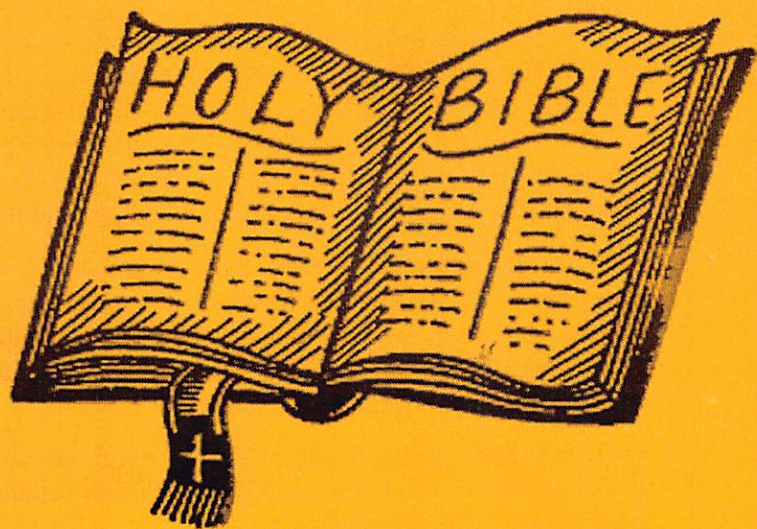


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



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 churches 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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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Some Are Mistaken Not Knowing The Scriptures

WHEN JESUS LIVED on earth there were two most popular religious sects among the Jews, called the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They felt threatened by Christ's plain and truthful teaching. So they often tried to embarrass Jesus by putting to Him ensnaring questions. They were always scheming with how they might entangle Jesus in His talk. So they would often bring to Him very tricky and mischievous questions with such intentions. Jesus, however, refuted their arguments each time and reduced them to silence. On one occasion when Jesus had silenced the Pharisees by giving a very fitting answer to their question, we read, "the same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman dies also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning resurrection of the dead, have you



not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:23-32). Thus we observe, Jesus gave them a most Scriptural and appropriate answer to their question. Had they known the Scripture doctrine of the resurrection, they would have known that it did not involve the continuance of marriage; and had they known the power of God, they could have known that He could raise the dead without those carnal propensities on which marriage is based. However, here I would like for you to notice what Jesus told them, before answering their question, He said, "you are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

People have often wondered as to why there are so many conflicting doctrines and faiths in Christianity today? Some have contended that it is just a matter of interpretation. But if so, it is sinful, because the Bible teaches that no prophecy or teaching of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:21). The real problem, however, lies in the fact that most people have never studied the Scriptures as they should be studied and therefore they have not learned to handle aright the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 2:15). Most people want to understand a verse or a passage of the Scriptures through their denominational pre-conceived view or belief. Instead of searching the Scriptures themselves (John 5:39), they have often consulted commentaries and other such books written by uninspired men and "Bible scholars," and believe things written in them as God's truth. Now, there is nothing wrong in consulting a commentary or a book, as long as one is not carried away by the thoughts and belief of the author, if they are not contained in the Scriptures. But the fact of the matter is that in most cases people do not want to consult the Scriptures as much as they would want to consult a commentary to understand a certain teaching of the Bible. Instead of leaning on God's book they rely much on the books written by men, and moreover, often they get so much impressed by the popularity and educational background of the author that they would accept them as the authority on the Scripture. Thus, if the commentator or the "scholar" teaches error on some subject then they would uphold that error, not as error, but as truth. This is exactly what has happened in the last few hundred years, of which we are reaping the consequences now. Uninspired men, so called scholars and founders of various denominational churches, years ago advocated the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, doctrine of

inherited sin, baptizing infants, sprinkling of water for baptism, use of mechanical instruments in the worship of God, calling the Lord's supper a sacrament, and instead of observing the Lord's supper on every first day of the week, as the Bible teaches, observing it only once in a month, and in some cases only once or twice in a year, observing Christmas and Easter as "holy days" and several other unscriptural teachings, and millions of people today around the world follow and uphold these teachings and doctrines of men, not knowing what the Scriptures teach about them.

All denominational churches have different beliefs and convictions. If not, they would be all together in one church and not divided. They all believe in the Bible, but they also believe as much in their creed books; catechisms, confession of faith, manuals and books of disciplines, etc. In fact, they are not divided on what the Bible teaches, but on what men have taught in those different creed books. There is not a single denominational church on earth which follows the Bible only. And if a church follows the Bible only, it cannot be a denomination. We can all agree on what the Bible teaches, but we all cannot agree on what men teach, because men teach differently. For example, we can all agree to be called Christian only, because the Bible teaches that in the beginning this is the name by which the followers of Christ were called (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), but we cannot all agree to be called Methodist or Baptists or Lutherans or Pentecostals, etc., etc. Moreover, all denominational churches on earth today exist contrary to the will of God. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; John 17: 20, 21). They err not knowing the Scriptures.

