 27).

2. A Christian is a believer in Jesus Christ. How could one be a Christian if he did not believe in Christ? Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14 : 1). "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24).

3. A Christian is one who has repented of his sins. Could one be a Christian if he refuses to repent? Christ himself said, "I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13 : 3). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

4. A Christian is one who has confessed Christ as the Son of God. Could one be a Christian if he refused to confess that Christ is God's Son? Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10 : 32).

5. A Christian is one who has been baptized by immersion for the remission of his sins. Could one be a Christian if he failed to obey the Lord? “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2 : 38). “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16).

6. Also read Acts 8 : 26-39 and Romans 6 : 3, 4. A Christian is one who has been baptized into Christ. Could one be a Christian outside Christ? “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6 : 3).

7. A Christian is one who has been saved and added to the Lord's church. Could one be a Christian if the Lord had not added him to his church? “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2 : 47).

8. A Christian is one who wears the name of Christ. Could one be a Christian if he did not wear the Lord's name? “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11 : 26).

9. A Christian is one who is living for Christ. Could one be a Christian and not live for the Lord? “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12 : 1). Also read I Corinthians 15: 58 and I Peter 1: 5-11.

Many additional points could be added to the foregoing to tell you who a Christian is and to explain what he is. But certainly one cannot be a Christian until he becomes a Christian. Neither can one live the Christian life unless he is a Christian. You are urged to consider these truths closely and examine yourself to see if you are a Christian according to God's word. If you are not, then you should become one.

GOD CALLS US TO BE HIS PEOPLE, HIS FAMILY

RON BRYANT

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS PERSONAL, but it is not individualistic. Each one who becomes a Christian becomes part of a fellowship of caring and sharing—a family of believers who belong to the Lord

and to one another, and who have responsibility to one another (Acts 2:41,47; Romans 12:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:1-6,11-17).

If there is any truth set forth in the New Testament, it is that Christians need one another, even as in the physical body the eyes and the ears need the hands and the feet.

Paul wrote by inspiration, *"But now are they many members, yet but one body, and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"* (1 Corinthians 12:20,21,27). In God's design every member of the body needs every other member. Likewise, in God's plan for the church and its functioning, individual Christians cannot go their own way.

Even when the figure of speech is changed and the church is spoken of as a family, the plan of God is still the same. God's plan for life in the spiritual family which was created in Christ is not one of individual self-sufficiency, but one of interdependency. The people of God are a family of interdependent members.

No Christian can afford to be careless about his or her place in the body of Christ, the family of God. This is basic, for it is God who adds the saved together (Acts 2:41,47). It is also vital, for it is bound up in the fact that *"Christ is the head of the body, the church"* (Colossians 1:18,24).

In this plan we see that God's appointed means of strengthening each believer, of protecting each, and stimulating growth in grace on the part of each, is in the context of a fellowship—a fellowship of mutual commitment, and mutual caring and mutual sharing.

It is in view of these great truths that we each are to consider our purpose in the family, our participation in the fellowship—the work and worship, the ministry and outreach of the church. In view of *God's purpose*, we must not be careless about the worship, the fellowship, or the unity of God's people.

Undergirding all of this is the fact that God's eternal purpose for the church is bound up in the blood of Christ. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood! The church of Jesus is no mere social entity, of only temporary import! The church—the people of God—is a blood-bought family that God expects to function as **His family!** It is a family that is preparing for eternity.

THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE

DON HATCH

AN EXAMINATION OF ALLEGED discrepancies in the Bible is important. The vast areas of dates, authorship, arrangement, idioms, names, manuscripts, intellect, nature, moral character, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, duty of man, duty of God, duty of men to fellow men, persons, places, numbers, and time should be considered. Neander stated, "God reveals himself in his word, as he does in his work. In both we see a self-revealing, self-concealing God, who makes himself known only to those who earnestly seek him; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief; in both we find contradictions, whose higher harmony is hidden, except from him who gives up his whole mind in reverence, in both, in a word, it is a law of revelation that the heart of man should be tested in receiving it; and that in the spiritual life, as well as in the bodily, man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow."

