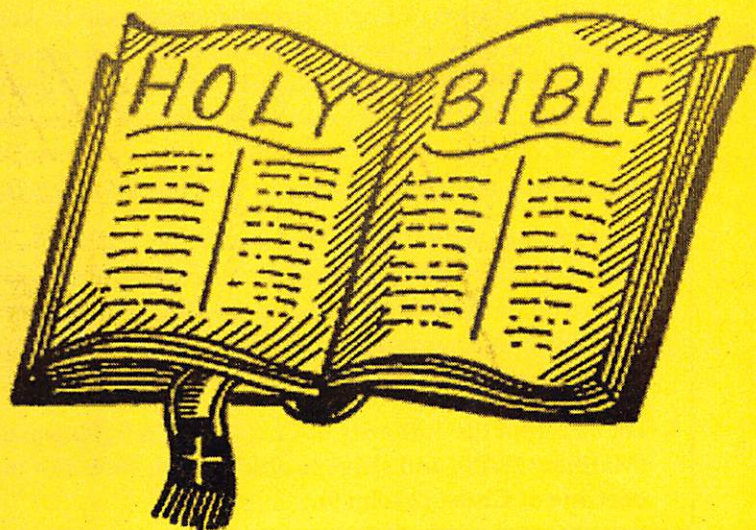


Monthly

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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## *Our Plea*

### *Let the Truth Prevail*

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as church of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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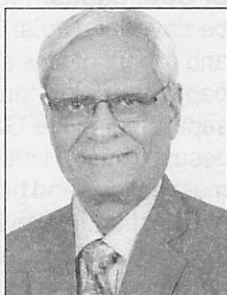
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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *Let Not Man Separate, What God Has Joined Together*

ONCE THE PHARISEES had asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" In reply Jesus said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh?' So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6). Jesus taught that God's institution of marriage is for life, it is permanent, and no person, whosoever, has the right to separate them.



But God's law of "joining together" is not limited to marriage alone, since it says, **what God has joined together, let not man separate.** There are several other things God has joined together, the Bible teaches, and no man has the authority to separate them. Let's, therefore, learn about those things which God has joined together:

First, we observe, **Christ and His blood and His church and salvation** are joined together. Salvation is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10), and one is saved in Christ by His blood in His church. In Matthew 16:18 Christ promised, "I will build my church." According to Ephesians 1:22-23, the church is the body of Christ, and Colossians 1:18 says that Christ is the head of the church. Then in Acts 20:28

we read, about "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The blood of Christ was shed from the cross for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:28; 1 Peter 1: 18-20). The church which Christ built, according to 1 Timothy 3:15, is the spiritual house of God, a blood bought institution. Christ and His blood and His church and salvation are, therefore, joined together. This means, if we belong to Christ, then we have been saved by His blood, and since we have been saved by His blood, then we are in His church, which Christ purchased with His blood. The point is, those whose sins are forgiven by the blood of Christ are saved from sins, and those who are thus saved Christ adds them to His church. (Acts 2:47). Are there then Christians outside of the church of Christ?

Second, in the list of things God has joined together are, **belief in Christ, repentance of sins, confession of Christ as the Son of God, baptism for the forgiveness of sins and salvation.** To be saved in Christ, the Bible teaches, one must believe in Christ and repent of sins and confess Christ to be the Son of God and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. None of these things can be separated, since God has put them together. Notice: The Savior, Jesus Christ, Himself said, as we read in Mark 16:16, that one must believe and be baptized to be saved. After hearing the gospel of Christ and believing in Him, when people wanted to know, what they should do to be saved, the apostle Peter told them to: "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). Then in Acts chapter 8 we read about eunuch, who after hearing the good news of Jesus wanted to be baptized to be saved. Philip, the preacher, however, did not baptize him at that point, but he told eunuch, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch then made the confession, saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." After this we read, "And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:35-39). To be saved from sin, therefore, after hearing the souls saving gospel of Jesus Christ, one must not only believe in Christ, but also repent of sins, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized or immersed in water for the remission of sins. The doctrine of salvation by faith only, therefore, is wrong. (James 2:24, 26).

Third, we learn from the Bible that God has joined together, **death, resurrection, judgment and eternity.** According to Hebrews 9:27, God has appointed for all men to die once and then face His judgment. Acts 17:30, 31 says, God will judge all people one day

through Christ. Jesus said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). The last day is the day of judgment, and is also the day of resurrection, when all the dead will be raised by the power of God. Hear Christ, He said, "Do not marvel at this ; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28, 29). Christ also said, concerning the evil or the wicked ones, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment", but the righteous or the saved, "will enter into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46). Notice, both the punishment of sinners in hell, and the salvation of the saved ones in heaven, are everlasting or eternal. For all death is certain, and so are the resurrection of all from the dead and their appearing before God in the judgment after resurrection, after which all will exist eternally either in hell or in heaven, not to spend eternity but to live eternally.