"I GUESS WE WERE WRONG"

J.C. Choate

A FEW YEARS AGO the leader of a Korean cult-like religious organization began to teach that Christ would return to the earth on a particular date. The group had an office in New Delhi, India, as well as in other major cities of the world. Their primary task was to distribute literature, predicting the date of the Lord's return.

Brother Sunny David, a gospel preacher in New Delhi, went to their local office to talk to them. He found it difficult to get much



information. Later, a day or so before the date on which they said Christ would come. Sunny went back to their office, only to find it locked and abandoned. Someone nearby told him that the Koreans had returned to their country, to be there for the Lord's coming!

A few days later, a local paper told of the leader's response when the police went to his headquarters in Korea to arrest him: "Well, I guess we were wrong."

But why did the police arrest the man? Was it because he was innocently in religious error? No; rather, it was because he had convinced his followers that, since Christ's return and the end of the world were imminent, they would have no need for their money, possessions, or real estate. These riches were poured into the coffers of the leader of the cult, making him a wealthy man. The obvious question is, if Christ was returning and the followers in the cult would have no need for material possessions, what did the leader intend to do with them? You would think that his disciples would have been wise enough to have seen through his hoax.

We have heard such stories many times. Several years ago I talked to a preacher of the Jehovah's Witness group in Colombo, Sri Lanka. I learned that he was not sending his children to school that year, nor was he paying his taxes, because he was convinced that Jesus would be coming within the year. Therefore, it was a waste of time and money for his children to attend school, and there was no need to pay taxes. How foolish of that man, and others in his religious group! I've often wondered what happened to their misplaced "faith" when the Lord failed to appear.

In the 1800s, a Baptist preacher by the name of William Miller became convinced, based on his interpretation of prophetic statements in the book of Daniel, that Christ's return was imminent. He prepared his followers for the fiery end of the world by stating: "My principles in brief, are, that Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, cleanse, purify, and take possession of the same, with all the saints, sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844."

When the date came and went without the return of Christ, an adjustment was made for October 22. Henry Emmons, a Millerite, later wrote, "I waited all Tuesday [October 22] and dear Jesus did not come; I waited all the forenoon of Wednesday, and was well in body as I ever was, but after 12 o'clock I began to feel faint, and before dark I needed someone to help me up to my chamber, as my natural strength was leaving me very fast, and I lay prostrate for 2 days without any pain, sick with disappointment."

Miller continued to wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ until Miller's death in 1849. Followers later made the explanation that the October 22 date marked *a heavenly event, and not the literal Second Coming of Christ*. The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of this movement.

A disillusioned Adventist member by the name of Charles Taze Russell began to prophesy that Christ would return in 1874. When Russell died in 1916, and there had been no fulfillment of the prophecies, his followers were gradually pushed out of the Adventist sect and were officially formed into a new denomination under the leadership of Joseph Rutherford. They are known today as "Jehovah's Witnesses".

Other modern-day "prophets" include Hal Lindsey who wrote the book **The Late, Great Planet Earth**, predicting the end of the world in the 1980s. When Lindsey's original prophecy proved to be wrong, "Y2K", the beginning of the new millennium, became the date. Edgar Whisenant predicted 1988. Jerry Falwell said we would not see a new century.

All of these men, who claimed and still claim many followers, have made false predictions concerning the second coming of Christ and the end of this world as we know it. They have said that their statements were based on Scripture or on some special revelation God had made to them, so they authenticated their "prophecies" by putting the responsibility on God. The end result of such failed claims is that disillusioned believers lose faith in God and in the Bible as His inerrant word.

But Jesus made a very clear and emphatic statement concerning His second coming: "***But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away so also will the coming of the Son of Man be***" (Matthew 24:36-39).

Jesus confirmed His words with the promise, "***Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will by no means pass away***" (Matthew 24:35).

Many false teachers—in amassing fame, followers, and even fortunes—have prophesied about our Lord's return. Let each of us be aware of the fact that when someone claims to know the date of the end of the world, he is, in the same statement, professing

himself to be a liar and a fraud, contradicting the very words of Christ Himself.

NOT NEEDED

Dan Wheeler

BECAUSE OF THEIR fear of Jesus, the enemies of our Lord tried several security measures to ensure His capture and demise. But were they really necessary, and were they effective, for accomplishing what they wanted to do to Him?

