

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 54

October 2023

No. 6

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' SECOND COMING WILL NOT BE TO RAPTURE AWAY HIS CHURCH



WITH THE UPSURGE OF INTEREST in Jesus' second coming there is increased hope in many believers that they soon will be united with Jesus in the heavenly glory in what is commonly known as "The Rapture" Even though the word "Rapture" is nowhere found in the Bible!

The widely held belief of "The Rapture" theory supposes, Jesus will return in the air in an invisible form, take His church, both dead and alive into heaven, just before the rise of "the anti-Christ", and spare them the oncoming reign of tribulation upon earth. This event is supposed to end "the church age" that started at Pentecost and usher in a period of the "anti-Christ's" rule of seven years upon the earth; a reign that will last only until Jesus comes back again with His "Raptured" saints and sets up His physical throne in Jerusalem and reign on earth for one thousand years with His saints.

The word "Rapture" nowhere appears in the Bible. It is clearly a theory of speculations, suppositions, errors, and fanciful conclusions, without any Scriptural foundation. The word rapture ordinarily means feeling of extreme pleasure and happiness; a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotions; an expression or manifestation of ecstasy or passion. The idea of "rapture" is supposed to refer to a time when Christ will come back and secretly take away

with Him His church, which include the resurrected and living saints, who will rise from the earth to meet the Lord who has secretly appeared in the air. Those “raptured” saints will stay with Him up in the air for seven years. The people who remain on earth will not know where all these have gone. They will not be able to account for their disappearance. While the highly select group is with the Lord during the period of the rapture, on earth there will be a great tribulation. This tribulation period is to last seven years. After seven years, Christ will come back again, this time with all those saints who have been “raptured” and were with Him somewhere during the “rapture” of seven years. At this time there will be another resurrection of the righteous who were converted to the Lord during the period of tribulation of seven years. They will be raised to reign over the earth with Jesus and their fellow saints for one thousand years. A final judgment is to come at the close of the one thousand years of reign of Christ on earth with His saints, when all the unrighteous will be raised.

In the system of “the rapture” doctrine there are at least three separate resurrections. First, when the dead in Christ will be resurrected at the time of Jesus’ coming in the rapture; second, some will be converted during the tribulation, who will die during those seven years, these “tribulation saints” will be resurrected when Christ comes back again at the end of the seven years to set up His millennial kingdom on earth; and third, after one thousand years the wicked and the unrighteous dead will be raised at the end of one thousand years of reign of Christ with His saints on earth.

Yet, Christ taught that there will be one resurrection of all the dead at the same hour. The good and the bad will be resurrected at the same time. 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). Since the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous will be at the same hour, there cannot be a resurrection of the righteous preceding a thousand years period and another resurrection of the unrighteous following that period. According to John 12:48, 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.” The Bible teaches that the resurrection of all the dead, righteous and unrighteous, good and bad, and judgment of all will be at the same time on the last day when Jesus will come back.

The doctrine of “Rapture” is built on a misunderstanding and

misapplication of several passages of Scriptures, including 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. These passages of the Scripture are discussing the one and only one second coming of Christ. Nothing is said in these passages about a secret or invisible coming of Christ to “Rapture away” His church either before, during, or after an alleged time of tribulation. These passages were addressed to Christians to give them hope and to encourage them to live faithful lives, knowing that their eternal reward would be for such. The fact that the state of the wicked is not addressed in these passages, does not mean that the unrighteous are not included in and affected by the single second coming of Christ and one resurrection of all the dead.

Speaking of the day when Christ will come back, the apostle Peter said, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10). There can be, therefore, no tribulations and millennial reign on an earth that no longer exists. When Christ will come again, it will be to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 25: 31, 32).

Again, Christ is not coming back to establish His kingdom, but to receive His kingdom which is already in existence. His kingdom is His church which He established almost two thousand years ago. In Matthew 16:18, 19 we read that Christ used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably when He had promised to build His church. Those who believe in Him and obey His gospel are saved, and the Lord adds them to His church. (Acts 2: 38, 41, 47). Those who are in the church of Christ are also in His kingdom. Colossians 1:13 says, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” Speaking of the second coming of Christ, the apostle Paul said, “Then comes the end when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rules and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Jesus now reigns over His kingdom. He is not coming back to establish His kingdom. He is reigning now. When He comes back He will deliver the kingdom to the Father. Do not look and wait in vain for an earthly kingdom upon this planet. When Jesus next appears up in the air (1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17), it will not be to set up His kingdom, but to give the existing kingdom to the Father. Men needs to make it sure that they are now in the kingdom of the Lord by obeying the gospel, and live faithfully until Jesus comes back.