Friends, God has put these things together; let no man think himself great enough to try to separate them. Remember, the final word in judgment will be God's word.

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## *Rightly Dividing The Word*

**J.C. Choate**



MANY BECOME CONFUSED when they read the Bible because they may open it to any book, chapter, and verse, and think that the Lord is personally speaking to them. In doing this, they may conclude that God would want them to build an ark, offer animal sacrifices, or go to Jerusalem once a year to worship. Others are convinced that they are to worship on the Sabbath Day, give tithes of their income, and keep the "Ten Commandments". Of course, their problem is that they are not *rightly dividing the word*.

The Apostle Paul said, "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). If one is to know God's will, it is a *must* to study His word, but one may study the Bible and still be confused and not know what to do. As Paul said, the key is to *rightly divide the word*. But what does he mean?



We must realize that the Bible was written over a period of about fifteen hundred years! Surely, not all of it was written and directed to you and me—and it was not. So, let's look into this matter of "rightly dividing".

To begin with, the word "Bible" means "the Book" or "the book of books". The Bible actually consists of 66 separate books, grouped into two major divisions, the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament". There are 39 books in the Old Testament, covering two major periods of time. The first period is called the "Patriarchal Age", beginning with Adam and Eve and continuing to the time of Moses, about twenty-five hundred years. During this period of time God spoke directly to the fathers of the households of those who were obedient to Him. There was no written law from God. The history of this "age" is to be found in the book of Genesis.

The second period is called the "Mosaic Age". It covers some 1500 years, dating from Moses to the death of Christ. This was the time in which God's people—the nation of Israel, the descendants of Abraham—were governed by the written law which God gave through Moses. The reason for choosing those people, and for giving the law itself, was to prepare the stage for the birth of the Son of God.

The third and final period of time is called the "Christian Age", dating from the death of Christ and the beginning of His spiritual family, the church, as recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts. This age will continue until His return, when time will end and He will receive the church into that eternal world which He has gone to prepare (John 14:1-3).

Now it's obvious that we didn't live in the Patriarchal Age, or under the Law of Moses which ended with the death of Christ. Only one period of time, or age, remains—the Christian Age under the Law of Christ—so that is the age in which we live, and the law which we must keep.

Since we are not living in the Patriarchal Period or during the Mosaic Age, those laws do not apply to us! Isn't that logical? Of course it is. So, we read the Old Testament for its example and history, and we learn much that is valuable to us. But God does not expect us to obey those laws.

To this point, we have "rightly divided the word". Now, since we live in the Christian Age, it is logical that we are expected to obey the law of Christ. We don't have to worry about offering animal sacrifices or building an ark—those were commands to other people

in other times! But our responsibility is to the Law of Christ *only*! Isn't that simple?

A series of logical questions will help us to rightly divide the New Testament. **First**, who is the speaker? Is it God, Satan, some Bible character, or some other person? **Second**, to whom is he speaking? To the unbeliever, to Christians, to people in general, or to some specific person? **Third**, when was it spoken? Did it apply only to the situation of the infant church (as in the case of the use of miracles to confirm the spoken word), or to all of the Christian Age? **Fourth**, why was it spoken? Was God revealing some specific truth or guidelines, for a particular age or situation or person?

Surely by now you are beginning to discover if God is speaking to you through His word, or if the message is to someone else. Answering these questions should enable you to know what God wants you to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

To help you in your study, you can get a Bible dictionary to define words, a Bible concordance to list more, or even all, of the verses on the subject you are studying; you can get commentaries and other books and materials that discuss the subjects and Scriptures under consideration.

Now, when you read and study the Bible, keeping all of these things in mind, you will find it much easier to understand God's word. As you study, you must be prayerful that you will hunger for the **truth**, and that you will accept that truth as you learn it, no matter what it costs you.

Another thing to keep in mind is that Satan and his workers would put all kinds of stumbling blocks in the way, to blind you, to deceive you, to make you think it is too difficult to learn God's will. Don't allow him to do that! He will try to have you believe that everyone reads the Bible differently, and whatever you believe is all right. But 2 Peter 1:20 says that we cannot have a "private" interpretation of Scripture. Rightly divided and understood, its message is the same for everyone.

In the Bible, our Lord has revealed Himself to the world, telling of His coming, of His life, and of His death, burial, and resurrection. The gospel is the good news of salvation for those who will believe in God, repent of their sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and are baptized. The New Testament tells of the church, the spiritual body of Christ and how the Lord saves those who obey the gospel (Mark 16:16) and adds them to His church (Acts 2:47).