The foregoing statement touches on the means to understanding the accuracy of the Bible. The doubter will assume discrepancies, while the believer will look for a means to harmonize the Scriptures with the knowledge of man. If the Scriptures seem different from the knowledge of man, it is the Scriptures that are believed and not man.

For the Bible to be a book divine it must be accurate. Its credibility is established on known events and matters that can be verified beyond a reasonable doubt. Accuracy alone will not prove inspiration. However, it does prove that the Book is historically accurate in degrees unknown to mankind at any other level. Enemies of the Bible have attacked it upon many grounds. Time after time the Bible has been exonerated by archaeology. If the Bible is proven historically, it stands in all other tested areas. If it fails in this section of truth, it falls in all areas.

The Bible has been absolved of any fault each time it has come under attack. Consider this example: The people called the "Hittites" were long denied by scholars. Some claimed that there were no such people, and they therefore scoffed at the Bible. The Bible mentions this nation 48 times. They were a hindrance as Israel entered the promised land. David married the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Yet written record was silent about a nation called by this name. Skeptics attributed them to the vain imagination and lore of

Israel. In about 1876 Dr. George Smith found in Djerabis, Asia Minor, a stone monument that confirmed that there was a city called Carchemish, the capital of the Hittite nation. Dr. A. H. Spence demonstrated later that this nation contended on equal terms with Egypt and Assyria. It was proved that there was a nation of Hittites.

Because of the climate and other factors, the doubter mocked the Bible teaching of there being grapes in Egypt. Joseph interpreted the butler's dream of Pharaoh and grapes. Herodotus, an ancient historian, claimed that Egypt did not have grapes. Thus, the Bible was renounced as a pious fraud. However, among the paintings discovered by archaeologists in Egypt were graphic details of dressing, cultivating, pruning the vines of grapes, and then processing them into wine. The "Father of History," Herodotus, was wrong. The Bible was right.

More could be told of Sargon, who was shown to be real by Dr. P.E. Botta after he dug in Ninevah. The bricks of the Pithom were demonstrated in 1883 by Edouard Naville to have straw in the lower level and none in the upper level, as the Bible stated. The flood was a world-wide epoch which has been proven with accuracy by countless traditions of ancient people and archaeological digs all over the world. Apparent inconsistencies are removed over and over again by authentic research. The doubter has been disproved every time. The Bible is accurate. Read it, trust it, use it, and live by its eternal principles and precepts, while leaning on its promises.

GRACE: 3 Things We Know About It

JACK HARRIMAN

First, we know how to define it.

WE SAY IT IS God's unmerited favor—favor we do not merit, have not earned and do not deserve. David deserved to die on two counts—adultery and murder. But when he finally saw the gravity of his sin, confessed it and repented of it, God put away his sin (2 Samuel 11,12).

God bestowed on David a favor he did not merit, had not earned and did not deserve.

Second, we know how much we need it.

Without a savior, all men are like those said to be "*without hope*

and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). And man cannot be his own savior. He cannot be saved by being good, generous or moral. He cannot be saved by attending church services, eating Lord’s supper or teaching Bible classes. If we helped all the needy and baptized all the lost, we would not earn our salvation. All of these things have a place in the life of a faithful Christian, but even if we did all of them flawlessly, we would not merit our salvation.

Third, we know how to accept it.

Jesus died for all mankind (Hebrews 2:9), but only a few will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). Since He died for all, why are not all saved? Because most will not accept the gift of salvation. Jesus said, *“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”* (Mark 16:15,16).

The gospel is the good news of God’s wondrous gift of grace which we do not merit, have not earned, and do not deserve. Those who believe that news and are baptized, accept the gift—accept the grace. Those who do not, reject the gift and are eternally lost without the saving grace of God. There is no middle ground.

These three things we can know, without doubt, about the grace of God.

JESUS CHRIST: Fact Or Fantasy?

HERSHEL DYER

THERE ARE FEW PERSONS in the world whose lives, directly or indirectly, have not been influenced by Jesus Christ. Yet, unknown millions of these are unwilling to grant that He is the Son of God. Some are willing to concede that He was a prophet. Religious liberals will say that He was a good man, but these refuse to acknowledge His divinity.

This raises the question: What shall we do with the Christ who is set forth in the four Gospel records? He is therein revealed to be the Son of God descended from heaven and who afterward ascended back to heaven where He now lives and reigns.