GOD AND HIS CREATION

J.C. Choate

THE BIBLE BEGINS, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Neither here, nor any-where in the Bible, is there an attempt made to prove that God exists or that he created all things. This is assumed already to be an accepted thing. And should this be so strange since man is supposed to be an intelligent being with the knowledge that for each thing that exists there had to be some higher power behind it? That is God.

Genesis gives a full account of how things came into existence and the order in which they were created. We do not need to know how long it was after the creation of the earth before animal life and human life came into being to know that there was a God. As far as that is concerned, there are many things that we do not have to know about the creation to be convinced that it was all the Lord's doing. But read Genesis 1 and 2 for the full story. This is the only true record that we have that tells what really happened.

But note that in all of God's creation he placed man above everything else. Man was to be over the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea and the beasts of the field. And so it has always been. There are many animals, etc., much larger than man but all may be tamed and taught to obey him. All fear man.

There are many reasons why one should believe in God. In the first place nature itself is a testimony to the effect that there is a God. Just look around you. You see that which God brought into existence and that which is perpetuated by the law of nature that God set in order. Perhaps you will reason that since you cannot see God with the naked eye then you do not believe he exists. You can see his work though. I cannot see your brain but I believe you have a brain by that which you do. When I look at my watch I cannot see its maker but I believe that it had one. As surely as things are, then it is that sure that someone had to create them. Just because you can't see them that doesn't prove they do not exist. God is the brain and the life behind the entire world's existence.

Look at the beautiful flowers, the heavens, a new born baby. How can you help but believe in an eternal, all powerful being? David said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1).

There is a God because the Bible teaches that he is. The Bible is full of God. It tells us that he is a Spirit, that he is powerful, that he is all-seeking, all knowing, and that he is from everlasting to everlasting.

God is because that is the only logical conclusion that one can reach. To say there is no God is but to say truthfully there is a God. For if I could say that then I would be saying there is a God — myself. To say that there is no God is but to say that an impossible thing happened — all came into existence without a creator. That would be as sensible as pointing to a house and saying that it was not built but suddenly one day it just appeared; it just happened.

How can one point to evolution as being the answer when all living things have been the same for hundreds and thousands of years? Not long ago I visited the Cairo Museum and saw on display some mummified monkeys, dogs, etc. When they lived 5000 years ago they were just monkeys and dogs, even as there are monkeys and dogs now. According to the theory espoused by many, monkeys should all along be evolving into man or there should be no such thing today as monkeys since all should have already evolved to a higher plane. Then what about man? Has he reached the most perfected state or is he eventually to evolve to something greater and better. But this is foolishness.

As you can see, the wise thing is to accept the facts of the case and quit relying on theories. David said that only a fool would say there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

The God of heaven is the same one that James speaks of as being the giver of all blessings (James 1:17). John said that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). So every way you turn there is the Lord, his work, his blessing, and his mercy being bestowed upon men. Truly, he lives.

ARE PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES?

Basil Overton

ONLY THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND those who were proselyted into the Jewish religion were under the law of Moses when that law was in force. Now, no one is under that law because the New Testament in many places teaches that Christ abolished the law of Moses when He died on a Roman cross. One of the places this is taught is in the New Testament letter or epistle which Paul wrote to the churches of Christ in the Asia Minor province of Galatia.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24,25).

“Schoolmaster” of this text is the translation of the Greek *paidagogos*. The first part of this compound word is the word for child. The rest is a form of the Greek infinitive *agein* which means to lead. So, the word means a child leader; a tutor; a trainer. Our word *pedagogue* (teacher or trainer) is an Anglicized or transliterated form of this word.

Paul used the figure of a schoolmaster to illustrate how the law of Moses led those who were under it to Christ.

The Greek text of verse 25 contains *tes pisteos*, which means “the faith.” Unfortunately, the King James translators left out the of the text. “The faith” is the Gospel. It is “the faith” that Paul preached (Galatians 1:23). It is “the faith” that a great company of Jewish priests obeyed (Acts 6:7). It is “the faith” for which Christians are to earnestly contend (Jude 3). It is the “*one faith*” of Ephesians 4:5.