May God help us to read and study His word, rightly dividing it,

so that we can know His will and obey it, to have the hope of eternal life.

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## *The Believer Have Eternal Life*

**W.A. Holley**

MANY PREACHERS SAY that the believer possesses eternal life now; but Jesus teaches: “—in the world to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:30). Hence, eternal life is a wonderful “promise” (I John 2:25). Those who have heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel have been raised to “walk in newness life” (John 6:44-45; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4).

Writing to the Corinthian Christians, Paul says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (I Corinthians 15:1-2; Cf. Acts 18:8). We respectfully ask: how could one “believe in vain,” if he were in possession of eternal life then and there?? Again, we ask: If one receives eternal life the moment he believes, how could one “believe in vain.”

Jesus taught his disciples: “Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:29-30). There are some things one can have now; but “eternal (or everlasting) life” is in the world to come.

According to your Bible, it is possible for one to make “shipwreck” of one’s faith (I Timothy 1:19-20). It is possible for one to believe for a while, “and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Moreover, one may “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Timothy 4:1-3; Cf. I John 4:1; I Thessalonians 5:21; Revelation 2:2). The Bible speaks of the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2; 3:7). But one cannot “hope for” what he already possesses. Let us listen to Paul: “For we are saved by hope: but a hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24-25). No one “hopes” for what he already possesses! If our redemption was already complete, if there was nothing yet to be desired or expected, there would be no hope.



Just as the end or result of living a sinful life is death, even so, the end or result of living a faithful Christian life is "everlasting life" (Romans 6:3-4, 21-23). "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life ..." (1 Timothy 6:12). But, everyone knows that victory comes after the battle—not before the battle! A faithful child of God receives eternal life in the next world!!

Does the Bible teach that believers can be lost? Yes, if believers refuse to continue to be faithful to the Lord. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Who will argue that those mentioned in the verses just quoted will be saved—even though they were "believers." Can those who are ashamed of Jesus be saved, even though they "believe," but lack the courage to confess him? (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Matthew 10:32-33). Jesus taught that if you confess me, I will confess you; but, if you deny me, I will deny you!!

Will you listen to Jesus? "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:30-32). Jesus' speech is continued. In verse 44, Jesus says, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do ..." Is Jesus teaching that, no matter what a believer does, he will be saved, even if he serves Satan? ? The believer who obtains eternal life is the believer who obeys the Lord. John 3:36 in the American Standard version reads: "He that BELIEVETH on the Son hath eternal life; but he that OBEYETH not the Son shall not see life ..." Thus included in the word "believe" is obedience!

Our readers may inquire: Do you believe John 5:24 and John 10:27-28? My answer is "Yes! Wholeheartedly!" We shall quote John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." What Jesus is saying, "If you hear—and keep on hearing; if you believe—and keep on believing, eternal life, "in the world to come," is certain to be yours!" But, what would happen if one STOPS HEARING and STOPS BELIEVING?? 1 Chronicles 28:9 says: "... If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever."

We now ask our treasured readers to turn to John 10:27-29,

and read these words of our Lord with great care: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Does the afore-quoted passage teach the impossibility of apostasy? No, it does not! The Master teaches that those who HEAR his voice and FOLLOW him shall receive eternal life. Just suppose the sheep stop hearing and following the Master? Will such be saved in their disobedience? We will permit the Bible to supply the answer: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13).

Yes, Jesus gives eternal life to those who hear and obey his commandments, and who remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). The actual possession of eternal life is "in the world to come," not here (Titus 1:2; Mark 10:30; 1 John 2:25).

## "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

**Hugo McCord**

DAVID EARNESTLY PRAYED: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:1-2 NKJV).

David suffered much from the anger and jealousy of King Saul. More than once Saul hurled a spear at David (1 Samuel 18:11; 19:10). While David was hiding in the wilderness of Ziph, Saul "sought him every day" (23:14). It is no wonder that the frightened David thought God had forsaken him. But we read that "God did not deliver him into [Saul's] hand" (v. 14). The "Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul" (18:12).

Later, when David lied to Ahimelech the priest, committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-4), and ordered her

husband, Uriah, killed (vv. 6-24), even then God did not forsake David because He could see deep penitence in David as he prayed: "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me" (Psalm 51:1-3).

How could God forgive a lying, adulterous murderer? "The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). What does He see in my heart? And yours? The Lord said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart" (Acts 13:22). Thank God, it is humanly possible to have a heart like God's! Jesus also thought it is possible, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

David so touched God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) that God swore to David His servant that He would establish his descendants forever, and make "his throne as the days of heaven" (Psalm 89:3, 29). The Lord said to David, "your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

After David's death (970 B.C.), Isaiah (about 700 B.C.) predicted the coming of Christ, putting Him "on the throne of David" and over His kingdom forever (Isaiah 9:7). Ezekiel said that Jesus would become another David (about 600 B.C., Ezekiel 37:24). Consequently we are not surprised that the New Testament begins with the statement, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David" (Matthew 1:1).