Is it reasonable to suppose that these writers, devoid of scholastic attainments, would or even could invent a Christ they did not comprehend? Imagine Peter contriving that incident where he boasted so vainly that he would never deny the Lord, then relating

how he cowardly denied Him with cursing and swearing, even saying that he did not know Jesus! If Peter, as an imposter, wanted to convince anybody that Jesus was the Son of God, a confession that he reputedly had made more than once, why would he then relate how he so completely disavowed that faith? And, remember, it is recorded of all the apostles that they *“forsook Him and fled”* (Matthew 26:56).

The ring of truth and honesty is heard in all they wrote. If men had conspired in their thinking and efforts to invent such a divine character for human belief, surely they would have revealed themselves as His unswerving, indefatigable followers. The fact that they show themselves faltering and weak in their faith gives a greatly increased credibility to their accounts.

The Christian Is To Be Different

MAX PATTERSON

THERE WAS A TIME when preachers and Bible teachers taught forcefully that Christians were to be different from those in the world. Many passages were cited, including 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord....”*

Today, there is an element, even in the church, that is saying, “We ought not to be different. We ought to mingle with people as they are, and not ‘stand out’ in our appearance or actions.” I believe this is totally false and exactly opposite to all the Bible teaches. Consider the following:

Our Language: While the world takes the name of the Lord in vain, tells dirty and suggestive stories, and gossips and maligns, the Christian is to shun all of this and to use his tongue to glorify God and to edify people (Matthew 12:36,37; Romans 1:29,30; 1 Timothy 4:12).

Where We Go: While the world is at the beer joint, and the dance hall, and the gambling hall, and the harlot house (and that can be just about anywhere nowadays), the Christian is concerned about good morals and a good example (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:24; 6:11,12).

How We Dress: While the world sees how little it can wear, the Christian is concerned about modesty at all times, and is aware of the Bible’s emphasis upon lust and the shame of nakedness

(1 Timothy 2:9,10; Revelation 3:18).

Our View Of Sanctity Of Life: While the world seeks abortions, in many instances to hide its sins, the Christian stands against murder, and for natural affection and the sacredness of life (2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 13:9).

Our Thinking: While the world is filling its mind with trash—lust, adultery, fornication, uncleanness—the Christian is trying to think on that which is honorable, clean, and pure (Philippians 4:8).

What Is Most Important: While the world regards *self* as the most important, and that which is to be satisfied, the Christian is trying to *seek first* the Kingdom of Christ and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Our Homes: While the world is attacking the home and bringing every imaginable pressure upon it to tear it down, Christians look upon it as a divine institution and a part of God's plan to meet the needs of man for his happiness (Matthew 19:1-9; Ephesians 5:23-28).

Our Benevolence: While the world thinks only of self, Christians are concerned about the needs of others (James 1:26,27).

Our Worship: While the world is lured and enamored by the gods of this world, Christians worship the true God (John 4:24; Matthew 4:8-11).

Need more be said to prove the point that Christians are to be different? Those Christians who teach that we ought to just fall in with the crowd (after all, we don't want to appear to be odd) betray their lack of depth, their shallowness of spirituality. There is not enough faith yet to keep them from being ashamed of this Christian life that calls for all who follow to be different. Paul expressed it well: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*" (Romans 1:16).

Let us dare to be different! Let us dare to be that for which Jesus Christ died—that which He made it possible for us to be.

Forgiveness In Christ

HANS J. DEDERSCHECK

FORGIVENESS IS TO BE defined as "to remit, to cancel, or a remission of a debt" (Psalm 32:1; Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:48). As we

talk about remission of sins and forgiveness we also need to refer to the expression of *"not to impute"* (Numbers 12:11).

Thus, forgiveness is seen as the act of the Lord which puts an end to the unhappy situation created through the transgression of God's laws by disobedient men, a situation that is offensive to God Almighty and which is grievous to man. Sin destroys the real relationship between a holy God and man. Man, as such, cannot do much to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Here it is God who acts in full sovereignty. In His mercy and longsuffering He refuses to execute a judgment which is deserved, and He grants man a reprieve.