Paul taught that after “*the faith*,” or the Gospel came, those who had been under the schoolmaster, or the law of Moses, were no longer under it. So, the answer to our question is — No, people are not under the law of Moses today.

IT’S THE GREATEST QUESTION OF ALL TIMES!

Dan Winkler

“**WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?**” But what’s the correct answer? According to Jesus,

“HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED”
(MARK 16:16)

1. Now, Jesus did not say, “**He that is saved shall believe and be baptized.**” Some would have us think that man is unconditionally pardoned by the irresistible grace of God. He, thus, responds in faith.

But, wait! Salvation is conditioned on our **obeying Jesus** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8,9) **in faith** (Romans 1:16,17), **repentance** (2 Corinthians 7:10), **confession** (Romans 10:9,10), **baptism** (1 Peter 3:21), and **a life of diligence** (2 Peter 1:5-11).

2. Still further, Jesus did not say, “**He that is baptized shall believe and be saved.**” Some would have us think that little babies are born with the sin of those before and should be cleansed (thus the sprinkling of infants), only to believe in Jesus and be saved later.

But, thankfully, we are born spiritually innocent (Matthew 18:3,4;

19:14), inheriting neither the good nor the bad of our ancestors (Ezekiel 18:20,21). And, as another has suggested, "That's good news for my children, but bad news for my father's children."

3. Finally, Jesus did not say, "**He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized.**" Some would have us think that we are saved when we, in faith, accept Jesus as our personal Savior. Baptism, to them, is simply an outward expression of an inward possession.

But faith itself, without accompanying works, is dead (James 2:14-26). Our faith, to save, must be obedient (Romans 4:12; Hebrews 11:8). That's why **Jesus did say,**

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

SELF-CONTROL

Bill Nicks

"AND EVERY MAN THAT STRIVETH in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 9:25). This passage is an allusion to the Olympic games, familiar to all athletes. The principle of self-control is still a major factor in athletic contests today.

At the 1992 Wimbledon tennis finals, Andre Agassi became the champion for the first time in his career at the age of 22. Over and over again, amidst the grueling and demanding physical and mental stress of meeting world class players, he showed marvelous self-control, both mentally and physically. In spite of 37 aces from his towering opponent, he continued in the finals to struggle, finally winning the championship cup in five sets. Overwhelmed with emotions that had been under control during this draining match, he collapsed on the ground and wept when the last point had been won.

If athletes can succeed by exercising self-control, we as Christians can take a lesson from their lives. This is what Paul is telling us in 1 Corinthians 9:25. If they can do it to win a corruptible championship cup, we can also exercise self-control for the everlasting crown of life.

We are "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" with inborn desires and propensities. A successful Christian life cannot be gained by ignoring the need to restrain our capacities. We have the capacity to control our tongues, or "speak roughly," as did Rehoboam, son of Solomon. By taking the wrong advice from younger men, he plunged Israel into a division which meant 10 of their 12 tribes would rebel under Jeroboam, never more to be a part of Israel, but to be swallowed up in Assyrian captivity. The Christian is told, "*Let your speech be always with grace,*

seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). Every Christian should regularly read James 3 — extremely valuable information on how to control that little member which *"boasteth great things."* *"Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell"* (James 3:5ff). Many homes have been broken, and churches divided, because members could not control the tongue. Self-control is the factor which makes the great difference. Divorced couples often admit, too late, that "we could have worked it out if we had tried harder to communicate." *"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous (harsh) words stir up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1).

Controlling the temper is closely allied to controlling the tongue. *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city"* (Proverbs 16:32). *"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few"* (Ecclesiastes 5:2). *"He that is soon angry (quick-tempered) dealth foolishly"* (Proverbs 14:17). *"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly"* (Proverbs 14:29).

DISTANT DISCIPLESHIP

Joe Magee

"THEN, HAVING ARRESTED HIM, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed at a distance" (Luke 22:54).

Judas had done his deed. The betrayal was complete. Public sentiment against the Lord had reached a fevered pitch. Peter was about to be sifted as wheat. It was the beginning of the end for the Lord's earthly ministry. It was the end of the beginning for Peter's.

Distant discipleship leads to disaster. Peter took counsel of his fears just long enough to lose his spiritual footing. The decline was rapid and sure.