The **arresting mob** came to the garden armed with swords and other weapons. Although Jesus Himself would have surrendered peacefully, Peter was not as compliant, and he promptly cut off a servant's ear (no doubt aiming for his neck). This attack only served to give Jesus the opportunity to (1) heal the injury, and (2) rebuke Peter for violence (Matthew 26:52). As the Lord later told Pilate, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews"* (John 18:36).

What about the **guards** at the tomb? Did this security measure, granted by Pilate to the Jews (Matthew 27:63-66), fulfill a purpose? Did it keep Him in the grave? No, but it provided another obstacle for Christ to overcome and to show His power. Even though the tomb had been made secure, *"it was not possible that he should be holden of it"* (Acts 2:24). The fact that soldiers were vigilantly guarding the burial place of the Christ simply gave added proof that He arose from the dead, rather than that His body was stolen by the disciples to fake a resurrection.

But one of the security procedures was entirely useless: binding Him. First of all, no leather strap or iron chain could have held Him, for *"He could have called ten thousand angels."* Secondly, He had no intention of running away from the cup from which He was to drink, because He was determined to do His Father's will. His tormentors could have left off the thongs, and still Jesus would have calmly cooperated in all that was inflicted on Him. His love for the Father and for us enabled Him to endure the cross (and all that led up to it). But all these things happened, proving that He was who He claimed to be, and... *"that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled"* (Matthew 26:56).

THE GENTLE AND HUMBLE KING!

Thomas R. Dohling

"... I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls..." (Matthew 11:29).

HOW BLESSED WE are as Christians, to have One who is approachable, who sympathizes with our weaknesses, who has revealed Himself to us in the flesh and bridged the gap that separated us from Him. When the debt became too great for us to repay, Jesus paid it all. When the burden became unbearable, Jesus lifted it. He said something that comes to mind. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Did you catch it? First, He says, "Come to me." The invitation. Then He says something startling, but very soothing. Something that touches the truly weary and burdened soul, and causes such an one to put his/her trust in the Person uttering these words. It is not about the yoke or the burden. You will catch another glimpse of Jesus.

Notice what He says about Himself in verse 29, *"...for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...."* My King, Lord, Master, and Savior (in fact He is my All in all) has a gentle and humble heart, because of which my soul finds rest and is at peace in the assurance that He hears me when I cry to Him. He makes haste to help me. He eases my burden and lightens my load along life's highway as I submit to His yoke, which is easy, and to His burden, which is light. Indeed, His teachings and instructions are never cumbersome when we abide in Him.

Jesus. He is gentle and humble in heart. Remember those words the next time you feel rejected, scorned, humiliated, lost, in despair, and when everything seems bleak. His love will lift you up. He will comfort you. Leaving His glory behind, He came to seek and save the lost. May you be blessed in the knowledge that you do have a "high priest" who is able "to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15), a Judge who is not only "gentle and humble", but who is also your Savior and Lord. Praise be to God for His wisdom which is beyond our understanding!

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Tom Holland

WHEN OUR LORD was on this earth, identifying with us in an earthly body, He was very sensitive to the pain people were experiencing. He had time to go to the home of Jarius because his little twelve year old girl had died. *Jesus cared.* He came to the tomb of Lazarus and stood in the midst of sorrow. *Jesus wept.* He paused on His journey for the triumphant entry into Jerusalem because a blind man was there, beseeching the Lord to give him his eyesight. *Jesus restored.*

In anticipation of His imminent trial, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus reached out to His apostles in loving reassurance. He was acutely aware of the impending sorrow they would experience and He wanted to prepare them for the occasion. So He lovingly said to them, "*Let not your heart be troubled....*" (John 14:1).

Has your heart ever been troubled? Physical illness may trouble your heart. The illness of a dear loved one may trouble our heart. Problems of life—financial, marital, personal, employment, and various relationships may bring us disappointment, discouragement, and possible despondency. Does anyone live very long on earth and escape pain, sorrow, and disappointment?

How does the Lord who still cares (1 Peter 5:7) tell us *how* to deal with trouble? Does He recommend *denial*, a type of dishonest pretension that "all is well"? Does He urge *escapism* in drugs, alcohol, pleasure, food, work, lust, or suicide? Does He tell us to become *pessimistic*, even *cynical*, about life and to become *bitter*, *critical*, *caustic*, and *blaming*?