As David was a king, so Jesus, the son of David, was born to be a king (John 18:37; Acts 2:30-36). But His kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:36). David's was by military strength (2 Samuel 8:1-15). David wore a crown of gold (12:30) but Jesus wore a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:29). Jesus' kingdom is invisible in the hearts of His citizens (Luke 17:20-21), a kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy" (Romans 14:17).

## **JESUS**

A tormented, suffering David was mistaken in praying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" for God did not forsake him. But Jesus, tormented, suffering, dying, hanging by nails on a cross,

prayed with the same words that His ancestor mistakenly prayed.

David thought that God had forsaken him, but Jesus knew that God had not forsaken Him. Jesus knew that He was part of the Father's "eternal purpose" (Ephesians 3:11) of love to save sinners by sending His Son to die as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

On the cross, in the eyes of the mocking priests, scribes and elders, Jesus appeared to be God-forsaken as they cried out, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God' " (Matthew 27:43). But Jesus knew He was not God-forsaken. He had announced it: "For this purpose I came to this hour" (John 12:27).

In heaven, before He came to the earth, one can picture Jesus hearing God ask, "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" (cf. Isaiah 6:8), and Jesus' replying, "I come! ... I delight to do Your will, O my God" (cf. Psalm 40:7-8).

On the earth Jesus announced, "I always do those things that please [the Father]" (John 8:29). "My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. ... This command I have received from My Father" (10:17-18). "I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me" (John 8:16).

But if the Father loved Jesus (John 10:17) and never leaves Him alone (8:16), why did Jesus pray, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)? Had the Father forsaken the Son of His love (John 3:35), the Son He never leaves alone (8:16), the Son who obeyed His Father's commandment to lay down His life (10:17-18), the Son who always did the things pleasing to Him (John 8:29)? Impossible!

Somehow the words of Jesus' prayer, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" says Adam Clarke (V, 277), "could not be used by our Lord in the sense in which they are generally understood, ... for he well knew why he had come unto that hour; nor could he be forsaken of God, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9)." It would have been impossible for the Son (a person of the Godhead) to think that the Father (another person of the Godhead) would forsake Him. His prayer must have had another meaning.

### **DEDICATED PEOPLE**

I rejoice that there have been and are men and women with

hearts after the Lord's "own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), to whom the Lord "Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' " (Hebrews 13:5).

The list of such blessed people begins with Abel, who through his sacrifice, "being dead still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4) and the list continues with Enoch, "taken away so that he did not see death," having received testimony that he pleased God" (Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5). If God is pleased with us, we will "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).

But the majority of people choose the wide gate and the broad road "that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13-14). Sadly, they will be forsaken by God forever, some because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:19), some because of disobedience (4:6), some because of fornication (1 Corinthians 5:1), and some, like Demas, because they "loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire' " (2 Peter 2:20-22).

On the other hand, "few" people ("few" compared with the billions of people who have lived, who live now, or maybe will live) choose to enter the small gate and walk the narrow road that leads to eternal life "in the age to come" (Matthew 7:13-14; Mark 10:30). But those people who choose the small gate and the narrow road, are "a great multitude which no one could number—of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues" (Revelation 7:9). Their clothing will be white because they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14). The Lord "will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17). To them God Himself has promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you!" (Hebrews 13:5).

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# *Don't Tell God What To Do*

**J. Randal Matheny**

FALSE TEACHERS HAVE gone out into the world saying that God has promised to give health and riches to Christians. They teach that God expects us to demand that He fulfill these promises.

But read the Bible carefully. **Never can a human being tell God what to do, how to do it, or when to do it.**

Ahaziah, king of Israel, lay sick on his bed. He sent messengers to find the prophet Elijah. God had said the prophets would guide the kings so they would know His will. Perhaps the king wanted to pressure Elijah to change his prophecy that he would die from his wounds.

The king sent a captain with 50 men to Elijah. When the captain ordered the prophet to come down from the mountain where he was sitting, fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his men.

King Ahaziah sent another captain with 50 men to retrieve the prophet from his perch. The captain ordered Elijah, *"O man of God, this is the king's order: Come down quickly!"* (2 Kings 1:11, NRSV). The same happened again: the fire of God destroyed the men.

The king sent a third captain with his fifty. This time, however, the official fell on his knees before Elijah and asked him, *"O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight"* (v. 13).

The angel of the Lord saw the humility of this captain. Instead of ordering Elijah in the king's name, he asked for mercy. So the angel told Elijah to go with this third captain. But his prophecy that the king would die remained firm.