We follow at a distance when we are lacking in devotion. In the attitude of praise and prayer or in studying His will, if we find ourselves irregularly and infrequently involved, we are distancing ourselves from Him who spent so much time with His Father and found so much strength in His presence.

We follow at a distance when we carelessly allow our lives to be influenced by the impurity of the world. When we run after the “gusto” of this life, thirsting after the pleasures of the flesh, and entangling ourselves with the cares of this world, we forget the promises and the responsibilities given to the Christian.

We follow at a distance when we stay just close enough to the church to be aware of its activities but not close enough to be involved in its purpose. When we enjoy the comforts of its facilities and the plaudits of its good name but will not contribute to its efforts, or when we fail to give sacrificially of our resources, spiritual or material, to the cause of Christ, we follow at a distance.

The grave danger of following at a distance is that it takes us too close to the slippery slopes of indifference and the perilous pits of spiritual poverty. Peter recovered. As stated above, it was the end of the beginning for him. He raised himself from that awful experience and became the great apostle. He learned not to trust in his own strength, but to take confidence in the strength of the Lord. So must we.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF PRAYER

Ancil Jenkins

A RECENT COVER STORY OF **Newsweek** almost floored me. How unexpected was a cover story on prayer! The study brought to light some interesting facts. Prayer is one of the most popular activities in humans. Seventy-eight percent of the population pray weekly and 54% pray every day. Surprisingly, the study reveals that one out of five atheists pray. They seemingly want to cover all the bases in case there is something out there.

Equally as interesting are the reasons people pray. Some sincerely believe God is there and that He will answer prayer. Others pray in times of distress and peril. It can be a psychological exercise to some that produces tranquility and purpose in life. To those of us concerned with our country’s spiritual life, it is encouraging to see that many, perhaps even the majority, see a God who heals the hurts caused by living.

Somewhat overlooked by the article is the human side of prayer. Even when one accepts God’s power and sovereignty, man still has responsibilities in prayer. James points out some of these.

Prayer is rooted in faith. But when one asks, he must believe (James 1:6). Prayer must be more than touching all the bases. How thankful we, His children, must be that we have a Father who **can** supply all things. We must believe this. *“And God is able to make all grace*

abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Prayer must be a total surrender to the will of God. Our faith must be that He can do what He wills. Praying is our surrender to Him and being willing to accept what He gives. We can ask boldly because of Who He is.

Prayer must not be mixed **with doubt**. "*But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind*" (James 1:6). Some accept God's power to do all things, but deny His willingness. How thankful we, His children, must be that we have a Father who **will** supply all things. "*And my God will meet all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19). Those whose prayers are mixed with doubt will receive nothing from the Lord (James 1:7).

We must have a **purity of heart and motive**. James continues, "*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures*" (James 4:3). God is concerned about His children. Yet even these must combine a purity of life with a singleness of purpose. Man cannot live like a rebel and expect the Father's blessings.

What a power is available! *All* of God's power is available to us who believe — even more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:21). This, combined with man's faith, trust, and obedience, provides a power beyond human measure.

HOW Can One Know?

Jimmy Jividen

CONTRADICTIONARY DOCTRINES ARE TAUGHT in the name of religion. Teachers on both sides cause confusion by claiming that what they teach is the will of God. *How can one know who speaks for God?*

One claims his doctrine is from God because what he says has the support of time-honored human tradition. Churches, councils, and human creeds have affirmed it. The problem is that human traditions are *changing and contradictory*. The creed of one church is directly opposed to the creed of another. One cannot depend on such human traditions for religious authority. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Another believes his doctrine is from God because he has been given new revelation. The problem is that these so-called latter day revelations are *changing and contradictory*. When latter day doctrines

conflict, it is evident that one or both are false. When they change, it is evident that they cannot be from God. God does not change, nor does He contradict Himself. One cannot accept new revelation as a criterion for religious authority.

Another claims his doctrine is from God because it is accepted by many people. To him the voice of the people is the voice of God. He believes that the truthfulness of a doctrine is determined by the receiver — if he “existentially” perceives something as true, it is true “to him.” Two contradictory doctrines can be true at the same time if they are so perceived. For him there is no objective, absolute, universal truth. This view of relative, subjective truth is a popular criterion people use to determine their faith. Such faith is *contradictory and changing*. It undermines the very nature of God, who “*is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8). The one and only criterion for religious truth must remain the Scriptures. They are inspired, absolute, and do not conflict. “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

HOW'S YOUR SKILL?