In the New Testament, emphasis is placed on the unmerited character of forgiveness. Matthew 18:23-35 gives us an excellent example of God's forgiveness of sins. Sinful human beings are unable to rehabilitate themselves before God. Man cannot save himself. *"And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' And Jesus looking upon them said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible'"* (Mark 10:26,27).

God loves man and wants to forgive him his transgressions if he fulfills the conditions to obtain the forgiveness of sin through God's grace. *"Thy sins are forgiven"* (Mark 2:5). The forgiveness of sins is the good news to men as a free gift from God if man accepts the conditions God granted: faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism in water (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-10). God is looking forward to seeing man return to the fatherly home (Luke 15:11-32). God's compassion makes it possible for man to return to God even though he is an unworthy creature. His return to the paternal home and to life makes it possible for fallen man to be restored.

Forgiveness of sins and restoration of life would be impossible without Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Only Christ has the power to forgive sins. The death of Christ is presented as a redemptive act which makes possible the remission of sins. Jesus said: *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). Only Jesus Christ can restore a spiritual life through His forgiveness of sins. Thanks to Him, every sin will be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Spirit.

As we look upon the church of the Christ, we will see that the forgiveness of sins is related to Christ and the Christian life. This

grace is specially significant in baptism. *"Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'"* (Acts 2:38). *"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations....."* (Luke 24:47). Paul said: *"Therefore we are buried with him (Jesus Christ) by baptism into death . . . knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Romans 6:1-10).

It is a must for Christians to forgive the sins of those who offend them. The real atmosphere of a Christian community is that of a permanent forgiveness of sins. It is impossible to please God without forgiving others their transgressions (Matthew 6:12-14; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25). *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

There is no way to live with God's forgiveness without forgiving the sins of our fellow men. Thus for the church of Christ forgiveness does not concern only the things of the past. It is the living action of God which man knows in forgiveness and which unceasingly opens the future to him.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). As God in Christ forgave our sins, so it is a must to forgive the sins of our fellowmen. It is impossible to imagine a Christian community without a permanent forgiveness of sin from all our heart.

Perfect Morality Found in the Example of Jesus Christ

COLEMAN K. ALIMOND

THERE IS NO NEED to hide our heads in the sand with such a subject as this, because at the heart of every problem in our society today there is a problem with the heart of mankind. The Bible heart has to do with the mind, intellect, emotions, and will of mankind.

Hear what the Scriptures say regarding the heart: *“As one thinketh in his heart so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7); *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23); *“... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Matthew 12:34); Jeremiah 17:9—*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”* These and many other Scriptures led our Lord Jesus Christ to say, *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness and blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man”* (Matthew 15:19,20).

Therefore, our speech and our actions or deeds determine when we are right or wrong morally. Wrong is always wrong, and there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Morality relates to principles of right and wrong in behavior or manner of life (lifestyle). Webster says that morality means a doctrine or system of morals ... particularly moral principles or rules of conduct. Let us consider the system of morality that Jesus Christ gave to the human family. Since Jesus never sinned, He is therefore a perfect example (1 Peter 2:21-25).

The attributes or characteristics of the moral system of Christ are revealed exclusively in the Holy Scriptures. Man is unable to provide a code of conduct that meets ALL needs, of ALL people, of ALL nations for ALL time (Jeremiah 10:23). Nothing in the history of mankind has come remotely near the revealed moral code of Jesus Christ! John Locke correctly said: “To give a man full knowledge of true morality, I would send him to no other book than the New Testament.”

The moral system of Christ likewise calls upon all to be like Christ and His Heavenly Father. The great apostle Paul challenged us to imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). His morality calls for godliness, holiness, and purity (Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:15,16; 1 John 3:3; Matthew 5:8). As the offspring of God, made in His image and likeness, we have a common origin, face similar problems, and have a common destiny in that we will all be judged by the same standard; thus, His morality is universal and for all time.

The moral code of Christ is based upon two great fundamentals—(1) *“Love God,”* and (2) *“Love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Luke 10:27). This morality also insists that I think not just of myself, but of how my conduct might affect others. It causes mankind to glorify God in all we do, and proclaims a final day of judgment when all wrongs will be righted, when all that has been

sown in this life shall be reaped (Galatians 6:7; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and the ultimate rewards given (James 1:12).