This episode shows that no one, not even a king, can manipulate God or His servants. **No one can order God to act or bless or change His mind.**

On the other hand, instead of *requiring something of God*, we must *give attention* to what God *requires of us* (see Micah 6:8).

Moses told the Israelites, *"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God **require of you**, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?"* (Deuteronomy 10:12,13, ESV).



In the desert, the people of Israel were unhappy with the manna that God sent from heaven to feed them. They wanted more. *"They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved"* (Psalm 78:18). God knew it for what it was: rebellion (v. 17). He gave them what they **insisted on having**, and more: meat, and with it, death in the desert.

When Jesus came to the earth, the Jews **demanded** a miraculous sign from heaven (1 Corinthians 1:22). But our Lord gave them none, except to point to the sky and mention, from the Old Testament, the sign of Jonah (Matthew 16:1-4).

Jesus taught us to ask in prayer to the Lord, to persevere in our requests, but never to demand anything of God. He taught humility, never arrogance. He gave us His own example of always submitting to the Father's will.

We are but stewards, entrusted with the treasure of the gospel. God requires that we be trustworthy in that work (1 Corinthians 4:2). We cannot even demand to know from God about our creation. ***"But you are a mere man. So who are you to talk back to God? Scripture says, 'Can what is made say to the one who made it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"*** (Romans 9:20, NIRV). If we should not even question how God has made us, how can we **order** Him to give us what we think we need?

Jesus never promised that God would make us rich or healthy. **Those who demand that God do so incur His wrath.**

Even if we ask humbly of God, we should be careful, for *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded"* (Luke 12:48).

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## **"WE WISH TO SEE JESUS!"**

**Loy Mitchell**

*"Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee and asked him saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus'"* (John 12:21).

### **I. WHO WERE THESE PEOPLE?**

ACCORDING TO VERSE 20 they were Greeks. Greeks who were among those who came up to worship at the feast. Were they pious devout men like Cornelius? Were they Greeks who had taken up the Jewish religion? The text does not tell us. Maybe they were just

curious. Perhaps they had heard of the great works done by our Lord and wanted to see Him in person. We do not know.

## **II. WERE THEY TRYING TO SEE THE RIGHT PERSON?**

**YES! YES!**

They were on target. Jobs are important, but not as important as seeing Jesus. Food, clothing and shelter are necessary, but to "see" the Lord is of the highest importance. Have you ever seen a President of the USA in person? Those who have, likely count that as an important event in their lives. Many years ago Donna and I sat at the same table with the then President of Rhodesia, Africa. On another occasion we ate supper in the same room with the Prime Minister.

However, to *see Jesus* is the greatest sight of all. Have you *seen Him as your Savior!* Have you *seen Him as the Messiah or Christ?* Have you *seen Him as the head of His church?* Have you *seen him as Lord of your daily life?*

## **III. WHERE WILL YOU AND I SEE HIM TODAY?**

- **We should see Him in the Scriptures.** Look carefully at the sermon given by Peter on Pentecost. He let Scriptures speak so they could see Jesus. The problem is that too few take time to let the Scriptures speak to us daily. The Old Testament speaks plainly about the coming Messiah (see Isaiah 53). Paul was able to bring many to "see" Jesus by preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

- **We should see Jesus in the lives of Christians.** Paul wrote, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20).

## **IV. ARE YOU LIKE THESE GREEKS? DO YOU WISH TO SEE JESUS?**

Then open your Bible and let His word speak of Jesus Christ. Read the Books of the Gospel so you can see Jesus in His Word, the Bible. Make sure you are present for every Bible class on Sunday morning with the church. Never miss an assembly of the church on the Lord's day. Look at the Lord through the lives of godly men and women and you will see Jesus.

***Can others see Jesus living in you?***

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# A SINNER'S PRAYER

Owen D. Olbricht

GOD HAS NOT promised to grant the requests of those who are not His children. Scripture reveals that there are prayers God will not respond to in a positive manner.

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).*

*"Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin" (Psalm 109:6,7).*

*"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).*

*"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12, quoted from Psalm 34:15,16).*

## In order to receive what we request, we must

(1) be God's people who are called by His name (2 Chronicles 7:14);

(2) ask in Jesus' name (John 14:13);

(3) ask in faith (James 1:6,7);

(4) ask for right things (James 4:3);

(5) keep God's commandments and do those things pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22);

(6) ask according to His will (1 John 5:14).

No non-Christians in this Christian age were ever told to pray for anything, much less told to pray to be saved, to be forgiven of their sins.

