

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*If Anyone Speaks, Let Him Speak
As The Oracles Of God*

THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE TEACHER, we have through the years endeavored to show the readers what the Bible teaches on variety of subjects. Our emphasis has been to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent, as the apostle Peter said in his epistle, 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God..." This simply means to speak as the word of God says. While there are some things we teach, others who believe the Bible to be God's word also teach, such as, Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that He was born of a virgin; that He died and was buried and was raised on the third day; that He is the Savior of the world; and that one day He will come back to judge the whole world. But there are some things we teach according to the Bible that others do not teach, *and that is the distinct nature of the Bible Teacher*. As a matter of fact, on such matters we stand virtually alone.



We believe and teach, that to be acceptable to God one must abide in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, as the apostle John wrote: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9). This simply means that

we must believe and teach and practice what Christ taught and authorized His apostles, who were His spokespersons, to teach. (Matthew 28:18-20; 18:18). We reject all man-made creed books, and accept only the Bible to be our guide in all spiritual matters.

As such, we believe and teach that one is not saved from sin by faith alone (James 2:24), but one must, after believing in Christ, repenting of all wrongs, be baptized for the remission of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Baptism is not an option but a command of the Lord. We teach that baptism is not sprinkling of water, but is a burial in water (Matthew 3:16; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:38-39), and that one must be old enough to believe in Christ and repent of sins and confess the name of Christ to be baptized. (Acts 8:35-39). We teach, that when one is scripturally baptized the Lord Himself adds that person to the church (Acts 2:47), to His church, to the church He built and died for (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28), and not to a man-made sect or religious body. As such, the church of Christ cannot be joined by man's own choice. We teach, that denominationalism is wrong and exists on earth today in direct opposition to the prayer of Christ for the unity of all His followers. (John 17:20-21). We, therefore, instead of supporting denominationalism, speak unequivocally against all such division and sectarianism as did the apostle Paul in the first century said, "Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). We, therefore, teach, that all followers of Christ everywhere upon earth should be called only by His name, "that noble name" by which all followers of Christ were called in the first century (James 2:7). Acts 11:26 reads, "...And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." King Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Peter wrote, "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Peter 4:16). Martin Luther was right when he told his followers, "What is Luther? After all, the teaching is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not permit Christians to call themselves Pauline or Peterine, but Christian. How then should I—poor stinking

sack of maggots that I am—be entitled to have people call the children of Christ by my wretched name.” We can only reflect upon Luther’s words with regret that his plea was not heeded. Thus, today we have Lutherans and Lutheranism. And likewise, there are several thousand denominational churches upon earth who are called by all kinds of names not authorized in the book of God.

Further, we teach, that women in the church must not exercise authority over men or usurp authority and take over the public worship service. They are not permitted to teach or preach or give leadership in any manner where men in the assembly are present. While it has become a commonplace to appoint women as Pastors, evangelists, bishops, etc., in many organizations, the Bible still says, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak...” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) and “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Moreover, we teach, that our worship of God must be rendered to Him in spirit and in truth, that is, in accordance to His stipulated commands as given in the New Testament of Christ, and not according to any human creed or liturgical order. (John 4:24). Christ said, many worship Him in vain because they worship Him “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:8-9). Therefore, we teach, that in the worship of God the whole congregation should sing, and not just a choir or a group of professional singers. Ephesians 5:19 teaches, “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” The melody (music) should be made in the heart and not on a mechanical instrument of music. God requires singing (Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15) without the accompaniment of any kind of musical instrument. This also eliminates, clapping, stamping, beat-boxing, and humming. We teach that Christians should do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17), without adding anything to God’s written word or changing anything in it.

We are pleading with people to go back to the New Testament of the Bible to be Christians in all things as they were in the beginning. We are pleading with people to go back to the plan of salvation of the New Testament; to be members of the church found in the New Testament; go back to the worship as they worshipped in the New Testament. We are pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity.



SOME WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS

J.C. CHOATE

ALL ARE NOT CHRISTIANS WHO claim to be Christians. This may sound strange but it is true nevertheless. Even more astonishing is the fact that millions and millions around the world fit into this category. These people may be honest and sincere, but honestly and sincerely mistaken. Let us therefore notice some of them.

1. One is not a Christian just because he was born of parents who believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Bible teaches that it is the individual who obeys the Lord that is saved. Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Therefore there are many people who have never obeyed the Lord but are living in the so-called Christian community and are counted as Christians on the basis that they had parents who believed in Christ. But this is not according to the Bible.