Our loving Lord gives the power to cope with trouble: faith! "...*Believe in God, believe also in me*" (John 14:1). When we follow our Savior's direction then we believe in a God who is our Father (John 14:2), a Father who knows and loves His people, a Father who cares and is involved in the lives of His children, and a loving Father who can take the trouble His children experience in the world (John 16:33) and providentially work everything for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). If God could take all of the trouble a young man named Joseph experienced and turn it into a blessing for him and his family, and if God could take all the shame and suffering of Golgotha and turn the death of His Son into potential salvation of

mankind, don't you think He can effectively handle the trouble of His beloved people today? No wonder an inspired man would instruct God's people to "cast all of your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Times of Stillness

When the rash of life overtakes me.
And my soul for quiet seeks,
When my mind is full of pressures
That pursue me through the week.
I have a little haven
Where I find my heart's content.
And the quiet that surrounds me there
Is truly heaven sent
For we all need times of stillness:
To relax and just unwind.
And let go of small resentments
That clutter up the mind.
So, I seek the soothing quiet.
To my haven, safe I trod. And alone there in the silence.
I feel very close to God!

Jean E. Moore

How Does God Speak To Us Today?

John Thiesen

WILL GOD SPEAK to us in an audible voice today? Many are expecting to hear God speak to them a special message at some time in their life, either through a voice or perhaps in some unusual manner.

It is true that various biblical characters heard special messages from Heaven, either through an angel or the very voice of God Himself. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and others all received direct revelations. On three occasions in the New Testament, God's voice was heard bearing record that Jesus is His beloved Son. Saul of Tarsus was permitted to see Jesus and to hear His voice after Christ had already gone back to heaven.

Because the Bible has these examples, many have concluded that voices from heaven should be the natural expectation of communing with God today.

Christ The Final Spokesman

What they do not know is that God has changed His way of speaking to us in our age of time. Before Christ, God spoke to His people in many ways. *"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2). God spoke to the fathers through the prophets who received the communications in various ways: through visions, dreams, angels, and sometimes by a voice. But now in our time, God no longer speaks through the prophets. He speaks to us only through His Son.

God's Revelation Now Complete

Jesus is God's final spokesman to mankind in this last age. He brought the fullness of God's revelation to us. There are no more messages to await. This great, final Word from God has been deposited into the permanent, universally accessible form of the Holy Scriptures of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the light of this truth, why should God bypass His chosen way of speaking to us through His Son, and favor one particular person with a special voice in order to show him Christ? The Bible says that God is not a respecter of persons. If He were to save one person in this way, by His very impartial nature He would be obliged to extend the same favor to all the rest of us. Even during the days when God was speaking directly to men, He did not speak to all, but to chosen prophet mediators who relayed the messages to the people.

Please, all who read these words—God is trying to speak to you today. If you will read and study His Word, the Bible, you can learn His message to you and to the rest of mankind.

WHY NOT "REVEREND?"

Dennis R. Smith

MANY WONDER WHY preachers of the church of Christ do not use the word "Reverend" in front of their name, or why they do not

like to be addressed as such when spoken to. The answer to this, like all related subjects, is found in the Bible.

First, there is a complete absence in the Bible of this word being applied to any person on earth. The words "preacher," "evangelist," "minister," or "servant" are used often to identify a "proclaimer" of the Word, but the use of the word "reverend" is found only in connection with God Himself. In Psalm 111:9 we read, *"He sent forth redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name."* Since the use of this word is limited to only once in the Bible, and then it is used in application to God Himself, the church of Christ believes that it should be reserved for **the Most High only**. This may seem a small thing to some, but its use is another indication that various religious practices of today stem from a man-made origin instead of from the Bible.

Man's religious use of this word also shows a definite separation between certain "proclaimers" of the Word. That is, the word "reverend" distinguishes the "clergy" from the "laymen." Here, again, is a product of the mind of man, and not of God. No distinction is made in the New Testament between a man who is formally "ordained" and one who simply loves the truth, and through the call of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) begins to preach the good news of Christ. In other words, one Christian, whether he is a preacher or just a regular member, is not to be exalted above the other. Therefore, in keeping with a "thus saith the Lord," the church of Christ refrains from the use of this word other than to identify God Himself.

Respecting The Bible in Difficult Times

Steve Snider

"The proud have forged a lie against me, But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.... Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; But I will meditate on Your precepts.... They almost made an end of me on earth, But I did not forsake Your precepts.... I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life."
(Psalm 119:69, 78, 87, 93).

WHEN THINGS IN life become difficult, where do you turn? Maybe you go to a good friend, your parents, or to some other family member; or maybe you turn to a brother or sister in Christ, or to one

of the church leaders. Certainly none of these choices would be wrong, but do these people, then, turn us toward the word of God? *Too often we respect the Bible when things are going well, but then we are ready to lay it aside when difficulty arises.* If we would think about what the Bible teaches, we would remember that God's faithful have always had difficulties. Just think about Moses, Abraham, Lot, the prophets, and most importantly, think about Jesus Christ. All of these faithful servants of God experienced extremely difficult periods in their lives. Yet, they all survived!