## Bible Examples

Sinners on the day of Pentecost were not told to pray to be forgiven. Peter, in Acts 2:21, quoted an Old Testament passage (Joel 2:32) which is a favorite of those who believe all one has to do to be saved, forgiven, is to "call" on God in prayer. "Call" comes from the Greek *epikaleo* which means to be given a name (Acts 1:23) or to make an appeal (Acts 7:59; 25:11,12; 26:32; 28:19). Those who simply *call*, "Lord, Lord," will not be saved, but must **do the will of the Father** (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46).

When asked by the Jews, *"What shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37), Peter missed a great opportunity to tell them that all they needed to do

was pray, if prayer is what is meant by “call”. Instead Peter told them to *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* in order to be forgiven (Acts 2:38). When Paul was found praying (Acts 9:11) he was told to *be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord* (Acts 22:16). His appeal to be forgiven was to be made **through** his baptism. Cornelius, whose prayer had been heard, *was commanded to be baptized* (Acts 10:43).

No non-Christians were ever told to **pray** to be forgiven of their sins. In spite of this truth, today many religious groups instruct the lost to say **“the sinner’s prayer”**.

### **The Sinner’s Prayer**

Almost all denominational groups close their writings or preaching by telling people that if they sincerely repeat the sinner’s prayer, they are assured they will be forgiven. This prayer differs from group to group. It seems that if this were a requirement of God: (1) It would be the same prayer. (2) It would have been included in scripture by command or example.

**The Book of Hope** (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1998), author not given, p. 53, gives this prayer as: “God, I’m sorry for my sins. Right now, I turn from my sins and ask you to forgive me. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins. Jesus, I ask you to come into my life and be my Lord, Savior, and Friend. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Following this the statement is made, **“If you prayed this prayer and meant it, you can be sure God has forgiven you and received you into his family.”**

*This prayer, and the promise concerning such a prayer are not found in the Bible.* The promise was made by **man**, not by **God**; therefore, God is under no obligation to honor it.

**Conclusion:** Prayer is important in our relationship with God, but we should realize that only those prayers are heard that are according to God’s will. Perhaps non-Christians’ prayers are regarded when they ask for many varied helps and needs (Acts 10:31), but no where are they given instruction or assurance that **their sins can be forgiven simply by saying a concocted “sinner’s prayer.”** Salvation for the lost comes to those who hear God’s word (Acts 11:14), believe, repent, confess and are baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10).

# The Providence of God

**Dan Flourney**

THE PHRASE "the providence of God" is not found in the Bible, but the concept certainly fills the Sacred Book. The word translated "providence" is from a Greek word meaning "forethought," or "to provide for."

Divine providence may be defined as a part of the nature of God which preserves, governs, and protects His creation. It is sometimes spoken of as God working "behind the scenes" to accomplish His will.

There are two types of providence: general, and special. First, in a general way, God exercises providence over His creation by upholding and sustaining it. *"He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust"* (Matthew 5:45). The Hebrews writer declared that *"He upholds all things by the word of His power"* (Hebrews 1:3).

God also exercises a special providence over His people. Peter affirmed that *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation..."* (2 Peter 2:9). Jesus taught His disciples to pray: *"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"* (Matthew 6:13). It is through the providence of God that *"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Providentially, God supplies our needs: *"And my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19; see also 2 Corinthians 9:10). God providentially protects His people: *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry...the righteous cry...and the Lord delivereth them out of all their trouble."* Providentially, God governs nations: *"He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them"* (Job 12:23; see Psalm 22:28; Daniel 5:21; Acts 17:26).

There are times when things don't seem to be going right. When truth and justice seem to be trampled and crushed, rest assured that God is exercising His providence.

James Russell Lowell has captured the essence of God's providence in his poem, "This Crisis":

"Careless seems the Great Avenger,  
History's pages but record.

One doth grapple in the darkness  
Twixt old systems and the Word  
Truth, forever on the scaffold,  
Wrong forever on the throne...  
But He who holds the future,  
Stands amid the shadows.  
Keeping watch above His own."

"God amid the shadows keeping watch above His own" aptly describes the working of God behind the scenes. Thus, we do not always "see" God working, but we know that He does. When it seems that evil is going to prevail in the world, rest assured that God "stands amid the shadows keeping watch above His own."

May we never lose heart because things don't seem to be going right. Remember, God is still in charge and "*all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

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## A Plea For Non-Denominationalism

**Carroll Sites**

THE CHURCH OF Christ in the Bible was not a "denomination"—not "all-denominational"—not "inner-denominational"—not a *part* of the *whole* of *anything*. The church in the Bible was THE church.

The phrase "church of Christ," if used correctly, is not a "name" for anything. The church as revealed in the Bible is simply *God's family*. All of His children are in the family (1 Timothy 3:15). If one is truly a Christian, he is a member of the church, the family.