2. One is not a Christian just because he was sprinkled as an infant. Worlds of people are under the false impression that this made them Christians. But please keep in mind that the gospel is directed to adult and not to infants. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that one must be old enough to hear the gospel himself (Romans 10:17), old enough to believe it (Hebrews 11:6), old enough to repent of his sins (Acts 17:30), old enough to confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and old enough to be baptized for the remission of his sins. (Acts 2:38). Now would an infant be able to comply with these terms of pardon? If not, then it would be impossible for an infant to become a Christian. In the next place, sprinkling is not baptism. Rather, baptism is a burial. (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3,4). That means that those people who think they are Christians today, because they were sprinkled as infants, are not Christians. They have never obeyed the Lord. Certainly they have never been scripturally baptized. The sprinkling of infants is no where taught in the Bible. It is an invention of men.

3. One is not a Christian because he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. One must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God to be a Christian (John 14: 1), but this alone is not enough.

Mental acceptance of Christ alone is a dead faith. (James 2:17-24). A saving faith is the kind that will lead one to obey the teaching of Christ. Read all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts and see if this is not true. Often times these individuals will isolate certain verses of scripture and try to show that all that is necessary is faith. But what is he going to do with all of the other verses that teach obedience? (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8,9). Even the devil believe that Jesus is God's Son. (James 2:19).

4. One is not a Christian because he is a member of some church. The majority are members of churches that cannot be found in the Bible. Do you think for a second that in the following Christ He will lead you into some man-made organization? Christ said that He would build His church, and that He did. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2). Furthermore, He is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), and there is but one. (Ephesians 4:4). When an individual obeys Christ, the Lord saves him and adds him to his church. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).

5. One is not a Christian because he is living a good moral life. Many people are good morally. Some of them are even better than those who claim to be the most religious. But this alone does not make a Christian. Cornelius was a good moral man but he was lost, and he was not saved until he heard the gospel and obeyed it. (Acts 10).

If these are not Christians, then who is? Those who believe in Christ, obey the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38), are added to the church of the Lord (Acts 2:47), wear the name of Christ (Acts 11:26), and live the Christian life. (Revelation 2:10).

IS IT OR ISN'T IT?

DAVID DEFFENBAUGH

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Is it capable of making the "man of God" perfect, or isn't it?

"According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Did God give us "all things," or didn't He?

Many notables (and not-so-notables) in the religious world claim that God has spoken directly to them. This is a claim to which many have responded with disbelief and efforts of refutation. Among this same select group to whom God has supposedly spoken there is also the claim of direction and guidance given by the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the Word. Because of these claims and those who attempt to refute them, there is also left a group of people who just aren't sure about it.

Let's consider what we do know for sure. We know that what the Bible claims for itself is true. Therefore, the Bible is able to make us "*perfect*," and God has given us "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*." If these are both true (and they are), then the Bible must be the final and complete and perfect revelation of God to man. If it is not, then no reference to "*perfect*" or "*complete*" or "*all things*" could be made. But we can say emphatically that God and the Holy Spirit do not act in the way which some people claim. How can we be so emphatic? Because if God does speak directly to man today and the Holy Spirit does direct the lives of people independent of the Word, then Paul and Peter were sadly misinformed when they wrote the words cited at the outset of this article.

Is the Word able to do what it claims to do, or isn't it? The claims of the Bible and the claims of these people cannot both be true. The claims of the Bible, if true, exclude any further or separate guidance or messages from God. The claims of these people, if true, exclude the Bible from being the final, complete, and perfect revelation of God to man. **Is it, or isn't it?**

The Sacred Writing (Holy Scriptures) ***(Psalm 19:7-14)***

DON L. NORWOOD

THE SCRIPTURES WERE WRITTEN and preserved by God's divine providence so that mankind could come to know for himself God's will (John 20:30,31; Luke 1:3,4; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 John 5:13; 1 Timothy 3:14,15).

God's Holy Spirit inspired (guided) the men whom God chose to write the Holy Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Samuel 23:2). Christ Himself endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures

as being divine (Luke 24: 27,44,45). Consider some of the scriptural names that are applied to the Sacred Writings (Romans 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Peter 3:16).

We are warned concerning what will happen to persons who wrest or twist the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). The New Testament explains that a person must love the truth (the New Testament is the whole body of truth brought to mankind through Jesus Christ—John 14:6; John 1:17), or God will cause the person to be deluded, and thus to believe a lie and be damned as a result.

God instructed the Hebrew people: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”* (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

The New Testament Scriptures teach that a Christian has *“... all things that pertain to life and godliness in the knowledge of him who called you by his own grace and virtue”* (2 Peter 1:3). This knowledge can be found only in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Apostles of Christ were guided by the Holy Spirit into revealing all the truth (John 14:26; John 16:13; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

The kings of Israel were commanded by the Lord to have a written copy of God’s law at hand all the time and to be very careful to do as it taught (Deuteronomy 17:14-19).