The Psalmist said that he had been lied about, treated perversely, was almost consumed, but through it all he refused to forsake the word of God. What was his reason for that strong conviction? *"For by them You have given me life"* (Psalm 119:93). The Psalmist knew that **in God's word** he would find encouragement, strength, and guidance for the difficult times in his life.

What do we do when someone lies about us? What do we do when someone treats us in a shameful way? What *do* we do when it seems that our problems are about to consume us? Do we give up, get angry, quit the church, or do we cling ever stronger to the word of God?

In Matthew 4, when Jesus was being tempted by the devil, He resisted each temptation **by appealing to the written word of God**. If our Lord found strength and comfort in the promises of God's word, surely that should be an example that we will want to follow.

The real test of our respect for the Bible often comes when the going gets rough. Let us have the determination of the Psalmist and, regardless of what else may be going on in our lives, let us remember that one thing is certain: we will not turn away from God's word because **in that word we know that we find eternal life.**

WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW AND TO DO

Clayton Pepper

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power..." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

Since one will be lost in torment who does not obey the gospel, the question arises as to **what** the gospel is and **how** to obey it.

What the Gospel Is

The apostle Paul provides the answer:

"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. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures ..." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; See Isaiah 53).

Christ took upon Himself the punishment that we deserve because we have sinned. Paul wrote,

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

Is it urgent to obey the gospel? There are two reasons why one should not postpone a decision to obey the gospel:

1. The uncertainty of life. We are reminded daily that life is not permanent. Illnesses and accidents bring about death often at the most unexpected times. The writer of the book of Hebrews said, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..."* (9:27)

2. The unexpectedness of Christ's return. The Bible teaches that Christ will come at an unexpected time. He will come *"as a thief in the night"* (1 Thessalonians 5:2). No one knows when this will be.

Beware of Perverting the Gospel

The Apostle Paul warned of some who would pervert the gospel. He said that even an angel from heaven could not change the gospel without being accursed (Galatians 1:6-8).

Who needs to obey the gospel?

1. All who want to be born again, (John 3:3-5). All lost people

who have never obeyed the gospel must do so to be saved. Making a mental acceptance of Christ as one's personal savior is not enough. It falls short of obeying the gospel.

2. All who were sprinkled for baptism. True baptism is a burial in water (Romans 6:3-7; Colossians 2:12; John 3:23). Only those who are *old enough* to be taught and understand the gospel are subject to obeying it. Children who were sprinkled as babies were not baptized, according to the scriptural meaning of the word.

3. All who were told to receive Christ into their heart and pray the sinner's prayer. This action is erroneously based on the incident concerning the publican and Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. This story teaches us not to be self-righteous, but to have an attitude of humility. *It does not tell one how to be saved.* All who teach salvation apart from baptism are actually teaching that one can be saved without obeying the gospel.

4. All who were taught that they were saved by prayer. Christians are told to pray when they sin (James 5:16; Acts 8:22). However, one who has not obeyed the gospel is not commanded by Christ and His apostles to pray for forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins is granted when the sinner obeys God, not because he has prayed to be saved.

A man dying of cancer was married to a woman who believed that salvation was by faith and repentance, apart from obeying the gospel. She arranged for her preacher to talk to him. The man already believed in Christ. He was of the disposition of mind to obey the gospel. However, the preacher did not believe that baptism was necessary to be saved. They gathered around his bed, held hands, and all three prayed. The man looked up at his wife and said, "I have just been saved." He did not understand the point of pardon. His wife did not understand what the Bible teaches to be saved. The preacher led him to the door of the kingdom, but he did not teach them how to go inside. The man died thinking he had done what was necessary to be saved (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 22:16).

Surely, it is necessary to obey the gospel just as the Lord has commanded. Otherwise, we will be punished with everlasting destruction from God's presence (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Is there a doubt in your mind? It is a comforting thing to be sure and a disturbing thing to be in doubt. If you have not obeyed the gospel, then we urge you to make that decision immediately.

WHY BAPTISM?

Bobby Wheat

THERE HAS SELDOM been a topic of religious discussion generating more debate than baptism. For some, baptism is unnecessary, perhaps even a nuisance. Others see baptism as a matter of choice in religious practice. And still others regard baptism as a most important teaching in the Bible. Hence our question, "Why Baptism?"

Some questions about how the modern person should understand baptism need to be answered. What was the meaning of baptism in New Testament times? What is the proper mode of baptism? What is the purpose of baptism? Is baptism mandatory or optional in religious practice?