The moral code of Jesus Christ has stood the test of time. Men of every nation and rank have praised its grandeur. No other code has equalled its power to reform and elevate mankind and nations. It is as relevant today as when first given because it came from heaven, not from men. Its heavenly origin presupposes an author with unlimited knowledge, one Who is totally just, right, and good. Therefore, we can heartily sing the song written by L. O. Sanderson: "How precious is the Book divine, By inspiration given! Bright as a lamp its precepts shine, To guide my soul to heaven. Holy Book divine! Precious treasure mine! Lamp to my feet and a light to my way, To guide me safely home."

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

WILLARD COLLINS

THE BIBLE DECLARES THE existence of God in its first verse, which states, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1).

The human mind cannot fully comprehend the meaning of God. The best picture man has of the Creator is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who said, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9).

God Sees In Secret

The Almighty is able to see in secret, according to Christ. In describing an acceptable manner of prayer, the Lord told the disciples to *"enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and the Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee"* (Matthew 6:6).

David recognized the omnipresence of God, because he wrote: *"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shalt thy hand lead me"* (Psalm 139:8-10).

There is the story of the very poor father who took his little son with him to steal some corn. As the man prepared to put the corn in the bag, he looked around to see if anyone was watching. The little boy replied, "Daddy, you didn't look in one direction." Frightened

lest the boy had seen someone, the father asked, "Where? Where?" The son answered, "Daddy, you didn't look up." The father dropped the bag, and taking the little boy by the hand, returned home without the corn.

Men may hide their sins from each other, but God sees and knows everything. There are eyes above which watch our conduct.

God Makes Heaven Possible

In describing the judgment to come, the Lord revealed Jehovah as the one who makes heaven possible. The saved in that day of decision will receive the message, "... *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).

A seventy-five year old friend of mine told me recently that she was just waiting to live in a happier existence. This lady has been submissive to God for fifty-six years, and she is happy because of her hope in the future. Heaven seems nearer to her now than it did fifty years ago.

I read a story of a ship which was being tossed about by the winds and waves of the sea. Passengers were frantic; that is, all but one little girl who sat calmly in her cabin. Another passenger asked her, "Why are you not frightened?" The child replied, "Because my daddy is captain of the ship."

Christ, the captain, can lead man to heaven, the existence made possible by God for His children.

God The Father

Jesus and Paul referred to God as the Father. There are one hundred sixty-one instances recorded in the New Testament in which Christ referred to God as Father. Paul wrote to the members of the church in Corinth, "*Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things...*" (1 Corinthians 8:6).

The late W.L. Oliphant told a story of a young father who lost his wife in death. He was left to be both mother and father to a little girl.

After the funeral the father and young daughter returned home. That night he took his baby girl to her room and tucked her into bed, turned out the light, and requested that she go to sleep. Through her tears she said, "Daddy, it is so dark. I am afraid. I can't go to sleep."

The child continued to cry until late in the night. Finally, in an effort to be brave, she asked, "Daddy, will you stay with me all through the night?" "Yes, dear," replied the heartbroken father, "I will stay

with you.” “All right, Daddy,” said the little one. “It’s so dark I can’t see you, but I know you are here in the room and will stay with me, because you are my father and because you promised not to leave me, so I can stop crying and go to sleep.”

The young man knelt beside his baby’s bed and said, “Yes, God, it is dark—so dark I cannot see You, but I know You will stay with me, because You are my Father and because You promised not to leave me. So, I too, will stop crying and go to sleep.”

The Christian can find great comfort in the realization that the God of the universe is his Father, and that he can talk to such a God in prayer.

Lessons From Nature

PHILLIP SHERWOOD

WHEN GOD CREATED THE universe and all that was in it, he pronounced it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Everything had its place from the tiniest virus to the greatest dinosaur, the smallest mould to the greatest redwoods, the showiest flowers and vegetables to the prickly cacti. Each had its place and multiplied after its own kind. Yes indeed, all was “very good.” Over all this man had dominion and rule (Genesis 1:28-30).

What can we learn from creation? The first thing is rest. On the seventh day God rested from all his work (Genesis 2:1-3). This was the pattern he set down for man and all domestic animals (Exodus 23:12) because God knew man needed rest from his labours. The land also was to be given a rest in the seventh year (Exodus 23:10,11). This is to be a time of refreshing for the body, soul and spirit.