Human beings have the free moral choice of learning and believing God’s Word (Holy Scriptures, the Bible) or not to do so. However, Christ said that those who believe the Gospel and obey it will be saved, and that those who disbelieve will be condemned (Mark 16:15,16; John 3:36).

The Bible (at least parts of it) is three thousand years old. It was written over a period of about 1600 years by men inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. It never contradicts itself, and its historical accuracy is perfect. It tells openly about the good and the bad deeds of people mentioned in it. The prophecies recorded in it have come to pass just as was predicted centuries before. It even named people long before they were born and told what they would do. No ordinary human being could write such things.

As the Psalmist wrote: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Psalm 119:105). Man cannot guide his own life in a manner that God will accept (read Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 14:12). Without the guidance from the Word of the Son of God

(Christ), mankind will be hopelessly lost and condemned to an eternal punishment with the Devil and his angels (Ephesians 2:1-3,11,12; John 3:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

How precious, then, are the Sacred Writings to all mankind? Surely nothing compares with the value of these words of God, and man's learning and doing as they instruct.

The Silence of the Scriptures

OWEN COSGROVE

THERE ARE TWO MARVELOUS aspects of the Holy Bible: what it says and what it does not say.

The restraint of the Scriptures is very impressive to me. If I had been an eyewitness of the Lord's life and had been writing a Gospel account by mere human power, I would have been tempted to write details of His physical stature and appearance and other items that would have become spiritual distractions through the centuries. The Scriptures are complete. They say just enough and they do not say too much. Anything that I would do to "touch them up" would only defile them.

Going beyond the Scriptures can be just as serious as falling short of them. The Bible warns against leaving out part of the Word, but it also cautions against adding to it (Revelation 22:18-20; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9-11).

The early restorers pleaded, "Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Man is not free to make up his own rules that go beyond the Word of God.

How many times have you heard someone defend an unscriptural practice by saying, "The Bible does not say not to"? A doctor's prescription does not have to tell the pharmacist what NOT to put into the medicine. To add unauthorized chemicals or elements is to alter the prescription.

While historically we have urged "calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways," many congregations and preachers seems bent on inventing catchy names, titles, phrases, programs, and ministries that are inclined to go beyond mere descriptions of Biblical activities. They tend to add a whole new terminology to our work that clashes with the simplicity and the honest directness of the Bible. They belie our appeal for pure Biblical terminology.

Respect for the Word of God involves appreciation for what it does not say, as well as for what it says.

THE BOOK OF BOOKS

DALTON KEY

THE BIBLE IS BY FAR THE BEST book in all the world. It merits our reverence, our respect, our love, our belief, and our complete trust. It deserves our subjection and our willing obedience. Without this book we would be as helpless, hopeless nomads traveling the rocky road to eternity with no purpose, no map, and no guide. Were it not for God's book, the Bible, we would know nothing of divine law, will, and love; we would know nothing of God's eternal purpose for man; we would be ignorant of Christ's sacrifice, shed blood, intercession, and advocacy. Without the Bible we would not know of our own sin, our need for salvation; we would be without knowledge of our eternal nature and promised destiny.

The word "Bible" is not found within the pages of God's eternal revelation to mankind. This matchless book refers to itself as the law (Psalm 119:97; James 1:25), the word (Psalm 119:11), the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 17:11), doctrine (2 John 9; 2 Timothy 4:2,3), and truth (John 8:32; 17:17). The Bible describes itself as a sword (Ephesians 6:17), a fire and a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), a seed (Luke 8:11), a lamp (Psalm 119:105), and a light (Psalm 119:105).

The Bible is not a "dead letter." According to the Hebrews writer, God's Word is both quick (alive) and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). It was by the word of God that the worlds were framed and the heavens were made (Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:6). The Bible quickens (Psalm 119:50), begets (James 1:18), cleanses (Psalm 119:9), purifies (1 Peter 1:22), converts (Psalm 19:7), saves (Acts 11:14; James 1:21), pricks and cuts the heart (Acts 2:36-33; Hebrews 4:12), and will judge us in the last day (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

The Bible stands alone. It is unlike the books of men in that it is inerrant (Psalm 19:7; 33:4), verbally and wholly inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13), and eternal (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24,25). While the books of men rise and fall with respect to public acceptance and popularity, the Bible has throughout the years sustained a "best seller" status. Other works are undergoing

constant revision, yet God's book is every bit as relevant today as it was when first etched out by the inspired penmen.

Through the ages, many and various attitudes have been held by men toward this Book of books. Some have rejected it, some have waged war against it, some have been apathetic toward it, and some others have loved, cherished, and respected it. King Jehoiakim cut and burned his Bible because he didn't care to hear or do what it demanded of him (Jeremiah 36:23). Unlike this wicked king, David loved God's Word to the point of making it his constant meditation (Psalm 119:97).