Tom Kelton

MANY HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE in the sufficiency of God's Word because they have never really learned its truths or how to apply it properly. Yet Scripture is a crucial part of the spiritual armor that makes up the essential equipment for the complete Christian (Ephesians 6:11). The sword of the Spirit, God's Word (verse 17), is the only offensive weapon Paul mentions in that passage. Like any weapon, it must be used skillfully to be most effective.

Luke described the people at Berea as noble (Acts 17:11) because they searched the Scriptures before they accepted anything Paul said as truth. If only people today would be so noble! It is a praiseworthy thing to uphold God's truth and support those who accurately proclaim it. On the other hand, it is spiritually lethal to tolerate false doctrine and apostate teachers — and foolish not to know the difference. But the spirit of ignorant tolerance that plagues the church today often brands any attempt to scrutinize others' teachings as narrow-minded, unloving, or divisive. The flip side of tolerance of error is indifference to truth — and that is disastrous.

The church has become lazy. It has moved away from careful biblical thinking and has tolerated far too much non-biblical teaching. Fewer and fewer Christians are approaching life with the Berean perspective.

People don't often go into error all at once. It is gradual. And they do not do so intentionally most of the time. They slip into it through laziness in handling the Word. All it takes to start on the road to error is a craving for something new and different, a flashy new idea, along with a little carelessness in handling the truth of God.

“GOD IS PRO-LIFE”

Cecil May, Jr.

A SIGN ON THE MARQUEE of a large Roman Catholic church building said, “God is pro-life.” Many will consider that a prejudicial, arrogant statement. Who can presume to speak for God!

I cannot. The priest in that Catholic church cannot. But God Himself can. He tells us in His word that He is pro-life.

God said, *“You shall not kill.” “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” “You shall do no murder.” “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”*

Pro-choice advocates say, “We can trust women to be mature and sensible enough to make the right choices about their own bodies.”

However, most of those choosing abortion have already shown that their ability to make right choices is flawed by immaturity or seriously impaired by erroneous moral viewpoints.

Further, the choice being made is not just about the woman's own body. It is about another body, an infant formed inside the womb.

Pro-abortionists prefer to be called pro-choice, but it is the same thing. Most who are pro-choice object to anything that makes abortion less convenient, less available on demand. The child inside the womb is considered as nothing more than a bit of unwanted protoplasm.

Some are quick to apply the word “extremist” to anyone who believes abortion is murder of an unborn but still distinct person. What word applies to those who believe the baby in the womb is comparable to an appendix or a tumor?

IN BIBLE STUDY

John Thiesen

THE ATTITUDES WE HAVE towards the Bible will greatly affect what we learn from it. Many say that no two people can derive the same thing out of the study of God's Word. This is a wrong attitude which from the outset will drastically influence our study.

The right attitude is that God wants all to get the same message from His Word. If we go to the Bible doubting that we shall come up with the truth, the pages of God's book will seem to us to bear some secret, mysterious meaning between the lines. As a result, we will be searching for hidden meanings rather than plain truth. This is an attitude of mistrust, thinking that God is trying to trick us with His words, and will only result in our becoming confused.

GOD WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE

God wants us to know the truth, believe, and obey it. He wants us to enjoy the grand knowledge about Himself and His Son, and for us to have all the blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life which He freely offers. He is not a God who throws stumbling blocks in our way and hides the truth from our eyes. He is not playing games with us to see how many He can fool or surprise. How the devil must laugh every time he can persuade someone to believe that the Bible is an unfathomable mystery which no one can understand with any certainty.

GOD IS SPEAKING TO US THROUGH HIS WORD

We should go to the Bible with the attitude that God is speaking to us through it. The words contained therein are not the product of human learning or the thoughts of great men. They are not the work of talented dramatists, artists, politicians, or poets. Most of the writers were simple people of ordinary, everyday occupations. But all of them had the same thing in common: God had chosen to speak to the world through them. By inspiration, God miraculously placed in their minds the words which He wanted them to use to convey His thoughts. *"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:21). If we have this attitude, we will listen with deep respect to God speaking through these prophets.

THE BIBLE IS AUTHORITATIVE

Another attitude that we should have toward the Bible is that it is authoritative. That is, we must believe that it communicates the only religion that will carry us to Heaven. No other idea about God, no other

way to immortality, no other means of reaching God has been given by the Lord but that way revealed in the pages of the Holy Bible. If we do not possess this attitude, then we will be fair game for false teachers, easily persuaded to stray into paths leading in the wrong direction and away from God.