Too often we are too busy for our own spiritual welfare. We need to be like a tree planted near a river, it brings forth fruit in season, its leaf does not wither and it prospers (Psalm 1:2,3). This is another lesson we can learn from nature. We need to be tapped into the spiritual river to truly prosper. That river is the Scriptures and prayer. It takes time and a quiet place.

Jesus knew the value of the quiet times with his Father. That is the time for refreshing and for making the right decisions for our lives (Luke 6:12, Matthew 14:13-21, 23, 17:1, Mark 6:30-32 and Luke 21:37). Before his greatest trial in the Garden of Gethsemane he

needed to be alone with his Father (Luke 22:39-46).

Another lesson we can learn is the value of pruning (John 15:1-8). In nature old, dead, unproductive or wild branches are removed. This produces better fruit and flowers. We mow our lawns to keep them green instead of weedy and lank. So too our spiritual lives need pruning. All useless and unproductive sin needs pruning then the fruit will abound. If a branch does not bear fruit it is cut off and burned. It is far better to receive the chastisement of God now than to face eternity separated from him (Hebrews 12:5-11). Let us put aside that sin that tries to keep us down and run the race to victory (Hebrews 12:1,2).

Another lesson to be learned from nature is *do not worry*. In Matthew 6:25-34, God tells us that he provides for the birds and beasts and he will provide for us as we are of more value. Worry robs our spirit of its peace, worry can not make us taller. The flowers grow and bloom in the providence of God and even Solomon with all his splendour cannot outdo a flower. The temporal things of this world are but for a moment, seek God and his righteousness and all these things are a surety.

In Proverbs 6:6-11, we are told to consider the ants. Always busy, going about their work, providing food for themselves and their offspring, caring for each other and their homes, tidying up their environment, getting on with their everyday lives and not waiting for handouts. We too, need to keep busy doing the right things and we will be blessed and lack nothing. Put aside the garbage in our lives and concentrate on that which brings spiritual blessings, the destiny of our souls are at stake.

Watch the hen and her chick. (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34), she scratches around to find food for her chicks, calls them to her and teaches them what to look for and what is good to eat. She protects them under her wings when there is danger. This is how Jesus felt about the city of Jerusalem, he wanted to protect the people but they rejected him. We need to be like the hen, protecting each other and caring for each other, looking for the spiritual food. God has offered it, all we need to do is take it. Yes, we can learn some wonderful things from nature. Look around you today and each day, learn and be blessed.

A GOOD HUSBAND

DON HATCH

NOTHING MAKES A *good wife* like a **good husband**. The matter of being a righteous husband is under consideration in this article. Men who are weak in character generally define the nature of their marriage by less than favorable characteristics. If driven by vice, greed, lewd devices, or base desire, the marriage will be encumbered by these prevailing characteristics. However, if the opposite is so where the man seeks righteousness, holiness, purity, and godliness, it will manifest itself in the marriage. Men who abdicate responsibilities sooner or later find the home is in a state of anarchy. All that we can observe in the homes of our times and those of bygone days demonstrate to us that the husband is a key to the way homes will be shaped.

God has spoken to men who will become husbands and fathers. Fatherhood is more than being biologically able to procreate. There are responsibilities that must be considered and met. Man is the **head of the home** (Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-5). Love that he displays for his wife and children will unify the home (Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 7). Honor he affords his mate (1 Corinthians 7:2) by purity of life exalts the wife and home. The greatest instrument for teaching is doing. Husbands who provide for their family demonstrate to the sons their future responsibility and to the daughters types of men they should choose for a mate (1 Timothy 5:8). Children, as tender souls, are nurtured in the home (Ephesians 6:4) and will reflect the home's values. An exception is when the child falls into companionship with the world (1 Corinthians 15:33) and allows good morals to be corrupted.

Here are ten general values which will help the husband:

1. Remember that the wife is a partner, not property.
2. Don't expect the wife to be a wife and the provider at the same time.
3. Don't think that your business is none of her business.
4. You will hold the love of your wife the same way you won it.
5. Your first concern must be building a home, not just a house for your family.
6. Discipline is a cooperative venture of the husband and wife.
7. The cheerfulness of the husband establishes the tenor of the home.