What is your attitude toward the Bible?

Christianity Is True Because the Early Disciples of All Cultures Were Religiously United

ROGER E. DICKSON

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS Luke gives one of the strongest arguments that can be launched against man-made religions. If religions are man-made, then any man that comes along can add to the teaching, and thus, cause division among the followers. If the followers of any particular religion cannot find divine authority for the teachings of the religion, then they will divide over the pronouncements of great teachers of that religion.

Any religion that is closely linked to any particular culture is subject to isolation and division. Its own cultural orientation makes world propagation very difficult. Man-made religions are often tied to the culture from which they spring. Because they are culturally linked, it is most difficult for such religions to be propagated to other cultures.

The problem also arises with the culture from which a particular religion may have arisen. If the culture changes—and all cultures do change with time—the religion is often divided from within because of struggles between conservatives and liberals within the religion and culture. Luke argues that Christianity is above the culture of man. And by being above the culture of man, it is applicable to all cultures of the world. This is a most convincing argument to

prove that Christianity is the revelation of the one God of heaven who is the Father of all humanity.

Luke seeks to prove that Christianity is a God-revealed religion simply because the foundation principles of Christianity were based upon the simplicity of one gospel message and the few fundamental beliefs which Christians must maintain in order to be saved. That one gospel message, he affirms, originated from God, and not man.

THE DISCIPLES PREACHED ONE GOSPEL

The central message of the disciples was the coming of Jesus to die for man's sins, His burial, resurrection to give hope, and reign over all things at the right hand of God. Men must obey this Gospel by immersion into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:12,38; 10:47,48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). Jesus is also coming again and will judge the world (Acts 17:30,31). Because Jesus is coming again to judge all, men must maintain a moral life of integrity and righteous living (Acts 24:25).

The message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus permeates the preaching of the disciples. Luke records several major sermons which include these central events of the Gospel. Peter preached the death, burial, and resurrection on Pentecost (Acts 2:22-32). He preached the same in the temple (Acts 3:14,15). Peter and John preached this good news to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:10). The apostles preached the same message every day in the temple and from house to house (Acts 5:42). The disciples' belief in and preaching of the Gospel united them in their outreach to the world.

THE DISCIPLES PREACHED JESUS AS MESSIAH

Luke centers his defense for Christians on the basis that they believed Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. The apostles preached "*Jesus as the Christ*" (Acts 5:42). Paul preached "*Jesus is the Christ*" (Acts 9:22; 17:3; 18:5). Apollos also preached that "*Jesus is the Christ*" (Acts 18:28). The disciples' stand on this belief united them into one body of believers. They maintained their unity because they believed that this Jesus fulfilled all prophecies about the Messiah.

THE DISCIPLES WERE TOGETHER AND EXPRESSED UNITY ON FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS

After Jesus had ascended, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, "*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ...*"

(Acts 1:14). On the day of Pentecost *“they were all with **one accord in one place**”* (Acts 2:1). Those who were baptized *“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship ...”* (Acts 2:42). *“Now all who believed were **together, and had all things in common**”* (Acts 2:44). The *“multitude of those who believed were of **one heart and one soul...**”* (Acts 4:32). *“And they were all with **one accord in Solomon’s Porch**”* (Acts 5:12). Luke’s defense on this point is clear. The community of disciples throughout the Roman Empire were united as a group. The Christians came from many different cultures. However, they were united by one Gospel into one church.

When unconverted and legalistic Jews attempted to destroy the united fellowship of the disciples by binding Old Testament laws on the church, the church rose up as one to rid itself of this divisive influence. Thus in Jerusalem *“the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter”* (Acts 15:6). They made a decision to send a letter to the Gentile churches in order to inform them that those who went out from Jerusalem to bind circumcision on the Gentiles had received no such commandment (Acts 15:24). *“Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men”* to Antioch to deliver this letter (Acts 15:22). One of these men was Paul, who labored in agreement with all the disciples.

Luke has already written to Theophilus concerning fundamental moral teachings in the book of Luke. In Acts he is showing the difference between the unifying fundamentals of the church as opposed to the diversity of beliefs which are so characteristic of man-made religions.

Luke unceasingly delivers to all who would question the validity of Christianity the argument that the one church was unified in its struggle against Jewish persecution. The church was unified in its evangelistic outreach to the world. It was unified on the fundamental doctrines concerning salvation.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

WAYNE JACKSON

ON THE FIRST DAY of the creation week, God said, *“Let there be light”* (Genesis 1:3). For the very first time light existed. What is light? It is a form of energy that exists in “rays.” God once asked Job, an ancient wise man, *“Where is the way to the*

dwelling of light?" (Job 38:19). It is an amazing fact that light does exist in a "way" (a path), and it moves in a straight line. Light travels at the speed of over 186,000 miles per second (640 million miles per hour). It takes the sun's light more than eight minutes to come to earth (the sun is 93 million miles away).