The Meaning of the Word

In order to understand the teachings of the New Testament, we must understand as fully as possible the words which it contains. "Baptism" is not an English word. It is a **transliteration** of a Greek word. In other words, the sounds of the Greek characters were given English letters so that the word could be used in our language without translating its meaning. Our task, then, is to determine what the word means.

Baptidzo is the Greek word which lies behind our English word baptism. *Baptidzo* was used in common life long before it gained any religious significance. Its basic meaning was "dip" or "immerse." A form of this word would have been used, for example, to talk about the process of "dipping" or "immersing" a piece of cloth into a liquid for the purpose of dying it to another color.

Therefore, in order to properly translate the meaning of *baptidzo*, it is necessary to use a word which conveys a picture of pushing, dipping, plunging something beneath a liquid surface, causing it to be completely covered over with that liquid. We have several such words in English, the best of which is perhaps the word "immerse." It would be better, then, to read "immerse" where our English Bibles give us "baptize." In Acts 8 we are told about the conversion of the Ethiopian after he was taught about Jesus by Philip the evangelist. In verse 38 Luke tells us that *"both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."* If the Ethiopian was "immersed" in the water, completely covered by it, then it makes

sense that they both went down into the water.

Concerning John the Baptist, we are told in John 3:23 that *"John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized."* It is significant that John chose a place to baptize which had "plenty of water." Immersion, dipping, completely covering a person with water requires "plenty of water."

The Significance of Baptism

The significance of baptism as a religious rite lies in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul expressed very clearly the force of the act of baptism when he wrote: *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection"* (Romans 6:1-5).

When a person is dead, we put the body deep into the ground and cover it over with dirt. In Jesus' case, His body was put into a tomb and a large stone was rolled over the entrance. In either situation, the body is covered over, it is left "under" the earth, it is "buried."

Baptism is intended for the Christian to be a reenactment of Jesus' own death, burial, and resurrection. A person commits himself to Christ, desiring to "die" to sin, and so is baptized, or "buried." That person then comes up out of the water, is "resurrected," to a new life. Paul indicates that our participation in the resurrection is dependent on whether or not we shared in Jesus' death through baptism.

In baptism, then, it is possible for a believer to share in the atoning death, the burial, and the triumphant resurrection of Jesus.

Why Baptism?

IT IS INTERESTING to note how many times Luke made reference to baptism as he wrote the book of Acts. Two passages stand out for our present discussion.

According to Acts 2, Peter was preaching to the assembled crowd on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' ascension. When the Jews who were listening realized that they had truly crucified the Son of

God, they cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer helps us in answering our question, "Why Baptism?" He said: "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

Peter's teaching informs us that baptism, when accompanied by repentance, brings about two things in the life of the believer. **One is the forgiveness of sins; the other is receipt of the Holy Spirit as a gift.** The first, forgiveness of sins, can otherwise be expressed with the word "salvation." The other, the gift of the Holy Spirit, supports the first because it is God's presence coming to live in the one who has been saved.

Later in Luke's record we read about the time of Paul's conversion to Christ. Ananias came to Saul (as Paul was then known) in Damascus. He restored Saul's sight, told him that God had a mission for him, and then he said: "*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name*" (Acts 22:16). Why did Saul need to be baptized? So that his sins could be washed away! So that he could be saved!

Why baptism? Consider finally this passage from Galatians: "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*" (Galatians 3:26,27). Paul makes it clear to us that, **without baptism, it is impossible to become a Christian.** In baptism, when it is accompanied by faith, a person is clothed with Christ, and he becomes a child of God.

We spoke earlier about baptism being the process which allows us to share in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. When coupled with an abiding faith that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and with a desire to allow Jesus to be Lord, this "sharing" becomes a life-changing "participation." The person who submits to baptism, to immersion in water, comes up from the water a new person, one who has been saved by the blood of Jesus, a Christian!

Korah's Rebellion

Jeril (Polly) Cline

MOSES' FATHER, Amram, and Korah's father, Izhar, were brothers (Exodus 6:18-21). That made Korah and Moses first cousins. Their grandfather, Kohath, was a son of Levi.

From the day that God struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, He sanctified to Himself all the first-born in Israel. But, in substitution for the actual first-born sons of Israel, God had chosen the tribe of the Levites to stand before Him. The Levites belonged to God. *"They shall be Mine; I am the Lord"* (Numbers 3:12,13).

The tribe of Levi had been brought near and set before Aaron, the priest, that they might serve him and perform the duties for him as well as for the whole congregation before the tabernacle, to do the service of the tent of meeting (Numbers 3:6,7).