PURPOSES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Royce Frederick

THE LAW OF MOSES, in the “Old Testament” portion of the Bible, was given only to the Jews, the nation of Israel. It was **removed** when Jesus died on the cross: “... *And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*” (Colossians 2:14; see Galatians 3:24,25; Romans 7:4,6). Jesus **replaced** it with His New Testament (or “covenant”; Hebrews 8:6-9; 9:15-17). This covenant is for all people of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Since the Law of Moses has been removed, why does the New Testament contain many quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures? Although it is not God’s law for His people today, the Old Testament still serves many purposes:

The Old Testament tells us about God

It reveals that He is our Maker (Matthew 19:4,5).

It reveals that He is the Author of both the Old and New Covenants (Hebrews 8:6-9).

It teaches us about His character (1 Peter 3:10-12).

The Old Testament tells us about ourselves

It tells us of sin’s origin and destructive power (Romans 5:12; 1 John 3:11,12).

It shows us how sinful we are (Romans 3:10-23; 7:13).

It shows us that we cannot earn righteousness by trying to perfectly obey laws (Romans 7:22-8:4).

The Old Testament tells us about Christ

It tells us the historical and religious background of the nation through which Christ came (Luke 2:23,24).

It foretold His life and work, verifying His identity as the Son of God (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:13; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6).

It ruled the Jews to lead them to Christ (Galatians 3:23-25).

It leads us to Christ as we “walk” through its pages with those people (2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 10:7,11).

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

FOR THE RECORD

Maxie B. Boren

- Men say that there are “many churches,” **but for the record**, the Bible teaches there is one: Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22,23, and Ephesians 4:4.
- Men say that “salvation is through God’s grace alone” and that human response has nothing to do with it, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches the importance of human response: Matthew 7:21-27; Titus 2:11,12; Acts 2:37,38; 10:34,35; James, 1:22-25; 1 Corinthians 15:58.
- Men say that “salvation is by faith only” and nothing else required, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that Christ saves those who obey (Hebrews 5:9, and 1 Peter 1:22), and His wrath will come upon those who do not obey (Romans 2:8, and 2 Thess. 1:8,9).
- Men say that baptism is non-essential and has nothing to do with salvation, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches baptism for the forgiveness of sins: Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:20,21.
- Men say that “once saved, always saved,” **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that it is possible for Christians to depart from the faith, and thus, ultimately be lost: 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Timothy 2:19,20; 4:1; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Matthew 13:41,42.
- Men say “it doesn’t matter what a person believes, how he worships, or what he teaches,” **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that it **DOES MATTER**: John 8:31,32; James 1:21; John 4:23,24; Matthew 15:6-9; 28:20; 1 Timothy 4:16; Acts 26:25.
- Men say that people can live any way they want to, and that it doesn’t matter how many times they marry and divorce, engage in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or gamble, booze it up, or do drugs, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches differently: Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 5:3-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7,8.
- Yes, men say all sorts of things; men oftentimes distort, pervert, and change things, they sometimes lie and speak blasphemy. **But for the record**, God’s Word remains constant and true, and by it we shall all be judged: Matthew 4:4; 24:35; Acts 20:32; Hebrews 4:12; John 12:48.

PEACE-MAKERS: PASSIVE OR ACTIVE?

Byron Nichols

WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH the beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5, including the one in verse 9: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”* Let’s look again at this idea of peacemaking, this time from perhaps a different perspective.

Peace is a wonderful thing and should be sought after with much diligence. Peace exists because of peacemaking. We need to understand that the peace referred to by Jesus is much more than just the absence of bad things — it also involves the presence of those things which are good and spiritually healthful. It includes that which helps to bring about man’s highest good. This all results from the activity of peacemakers.

Peacemakers are themselves peaceable and peace-lovers, but they are much more than that: they bring about or produce peace. They love peace enough to sacrifice themselves in an effort to create, restore, and maintain peace. Many who are *peaceable* and *lovers of peace* are unwilling to put themselves in a position of risk by becoming peace-makers. Peace is the result of much activity and effort.