There is no Christian who has not been born again. There is no such thing as a "not born again" Christian. There is no need to refer to anyone as a "born again Christian", because to be a Christian one *must have been born* of God (John 1:13), *born anew* (John 3:3), *born again* of water and of the spirit (John 3:5).

"Christian" is not a sectarian name. There is no New Testament teaching for any sectarian name.

Christian is the name for members of the church. We should wear it proudly (1 Peter 4:16).

Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2), kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:19), church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23), church of Christ (Romans 16:16), church of the Lord (Acts 20:28), a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)—one and all of these



make reference to Christ's body, His church.

Going by the Bible and it alone will produce the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:20,21 and of which Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1-6. The New Testament is our "blueprint" for the church. The Bible, applied correctly, will lead us to **non-denominational** Christianity and the **non-denominational** church, and that is our plea to all people of all time of all the world!

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## ***GOD IS OUR REFUGE***

### **Dalton Key**

I ONCE OVERHEARD an interesting exchange in the grocery store between one of the checkout clerks and a customer. The clerk asked, "How are you doing?" The customer, an older man, replied, "Just terrible! I'm tired. I'm worn-out. I'm rundown. And I feel awful!" The clerk, somewhat taken aback by the customer's negative reply, quickly tried to cheer the man up, but was interrupted with, "Oh, don't concern yourself. This is one of my better days!"

I'm sure the older man was just teasing, but he did illustrate, even in jest, the depression and discouragement plaguing so many of us.

One thing is certain: life in the flesh is fraught with pain, difficulty, and suffering. Bad things happen, and they often happen to good people. Age, disease, and sickness destroy our health. Family problems enter uninvited into our homes, threatening to destroy the lives and souls of those we love most dearly. Financial strain, job-related stress, and the challenges of everyday life seem to be like Jesus' description of the poor—"with us always" (Mark 14:7).

The fact of life's problems shouldn't be surprising to us. Didn't Jesus warn, "*In the world you shall have tribulation*"?

We can be thankful, though, that Jesus didn't end His words on that somber note. He continued by promising, ". . . *but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

The God of heaven cares about us. "*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). He sent His Son to die for us "*when we were yet without strength*" (Romans 5:6). His Son, serving even now as our High Priest before the Father, is "*touched with the feelings of our infirmities*" (Hebrews 4:15).

No problem, no catastrophe, no sorrow is larger than God is.

And our God, who *"cannot lie"* (Titus 1:2), has promised to help His own. The Psalmist declares, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). The Hebrews writer reminds us, *"He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear...'"* (Hebrews 13:5,6).

And the best-known, most-loved passage in all of Scripture still reads as it always has: *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"* (Psalm 23:1,4,6).

The question is not: "Does God care?" He **does**. The question is not: "Will God help me through my troubles, through my difficulties, through my sorrows?" He **will**.

No, the real question, the one each of us in Christ must answer, is simply this: **"Do I believe what God has promised?"**

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## **GOD!**

**Stephen Eckstein**

THE MIRACLE OF miracles is God! He will use His unparalleled power and fulfill His promise through Jesus Christ as set forth in the New Testament. *He will raise the entire human race from their tombs and change the living in an instant* (John 5:27-29; 1 Corinthians 15:50).

Simply to sit back and reflect upon the magnitude of this coming miracle is mind boggling! Anyone who has traveled over the earth and seen the innumerable cemeteries and countless tombs and graves is utterly overwhelmed by the thought and reality that **GOD** will raise **all** without **ONE MISTAKE**. The world's largest cemetery is Flanders Field in France. With white crosses row upon row for miles, it will suddenly be no more! Those bodies which have been burned up or devoured by wild beasts or birds, or destroyed in unknown ways will be raised also. All the bodies which have been cast into the sea over the millenniums will come forth (Revelation 20:13).

If God cannot or does not do this, He is not what He claims to be. It will not make any difference how many Bibles have been printed and studied, how many prayers have been prayed, how

many songs have been sung, or how many times the saints have assembled—**all will be in vain, meaningless—if God does not keep His promise!** It will not make any difference what man has done, whether he has been good or evil, **if God does not keep His promise.**

But God will do exactly what He has said. On the one hand, the total input and output of all the computers, the adding machines, the record discs, all books of all libraries—everything that has been recorded by man—will be dwarfed to nothing by the perfect righteousness and vindication of God in judging sinful man. Each of the billions will be judged by his or her own works as recorded by God (Revelation 20:12). Note the simplicity of John's record, *"And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire"* (Revelation 20:15).

On the other hand, **the miracle of miracles is that God is so great He will save all those who are His** (2 Timothy 2:19). The saints *whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life* will be recipients of His matchless love and grace and will be blessed with spiritual bodies fitted for **eternal fellowship with God**. The redeemed will adore and honor, praise and extol, glorify and thank God forever. He and He alone deserves all praise.