The Levites were appointed over the tabernacle of the testimony. They were over all its furnishings and over all that belonged to it. They were the ones who set it up and took it down. They camped around it that there might be no wrath on the congregation of Israel, for no "layman" was to come near it (Numbers 1:50-53).

Because Moses and Korah were Kohathites, they shared the same camp ground, the south side of the tabernacle (Numbers 3:29).

Korah was responsible for some of the most holy work. The duties of the Kohathites involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary (Numbers 3:17,19,27-32).

But to Moses and Aaron and his sons was granted the responsibility to perform the duties of the sanctuary (Numbers 3:38). They, and they alone, could touch the holy things. It was only after they finished covering the holy furnishings of the sanctuary that the sons of Kohath (Korah among them) could come to carry them to their new location (Numbers 4:15).

Though God had honored the Levites, Korah included, and had given them a work to do to His glory, it was not enough (Numbers 16:9). Not for Korah and two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown.

Hear his words of rebellion. Ask yourself if they sound familiar. From women who desire a different role, to men who refuse elders' authority . . . from those who want to "showcase" their talent, to those who have a more "progressive" idea:

"You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers 16:3).

The meekest man on earth fell to the ground and appealed to God.

"The Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself, even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself (Numbers 16:5).

The only appeal we can ever make is to the Lord. He, and He alone, knows what He wants and what is pleasing to Himself. It is only those who are willing to do it *His way* that He can bring near to Himself, for it is *His* will that draws us near to Him. Without that will, we drift away—farther and farther from what is *pleasing to Him*—into the storm-tossed sea of what is *pleasing to us*.

It is ironic that chapter 15 of Numbers closes with instructions concerning the tassels on the corners of the garments of the sons of Israel. They were to be a reminder of all the commandments of the Lord, "*so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes ...*" (verse 39).

To ignore what God desires because we desire something else is to blaspheme (wipe our feet off on) His Most Holy Name, the very opposite of what we profess to desire.

Is it any wonder that God still recalls Korah's rebellion in Jude 11?

Korah had great influence. Some of the finest leaders in God's camp stood with him against Moses, and they swayed the people of God to stand with them against Moses in the very doorway of the tabernacle (Numbers 16:19).

Though it may be that only one or two stand with God, He is not swayed from His will.

Korah and the other two leaders, Dathan and Abiram, died before the Lord. However, their sons did not die (Numbers 26:11). And fire came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men of renown (Numbers 16:31-35).

Because the people wrongly blamed Moses and Aaron for the death of those "good men" (verse 41), God desired to kill the whole congregation! As it was, only 14,700 died, besides those who died on account of Korah (verse 49). (This congregation was many times larger than our largest congregations of today. Size never justifies actions.)

How is it where you are? The Lord knows those who are His. They are the ones He is able to bring near to Himself because they follow His will.

Evolution Versus The Genesis Account

Max Patterson

THERE ARE THOSE who want to hold on to the Bible **and** the theory of evolution. Thus, a doctrine called "Theistic Evolution" was invented. That is, they teach that God created the world, all right, but He created it by the process of evolution. However, there are many problems and contradictions between the Genesis account and this preposterous theory. Listed here are just a few:

1. The book of Genesis states that plants came into existence before the sun was made (Genesis 1:11-14). Evolution, on the other hand, suggests that the sun had been shining for millions of years before the first plant appeared.

2. The book of Genesis states that birds were created on the fifth day of creation, and that creeping things, including insects and reptiles, were created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:21-24). Evolution teaches that birds developed long after insects and reptiles appeared.

3. The book of Genesis teaches that man was created specifically by the Lord from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Evolution claims man descended from some ape-like creature.

4. The book of Genesis notes that fruit-bearing trees were created before fish (Genesis 1:11). Evolution contends that fish evolved long before fruit-bearing trees.

5. The book of Genesis clearly speaks of a universal (worldwide) flood (Genesis 7:10-12, 17-20). Evolution denies there was ever any such universal flood.

When it gets right down to it, I had rather believe what God said than what some man has postulated. We can never go wrong, or be wrong, on the side of The Book.

What Does The Bible Say About The Creation?

Don L. Norwood

OUR GOD WHO created the universe is an eternal being; He has existed always and is all-powerful. The Psalmist was inspired to

write, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God"* (Psalm 90:2). *"Of old You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands"* (Psalm 102:25). Therefore, the Bible begins with these words, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). God the Word actually was the agent of the creation (John 1:1-4,14; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 33:6-9).