Everything that God made was "*very good*" (Genesis 1:31), and that includes light. Light is good because without it we could not see the clouds, the birds, the green grass, or the words on this page. We see objects clearly or dimly, depending upon how many light rays fall upon them.

Light is good because without it plants could not grow and we would not have good vegetables to eat. Nor would we have meat to eat, for animals must eat plants in order to live. Light is good because it kills many germs which would be harmful to us if they grew as rapidly as they sometimes can in the dark. Doctors are even using light to perform surgery. Have you heard of laser surgery? How thankful we should be that God made light.

IN DEFENSE OF JESUS

BILL NICKS

WE ARE TOLD TO BE "*ready to give an answer* (apology, defense) *for the hope that is in us, yet with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter 3:15). Paul was "*set for the defense* (same word) *of the gospel*" (Philippians 1:17). There are three charges made against Jesus, based on John 2, which need replies: (1) that He was rude to His mother; (2) that He was an ascetic; and (3) that He encouraged social drinking.

(1) At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, His mother said to Him, "*They have no wine*" (John 2:3). In reply, Jesus said, "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.*" The word "woman" as used in Matthew 15:28; Luke 22:57; and John 19:26 "is by no means disrespectful, but there is no satisfactory English equivalent for it" (**Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament**, by Gingrich). Gingrich says it "is best to omit the word in translation." However, most translators use the word "woman" in the sense of any adult female. This is not disrespectful when we use it in the sense of "lady." When Jesus was on the cross, He addressed His

mother, *“Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother.* “ The same word is used, and He was showing utmost concern for the welfare of His mother after His death.

(2) One definition of an ascetic is one who lives as a monk, or a hermit. Jesus certainly did not live that kind of life, but showed us what it means to be the *“salt of the earth and the light of the world”* by living among men and influencing them with His life and His teaching. He encouraged marriage by attending this wedding feast in Cana; thus, as God, He was in the home circle, glorifying the ordinary life of humans. He joined in the festivities, drank wine, and was not opposed to showing joy at the proper time.

(3) Jesus is often charged with encouraging social drinking of alcoholic beverages. Did He change the water into between 108 and 162 gallons of liquor for this feast? The very thought is ridiculous! The word for wine (“oinos”) has a good and bad use. The good use: wine was nutritious, and when mixed with water, was non-alcoholic. It represented prosperity, as *“wine in the cluster”* (Isaiah 65:8). Its bad use is typified by the many warnings against drunkenness, as in Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; and Ephesians 5:18. We conclude that the *“good wine,”* as the governor of the feast called it, was non-alcoholic. Would the Prohibitor oppose His own teaching, and encourage that which would lead men to drunkenness?

KILLING THE PROPHETS

JACK W. CARTER

IN READING ABOUT JEREMIAH the prophet we find that this is indeed a significant period of Bible history. It was for the people of Judah, and it brings its vital message to every subsequent generation of God's people.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet. He was a weeping prophet. He became an angry prophet, and he even finally urged God to punish the people because they were so determined to oppose God's message and so eager to kill the messenger.

I have always found the disposition of humanity very engaging in this regard. Through many centuries of God's dealings with His people, He used prophets to reveal His will. Most of the time the people did not like the message that came from God, so they often sought to kill the messenger. Why?

Would killing the messenger nullify the message? Would it alter the force of the message? Is it conceivable that any kind of an advantage could be obtained by killing the messenger?

The only answer that I have been able to come up with has two parts to it. First of all, if the message is not what the people want to hear, they will try to convince themselves that the message really isn't coming from God. As it was in the time of Jeremiah (and so many prophets), the people sought other prophets who claimed to be speaking for God and who had a more acceptable message. This has never changed. Secondly, even while doing this, most of them knew in their hearts which was the true message. They just didn't want to accept it, and they most certainly did not really want to be reminded of it. It was a kind of "defy God now and maybe we can escape the consequences later" situation.

Killing the messenger is in no way an intelligent act. It serves no genuine purpose and offers no real advantage to anyone. The *messenger* is an incidental part of God's communicating with His people. It is always the *message* that must capture our attention.

You see, no matter what happens to the messenger, the message never changes. Many, many messengers have been killed, *but the message will never die. It will judge us in the last day.*

An Atheist Denies That Which The Devil Admits

BILL DILLON

THE BIBLE SAYS, "...*the devils also believe, and tremble*" (James 2:19), yet an atheist will not go that far. He doesn't believe, period! What are the grounds of disbelief? Some say:

1. "I don't believe in God because I can't see him." But we believe in other things we can't see, namely love, hate, electricity, etc.