8. Criticism of your wife should never be tolerated in your presence.
9. Never take the wife for granted.
10. Remember to keep the home holy.

Personal interest which each husband has in his home will never be wasted effort. Offer companionship, love, thoughtfulness, understanding, appreciation, sincerity, and godliness. Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others without grudging or complaining (Galatians 6:1-5). Never be satisfied with just being as good as someone else. Remember the words of Paul, *“Stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:14).

The Limitations of Unconditional Love

DAVID W. CHADWELL

PERHAPS THE MOST PERPLEXING reality about God is His unconditional love for humans. When Adam and Eve failed in their relationship with God, His love lived on (Genesis 3). When the people of Noah’s world were so vile that they exclusively thought and meditated on evil, God’s love lived on (Genesis 6:5). It lived on through Israel’s inexcusable failures in the wilderness, their incredible wickedness in the period of the judges, their idolatry in the period of the divided nation, and their wickedness which necessitated the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

God’s unconditional love did not exist for Israel alone. Jonah painfully learned that God loved the cruel, idolatrous Assyrians. God’s selection of Israel as His nation never stood as the proof that He did not love the other peoples. In fact, God chose Israel as His people **because** He loved all humanity. Israel was to be the responsive, attentive people through whom He would bring a Savior for the **world**.

When the Gospel of John explains God’s incredible act of sending a part of Himself, His Son, to live on earth as a human, it states, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son ...”* (John 3:16).

It is a fact that God loves people. All people. Wicked and righteous people. People of every culture. People of every

background. No one is too small, too unimportant, too guilty, too sinful, too weak, too disgusting, too troubled, too disturbed, or too anything else to be excluded from God's love.

For all people after the crucifixion and resurrection, what is the message of God's unconditional love? The message: *God is never too offended by anyone's evil or wickedness to forgive the person who repents and places his faith and life in the crucified Jesus.* He is the loving, joyful Father of all prodigal sons who will come to themselves and return home. It is never too late, too bad, or too awful for God to forgive. He is the God of beginning again for any person who will accept the atonement of His crucified Son. He is the God of total forgiveness, perfect cleansing, and complete sanctification, who loves the penitent person without reservation or qualification.

What is *not* the message of God's unconditional love? Merely by existing, does God's unconditional love remove the accountability and responsibility of a person? Because it exists, does His unconditional love mean a person can ignore his or her own sins and rebellions?

God's unconditional love *does not* destroy the accountability, responsibility, or sins of *an unrepentant person*. In fact, God's unconditional love does not specifically help an unrepentant person. That love stands as the unlockable door of opportunity for forgiveness, mercy, and grace to the penitent person who turns to Christ. However, in spite of the fact of that love, *the condition and accountability of the person who refuses to repent and accept God's sacrifice made in Jesus remains unchanged.*

God's unconditional love—the supreme gift for the penitent who enters Christ! and the gift forever out of reach of the person who refuses Christ!

Peter Walking On Water

(Matthew 14:1-36)

O.P. BAIRD

THROUGHOUT HIS YEARS OF MINISTRY, the power of God was seen working in Jesus. Two such occasions are recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Matthew. According to that account, a large crowd of people, five thousand men besides women and

children, came to Jesus and He taught them (verses 13,14) and healed their sick (Mark 6:34). Late in the day Jesus fed all of those people by multiplying five loaves and two fish (verses 15-21). After He had fed them He *“made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.”* Then Jesus went up on a mountain alone to pray (verses 22,23).

This miracle so impressed the people that they wanted to take Jesus by force to make Him king (John 6:15). It should impress us with the power of Jesus and His concern for the needs of the people, He is able to supply our needs and, by His word, He feeds us with the necessary food for our spiritual health and growth.

While the disciples were crossing the sea, a strong wind arose and their boat was being tossed by the waves. *“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’”* Immediately Peter asked Jesus to let him come to Him walking on the water. Jesus replied, “Come” (verses 25-29). Of course Peter could not have walked on water by his natural power, but his faith in Jesus was so strong that he believed He could give him power to do even that.