The Lord created heavens and the earth (universe) in six days and rested on the seventh day (Exodus 31:17). These were ordinary days just as the days are now, as is shown clearly in a comparison of 2 Peter 3:3,4 with Genesis 8:22. Consider also the fact that the Hebrew word "yom" (translated "day" in the English language) is a regular day-light day as we know it. Then study Genesis 1:5 very carefully. The lighted portion of morning and evening was called day. The darkened hours were called night (see Psalm 74:16).

On day one of the creation, light was brought into being. The Lord separated the light from darkness.

On day two He created the firmament (open expanse of sky) and divided the waters above from those below the firmament. God then called the firmament heaven.

On day three He collected the waters under the firmament and separated them so that dry land could appear. He called the land earth and the waters seas.

On the fourth day the Lord placed the sun and moon in the firmament to light the earth and to regulate signs, seasons, days, and years (Genesis 1:14).

Then on the fifth day the Lord created the sea creatures and the fowls to fly above earth in the firmament of heaven.

On the sixth day God created the living creatures who would inhabit the earth. The greatest of this creation was mankind, made in the image of God and given rulership over all living creatures on the earth (Genesis 1:27,28).

On the seventh day, He rested from His labors (Genesis 2:1-4).

If we can believe that God had the power to create all things from the substance of nothing, we should have no problem believing that He could also create them instantaneously, day by actual day, as He described in His revealed word.

The Limitations of **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

David W. Chadwell

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

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

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

It is a fact that God loves people. All people. Wicked and righteous people. People of every culture. People of every background. No one is too small, too unimportant, too guilty, too sinful, too weak, too disgusting, too troubled, too disturbed, or too anything else to be excluded from God's love.

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

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

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

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

DRIFTING AWAY

Rex Banks

SEVERAL URGENT WARNINGS punctuate the Hebrews epistle: *"Don't drift from the truth of the gospel"* (2:1-4); *"don't fall away from the living God"* (3:7-19); *"don't remain babes in Christ"* (5:11-14); *"don't go on sinning willfully"* (10:26-31). I could not help but think of that first warning when I came across the words of C.S. Lewis recently:

"The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts. The long, dull, monotonous years of middle aged prosperity or adversity are excellent campaigning weather for the devil."

We know that he's right. How easily we drift from zealous commitment to complacent ritualism. We're not quite sure when the change took place, but one day we realize that the fires of enthusiasm have flickered and died, leaving a few glowing embers behind. Words which once pierced our hearts like shafts no longer move us. We realize that at some point in time we gave up living as a *"new creation"* and contented ourselves with the patched-up old model. Bible study is no longer a delight but a duty; no longer an eager search for golden nuggets, but a dull, predictable routine. And the change was so subtle, the downward slope so gentle that we remained oblivious to those persistent currents even as they

caused us to drift further and further away from our *"first love"*.

Of course we don't have to drift away from the truth of the Gospel during "long dull, monotonous years of prosperity or adversity"! Hebrews 2:1-4 is not a prediction, but a warning against drifting by *"neglect"* of the *"great salvation"* offered through Christ. (Hebrews 2:4).

Look at the word "neglect". It doesn't mean *rebellion* or hostile *rejection*; it quite simply means "to lack concern about" (key to Greek New Testament). We drift when we lack "concern about" the great salvation offered through Christ. Isn't it odd that we can fall into this trap of neglect when we have such great concern for our houses, our cars, our holiday plans, bank accounts and investments? Because we pay close attention to our valuable assets we notice a "leak" in our bank account long before it bleeds us dry.

That's the point of Hebrews 2:1; we simply must pay much closer attention to the truth of the Gospel! Job *"treasured the words of His mouth more than... (his) necessary food"* (23:12), but is not the full story of Jesus sweeter than anything Job ever heard? What newspaper, television program, or novel could have such earth-shattering importance in our lives, that the story of the cross goes neglected day after day?

Is there anyone, anywhere so strong that he just has no need to be present when the saints encourage one another with *"...psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"* (Colossians 3:16)? Are we not in danger of drifting when the memorial feast is an inconvenient intrusion upon the weekend's activities, or when prayer, like a parachute, is used only in emergencies? Yes, that "gentle slope", that "gradual" extinction of the flame through neglect, is a far greater danger for most of us than the threat of some Christ-denying doctrine, or the appeal of some grave moral sin.

Significantly, the warning against neglect in Hebrews 2:1-4 is introduced with the words, *"For this reason (we must pay clear attention...)"* What reason? Chapter one tells us: "Look at the credentials of the messenger!" Christ is God's appointed "heir"; the One through whom God made the world; the very "radiance" of God's glory; the "exact representation" of God's nature; the One who upholds all things; the One who made purification for sins; the One who is seated (His work done) at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). Given such a messenger, should we not all *"pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it"* (Hebrews 2:11)?

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