2. "God's existence can't be proven by the scientists." Perhaps scientists don't have big enough laboratories and test tubes! Don't limit God to the measure of our own ideas. The Lord said, "... *thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself....*" (Psalm 50:21).

3. "I can't understand all about God." But the man who believes only what he can understand must have either an enormously large brain or a very small creed. God has given, in the Bible, the specific

information we need to know about Him and our responsibilities (Acts 27:22-31; 22:16; Romans 12).

An appeal to the world itself helps us to see the evidence of God. Can there be a work of art without an artist? A design without a designer? An effect without a cause? God's wisdom and power are displayed in nature so that only *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. ..."* (Psalm 14:1). Just as sure as a house has a builder, so the universe has a maker (Hebrews 3:4).

The certainty of God's existence is not at all affected by persistent denials of Him. Our God, He Is Alive!

Were the Days in Genesis One 24-Hour Periods?

GLENN COLLEY

IN AN ATTEMPT TO MARRY the beautiful account of creation to the sometimes blasphemous theories of evolution, some have argued that the days of creation in Genesis chapter one were not literal days (i.e., not 24-hour periods). The days, they affirm, were rather long and deceptive periods of time. Someone recently pointed out, "With the Lord a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day" (2 Peter 3:8), to demonstrate, I suppose, that the days of Genesis were AT LEAST 1000 years long each. I believe these ideas to be without biblical merit.

Consider three reasons why I believe the days of Genesis chapter one were literal days, 24-hour periods.

1. Because other passages of Scripture commonly compare obvious 24-hour days with the days of creation.

Exodus 20:8-11—*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."*

Exodus 31:16,17—*"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations,*

for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed."

If God were comparing "day" meaning a thousand or more years, with "day" meaning 24 hours, why is it that there is no mention of any distinction between the two?

2. Because the Bible defines the days of creation as 24-hour periods with the words, "The evening and the morning were the first day ..." (second day, third day, etc.) (Genesis 1:5,8,13).

The fact that the numeral is used demonstrates that a literal day is meant. Alan Highers, in the Freed-Hardeman University lectures, made this point well when he illustrated, "We might say, 'In my grandfather's day ...' to mean the years when he was younger. But if we say, 'In my grandfather's FIRST day ...' or, 'In my grandfather's SECOND day ...', we mean a literal 24-hour time.

The fact that the inspired Moses was so repetitive (each of the six days are numbered and are accompanied by the words, "*The evening and the morning were the ...*"), seems to indicate that the Lord expected this day-length question.

3. Because it is illogical for one to accept God's creative power when stretched over thousands of years, but deny that same miraculous power when creation was said to be accomplished in six days.

If He has strength to bring about our universe in ANY length of time, why can we not take Him at His word and accept that He did it in six 24-hour periods? Let's be people of the Book.

Escaping The Dead-End Path of Agnosticism

GARELL L. FOREHAND

AS IMPORTANT AS IS KNOWLEDGE in every other setting in life, it is hard to imagine how religion could come to be so commonly assailed by an attitude which asserts that we just can't know anything for certain. And yet, there it is, bombarding us from every angle, whether it be in the questioning of the existence of God, or in the more subtle assertion that we just can't all expect to understand the Bible alike.

OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE

In every branch of human perception the evidence forces reasonable people to accept the existence of objective truth. To very simplistically distinguish the concepts of objective and subjective matters, let's approach the subject by way of the development of a doctrine. If that matter is objectively true, then we must view it as an object which does not depend upon anyone for its existence. In other words, it's there, whether or not I accept it. On the other hand, a subjective reality does not exist except by virtue of its acceptance by one to whom it is subject. In other words, the propriety or impropriety of a matter would for me be dependent upon or subject to how I felt about it. In a nutshell, then, objective truth stands with or without believers, while subjective truth is subject to the individual's perception.

The Bible makes very clear that God's will is not subjective (subject to any man's perception). If God's truth were subjective, then the true call to man would be, *"Devise the truth,"* instead of, *"Know the truth."* However, God commands us to come to know His truth, and that truth stands as an object before us, whether or not we come to embrace it. Solomon was inspired to tell us, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus told His apostles that *"the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service"* (John 16:2). God pronounced a great woe on those *"who call evil good, and good evil"* (Isaiah 5:20). You see, we can be sincerely wrong—something that would be impossible were truth merely relative or subjective.