Paul is correct in what he writes: *"God will be everything to everyone"* (1 Corinthians 15:28).

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth..."* (John 5:28,29).

Be it so!

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## SALVATION: GOD'S FREE GIFT

**Gordon Hogan**

THE TRUTH CONCERNING salvation is vital because accepting error on this subject will result in damnation with the devil and his angels and being separated from God forever. So *this is a life or death matter*.

Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the first Pentecost feast after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and they were confronted with the startling truth that they had contributed to the death of the longed for Messiah. This obviously disturbed them, and they asked the right question, *"Brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37 ASV).

To obtain the right answers, we must ask the right questions. These Jews, having received the truth about Jesus Christ being the Son of God and the Messiah, asked the correct question. Peter, inspired by God, answered, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (v. 2:38). Peter followed that answer with the exhortation, *"Save yourselves from this crooked generation"* (v. 40). About 3000 people who wanted to be saved were baptized (v. 41).

We will not want to be *saved* unless we first recognize that we are *lost*. **Unfortunately, Satan has succeeded in convincing most of mankind that God will save us no matter what we do or fail to do.** Stop a minute and think: *Is it not so?*

Man is separated from God by sin, which is described vividly by Paul as *"unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affections, unmerciful"* (Romans 1:29-32). We all find ourselves somewhere on this list, and the truth is that people who practice such things, who make them a way of life, are *worthy of death*—separation from God.

Thankfully, our heavenly Father through His Son graciously *offers salvation to all people*. Jesus left His home in heaven to save us.

\* A search for truth reveals *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Timothy 1:15).

\* A search for truth reveals God *"would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4).

\* A search for truth reveals that *our eternal salvation will be revealed in the last time* (1 Peter 1:5).

\* A search for truth reveals that in none other is there salvation: *for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved* (Acts 4:12).

Harold Haslip, Chancellor of David Lipscomb University, tells a story about a barber who had a sign in his window which read "Free Haircuts Tomorrow". He never took the sign down; he never gave a free haircut. Tomorrow never comes. The Apostle Paul writes, *"At an acceptable time I harkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succor thee behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Salvation is for here and now, as well as hereafter.

## Salvation is offered freely

Again Paul tells us, *"for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). However, God does not force this precious gift upon anyone. We must **accept the gift of salvation by the exercise of obedient faith.**

Jesus tells us, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).

# Understanding the Sin of MOSES AND AARON

**Kevin L. Moore**

IN RESPONSE TO Israel's complaints at the Wilderness of Zin, God determined to give them water. He instructed Moses and Aaron to gather the assembly together, and Moses was to speak to the rock before their eyes. Instead Moses struck the rock. Although water came forth, he and Aaron were told they would not be allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 20:1-13).

Some may think that the penalty imposed on Moses and Aaron was harsher than they deserved. But before anyone accuses God of over-reacting and being unfair, the situation needs to be examined more closely:

*"Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.*

*"And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: 'If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.'*

*"So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron, gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.'*

*"So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before*

the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! **Must we bring water for you out of this rock?**'

*"Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.*

*"Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'"*

Striking the rock instead of speaking to it was certainly a presumptuous act, which went beyond what God had commanded, but there was even more involved. As God observed Moses and Aaron, He could see the condition of their hearts and the attitude which prompted their actions (cf., 1 Chronicles 28:9). God's accusation was, "...Because you did not **believe** Me." (Numbers 20:12).

We learn from Psalm 106:32,33 that this sin also involved something Moses said: *"he spoke rashly with his lips."* What did he say that was so bad? Before striking the rock, Moses proclaimed: *"Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"* (Numbers 20:10).

Did you notice the wording? Moses failed to acknowledge God, and he gave the impression that *he and Aaron* were responsible for providing the water. In so doing Moses and Aaron were guilty of rebellion, in that **they did not hallow God** in the eyes of the children of Israel (Numbers 20:12,24; 27:14; Deuteronomy 32:51).

God was perfectly just in the punishment He executed. *Pride, arrogance, and rebellion* are attitudes with devastating spiritual consequences (cf Proverbs 16:5,18). If forfeiting the physical promised land was *necessary* to gain the eternal one, no doubt the behavior of Moses and Aaron in this particular incident had contributed to the delinquency of a people, and would have ultimately jeopardized the coming of the Messiah through them. Jeopardizing God's overall plan for the ages was an extremely serious matter. Therefore it had to be stringently corrected and punished.

There are at least two lessons which we need to learn from this incident; (1) God must be glorified before all people (Leviticus 10:3); and (2) He is perfectly just in all His ways (Deuteronomy 32:4). May our acknowledgment of God on earth be comparable to that expressed in heaven: *"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created"* (Revelation 4:11).



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