Jesus said to Peter, *“Come.”* His invitation to come to Him is extended to all who will listen. His invitation is, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30). To those who respond to that invitation, Jesus gives the power to walk with Him.

In response to the command of Jesus, in this instance Peter sprang from the boat to the surface of the water and actually began to walk toward his Lord. With Jesus before him and the power of God beneath him, Peter’s faith should have increased at every step; but he moved his eyes from Jesus to the threatening waves. He became afraid and began to sink. In the world there are many things to entice us and threaten us, but we must keep our hearts fixed on Jesus and put out of mind the things that would distract us.

When Peter began to sink, he cried out to Jesus, *“Lord, save me!”* (verse 30). Immediately Jesus reached out and caught him. Then came the gentle rebuke, *“Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?”* (verse 31). In the anxieties of life, do we sometimes need

that rebuke? It was Peter who later wrote, "... *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). If Peter had kept looking at the waves he would have sunk beneath them, but he knew to whom he should turn. Jesus is ready to lift us up and strengthen our faith.

Likely it was with much embarrassment that Peter got back into the boat after so boldly starting out and failing. But, to his credit, he acted upon the faith he had, and Jesus honored his faith and gave him victory. We are imperfect, just as Peter was imperfect, and Christ will lift us up when we begin to sink if we turn to Him. When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, immediately they were at the shore (John 6:21). If we keep our eyes on Christ and follow Him in faith He will bring us safely through the storms of life to the calm harbor of that better land.

OCHRISTIAN SYMMETRY

KENNETH TIPTON

DOES YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE HAVE SYMMETRY? The term symmetry in art and mathematics refers to having as much on one side of a central point as you have on the other side. Let us briefly examine the following three elements: worship, service, and salvation. While we do this, we will be making an application of how we need to have symmetry in these areas.

First of all, do you worship in *spirit* and *truth*? Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that the Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23,24). It is not sufficient to have a good *attitude* without correct *doctrine*. At another point, Paul tells us to sing with the *spirit* and also with *understanding* (1 Corinthians 14:15). Is it possible that we are not pleasing to God if we place too much emphasis on the musical sounds and notes? The proper balance is to have understandable biblical lyrics that parallel the music in order to edify one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). Additionally, do you also have a balanced amount of *emotion* and *intellect* involved in your worship? Are you only touched in your heart by your feelings, or do you equally seek stimulation for your mind as you consider the depths of God's Word?

The second area of biblical symmetry is *faith* and *works* (service). James said that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). He clarifies

the concept even more in the next verse by challenging us to show our faith *without* works, and he will show his faith *by* his works. One can be out of symmetrical balance if he has the extreme of having *only* faith or the other extreme of having *only* works. Jesus refers to this in Matthew 7:21-23. He tells some of those boasting of works only that "*I never knew you.*"

Do you have the proper balance between *doctrine* and *practice*? Are you one kind of person on Sunday and a different person the rest of the week? Paul talks about man's sinful nature by saying that if sin is in you, you do not do the things that you want to do and you do the things that you do not want to do (Romans 7:15-19). Perhaps the motivation for having balance in your Christian living comes from a measure of both *love* and *fear*. Both emotions are tied to commandments. One area is seen in Ecclesiastes 12:13 where the Bible says, "*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*" Jesus gave the other emotional side when He said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). Do you have the awareness that God loves you and at the same time balance that with the awesome understanding that He will punish evil?

The third major element that must have a proper balance is in the process of having your sins remitted and of moving from a lost condition to a saved condition. Jesus explains this idea in Mark 16:16. He tells us that he who *believes* and is *baptized* will be saved. If we do not have both of these we are not balanced. We can be unbalanced if we only have belief and do not understand that baptism is a burial that leads to a new life (Romans 6:4). We can be equally out of balance if we emphasize baptism to the exclusion of belief.

In all of the above cases, it is necessary to have as much of something on one side as we have on the other side if we are to have perfect Christian symmetry. The Christian life must also have vertical elements that are directed toward God, and horizontal elements that are directed toward others. If you illustrate a vertical line bisecting a horizontal line, the result is a cross. I believe that one way to help us gain Christian symmetry is by thinking about the cross, more specifically, the death of Jesus on the cross. The awareness of His death for us should help us to have the desire and the incentive to live a symmetrically balanced Christian life.