WE CAN KNOW THE TRUTH

The objective truth of God is accessible to us. Those who embrace philosophical agnosticism are trying to hold to a self-contradictory viewpoint. That type of thinking essentially forces one to declare, "I know for certain that I can't know anything for certain." Do you see the problem? If he's right, he's wrong!

Jesus clearly dismantled that way of thinking when He let us know that objective truth came through Him (John 1:17). That's why He told believers, *"If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31,32). When someone says that we cannot know the truth, he is placing himself in direct contradiction to Jesus Christ Himself. That fact should change everyone's mind about this matter, but, sadly, it doesn't always do that.

MULTIPLE “UNDERSTANDINGS” OF A MATTER ARE MISNOMERS

A form of inverted agnosticism plagues religion today. This view prompts a person to say, “Well, you understand it that way, and I understand it this way. All that matters is that we honestly deal with it the way we understand it!” Looking at that viewpoint in even a cursory fashion will reveal it to be a means of denying that God gave us objective truth. If true, and were we to sincerely approach the Bible in such a way, then none of us could ever be wrong! We’ve already seen the fallacy of thinking that way.

The truth of the matter is, there is only one way to “understand” an objective truth—in the way it was originally intended by the one who authored it. Any other view of it, no matter how sincerely held, is simply misunderstanding. And proper understanding of the Lord’s words is crucial to our well-being. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus explained. *“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart... But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it”* (Matthew 13:19,23). We are required by God to use His Word to test everything before deciding what to do with it. *“Prove all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22). That’s why Paul commanded Christians to *“be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:17).

CONCLUSION

What about it? Are you following the crowd down the road of boasted ignorance; or have you striven to turn down the road of truth that is less traveled? May God help us to escape the dead-end path of agnosticism.

OUR GOD – A CONSUMING FIRE

REX BANKS

HAVING REMINDED US THAT “*God ... spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets*” (Hebrews 1:1), the writer of the Hebrews epistle then adds that “*... in these last days* (i.e., the Christian dispensation) (God) *has spoken to us in His Son*” (Hebrews 1:2). Commentators upon the text often draw our attention to the expression “*en huioi*” (“in His Son”) and point out that there is no article or pronoun here with the preposition “en,” “... giving the absolute sense of ‘Son’”

(A.T. Robertson). Evidently emphasis is upon the fact that "... the new revelation is given through one who is a son as distinguished from a prophet.... The revelation was son-revelation" (M.R. Vincent). "God spake to us in one who has this character *that He is a Son*" (Rienecker and Rogers).

Now, as the Hebrews writer continues, he details seven facts about the Son which emphasize His greatness, and thereby stresses the importance of the divine revelation given through Him. First, God "*appointed*" His Son "*heir of all things*," meaning that Jesus is possessor of all that the Father possesses (Acts 2:36; John 17:10; 16:15). Next, the Son is the One "*through whom also He made the world*" (Galatians 1:15-17; John 1:3,10; 1 Corinthians 8:6), not a "passive tool" but a "cooperating agent". Then Christ is "*the radiance of His (God's) glory*," perfectly manifesting the brilliant radiancy of the God who cannot be seen (John 1:18). He is also "*the exact representation of His (God's) nature*," so that He may claim with authority: "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9). It is Christ who "*upholds all things by the word of His power*." He it was who "... *made purification of sins*" at awful cost to Himself, and He it was who then "...*sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*," exalted, supreme, possessing all authority (Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9; Psalm 110; Luke 22:69; Matthew 28:18; John 17:2). This then, according to the Hebrews writer, is the nature and status of the One through whom God has spoken in the pages of the New Testament.

Now, given the superiority of the Son to "*the prophets*," what lesson do we learn about Jehovah's revelation through the Christ? Simply this: "... *if the word spoken through angels* (at Sinai; Galatians 3:19; Acts 7:53) *proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation* (as that proclaimed by the Son in the Gospel)?" (Hebrews 2:2,3). Surely "... to treat it lightly therefore must expose one to sanctions even more awful than those which safeguarded the law" (F.F. Bruce). Later on, the Hebrews writer reminds certain Jewish Christians who were in danger of reverting to Judaism: "*Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses*" (Hebrews 10:28). He then poses the question: "*How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*" (verse 29).

How serious is apostasy from Christ—deadly serious! *“For if these did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth (i. e., Israel in the wilderness), much less shall we (apostate Christians) escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven”* (Hebrews 12:25). Apostasy = death! Yes, of course love is the best motivation for seeing Christ! Yes, of course gratitude rather than fear should keep us faithful (Hebrews 12:28). But when love’s appeal and gratitude’s promptings fail to move the heart, let’s not forget: *“... our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:29).

God’s Winnowing Fan

JOE C. MAGEE

“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

Harvest was an important event to the farmers of Christ’s day. The grain with the stalks would be carried to a place prepared where it would be spread out and, either by animals treading over the harvest or by pulling a kind of sled over it, the grain would be separated from the stalks. This would be followed by using a two or three-pronged fork called a winnowing fan with which the kernel and the chaff would be separated by tossing them into the breeze. John’s listeners probably had little trouble understanding the parallel. But what of us today? What spiritual significance does this offer us?

When we submit ourselves to the threshing floor of God’s kingdom, the winnowing fan of the inspired Word will separate us from:

The chaff of ignorance. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Psalm 119:105).

The chaff of indolence. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15).

The chaff of selfishness. *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:1,2).

The chaff of hatred. *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen: And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20,21).*

The chaff of moral laxity. *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).*

The chaff of hopelessness. *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).*

The chaff of fear and uncertainty. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).*

Let us use the winnowing fan of God's Word to separate the chaff while in this life, lest the Lord come and, with the winnowing fan of judgment, separate us from life in God's eternal heaven.

Bread of Heaven

JOHNNY RAMSEY

IN JOHN 6 WE HAVE THE famous sermon of Christ. He is the *"bread of life,"* contrasted with the manna in the wilderness. Then in John 7, His brothers taunt Him saying, in effect, "If you are really who you claim to be, go to the feast of the Tabernacles openly and show forth your claim." But Jesus let them know that He was on the Father's time schedule, not on theirs. And yet when He did go to the feast, and began to teach, this statement is indicative of the reaction of the people: *"Never man so spoke."*

One of the beauty spots of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is John 8:12, when Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."* And then the famous utterance of John 8:32 when Christ said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

In John 9, Jesus healed a man born blind, and then went back to him to take care of his spiritual blindness.

In John 10:10, we have a magnificent statement of the Lord, *"I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."* In John 11:25, at the graveside of Lazarus, He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live. He that believeth in me shall never really die."* And then the climactic statement of John 12:48, Jesus said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day."*

But if I had to choose just one verse in the whole book, that emphasizes the importance of Christ and His message, it would be John 14:6, where Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Then in John 15, we learn the practical nature of Christianity. In v. 8 of that chapter, Jesus said, *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples."* In John 16:13, the Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would come and guide the apostles *"into all the truth."* And in John 17:17, He identified that truth as God's word by saying, *"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."*

To Pontius Pilate He said, *"My kingdom is not of this world"* (John 18:36). Suspended between heaven and earth on the cross, He cried, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). He had finished the work which God gave Him to do (John 6:38; 17:4). And then, in John 20:2, one of His friends exclaims at the empty tomb of the Christ, *"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him."* Today, men have taken away the authority of Christ, the church of Christ, the example of Christ, the worship Christ ordained - but they will pay for it in the day of Judgment. They rob themselves and become bereft of the best things this life affords by removing the Lord. Of course, His body had not been stolen away - up from the grave by the power of God, He had risen.

The last few verses of John 20 state the purpose of this book and of the three preceding ones in the New Testament. *"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name"* (John 20:30-31). Just as a gentle mother slaps hard on her baby to keep the child from choking, so God

chastens those whom He loves and scourges everyone He receives (Heb. 12:5-10). We dare not pick and choose the characteristics we admire in Jesus. We must be like Him in every way. Each facet of the Divine One should challenge our attention.

Yes, Christ was meek and gentle (2 Cor. 10:1), but He was also exacting, straightforward and unbending (Mark 9:43-48; John 8:21; Luke 13:3; Matt. 12:30). At the first and last of His personal ministry (John 2, Mark 11), Jesus ran the money-changers out of the temple in a awesome display of righteous indignation. The apostles saw it and were reminded of Psalms 69:9 and the famous words: *"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."* Evidently, some of us are not very zealous, for we never get excited enough about error and sacrilege and blasphemy even to raise a whisper against such matters. And many a preacher has been branded as harsh and uncouth when the real problem was cowardice and compromise by the many unconverted members.

We must conclude, therefore, that some folk want to be like Jesus only in the characteristics that are palatable to them. The full Bible account of what Christ was really like would truly shock many casual, traditional members of the church. If we were to truly "stamp His own image deep on our hearts" as the great song suggests, I guarantee we would be more militant against sin and most outspoken against error! Everybody knows of the love of the Lord, but many seem oblivious to the fact of His wrath. Justice demands a proper view of these matters, lest we concoct a vision or image of our own imagination and then become disenchanted when we really meet Jesus on the pages of the Bible.

What was Jesus really like? We all need to read again the Bible story of Jesus, lest we grope around the scaffolding of His life like blind men and never really get to the super-structure of divine revelation on the matter. Such a study would be a real adventure for any honest Bible student, and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are waiting to tell us the story.