Peacemakers are children of God who love both God and their fellow man enough to do that which is often difficult and unpleasant, that which can result in alienation and a loss of popularity. Peacemakers are willing to pay the cost that goes with presenting themselves to God as His instruments for making and maintaining peace. They sometimes suffer disappointment and discouragement as they see that their efforts are not always successful. Paul urges in Romans 12:18, *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”*

We learn here that peace will not always exist, in spite of the efforts of peacemakers and peaceable persons. Unfortunately, not everyone wants peace. Thus, peacemakers do not always succeed in their peacemaking efforts. However, Proverbs 12:20 states a principle that remains true today: *“Counselors of peace have joy.”* Those who allow God to use their love for truth, righteousness, and souls truly experience joy through knowing that they have walked in the footsteps of *“the Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6).

Peace that results from the sacrifice of principle is not really peace. That one who would compromise the Word of God so that folks can “get along” is not a peacemaker. Let me say in all honesty and

kindness, that person is actually a peacemaker rather than a peacemaker.

When peace has been destroyed or is being threatened, by far the easiest course of action is to take no action at all, but to simply ignore the problem or pretend that it does not exist. Sweeping a lack of peace “under the rug” does not get rid of the matter and certainly does nothing toward correction and the making or restoring of peace. Failing to take appropriate action to eradicate a problem and restore peace is not *making* peace, but is in reality making trouble. Such decisions actually compound the lack of peace. It is just like failing to treat an illness in its early stages, only to learn later to our dismay that what became a life-threatening condition could have been avoided with appropriate early treatment. Evading and avoiding problems does not make for peace. Again, Jesus did not say, “Blessed are those who desire peace whether or not they are willing to pursue it.” Instead, He said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers....*”

Elders are particularly responsible for being peacemakers. Paul discusses some qualifications and responsibilities of elders in Titus, chapter one. Beginning in verse 9, he declares that elders are to be men who know the Bible and who use the Scriptures to bring about peace by confronting and silencing those who are destroying the peace through their false teaching and deceitfulness. There are even times when the peace has been so shattered by those who are “*walking disorderly*” that the Lord would have us to “*withdraw ourselves*” from such wayward and disruptive brethren (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15), and elders must take the lead in this unpleasant action.

Peacemakers are spiritually-minded individuals who are willing and able to view situations in relation to a longer period of time rather than merely the present. They are not concerned simply with the current circumstance, but with the ultimate results which are likely, depending on what is or is not done now.

The Bible frequently refers to God as “*the God of peace*” (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). In His beatitude in Matthew 5:9, Jesus promises that peacemakers “*shall be called sons of God.*” What Jesus is saying is that by being peacemakers we can become partakers of the character of God, we can become God-like. Please be reminded, however, that this is possible only for those who promote peace by actively pursuing it. May God raise up more peacemakers, Christians who have the courage and conviction to do all within their power to bring about and preserve peace.

4 ASPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY

T. Pierce Brown

IN ACTS 2:42, WE READ, “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.*” For all those who are interested in the idea of having a life or a church patterned after that which Christ ordained, a continued emphasis on the four aspects of Christianity mentioned here should be valuable.

First, we need to consider the apostles’ doctrine. What was it? How do we discover it? What difference does it make? Is it good for us to continue steadfastly in it? Paul said to Timothy, “*Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*” (1 Timothy 4:5). If Paul’s language to Timothy does not teach that doctrine is important, what does it teach?

In taking heed to the apostles’ doctrine, we need to make some significant distinctions. First, we need to make distinctions between the Old Testament and the New.

We need to see that there is a definite distinction between faith and opinion. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Opinion is guessing about what God wants. I have faith that Peter preached as recorded in Acts 2. I have an opinion about why God chose him instead of John.

We need to distinguish between the things that were temporary and those that were permanent. I still hear folks refer to God’s providential acts of today as miracles. They say such things as, “It is a miracle that the Berlin Wall came down.” There is and always has been a difference in the providential and miraculous. Miracles could be seen and verified as absolute evidence of the power of God and confirmation of the Word of God.

We need to make a distinction between the circumstances of a situation and the requirements of the situation that apply to us. The breaking of bread that was mentioned and the fellowship that was involved in it are important. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He had the disciples follow a man bearing a pitcher of water, prepare an upper room, and He reclined at the table with the twelve. There are those who seem to think that if we follow Jesus, we must follow His example and meet in an upper room. We need to understand the difference in the principles underlying an action and the means of expediting the command. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 there are at least four principles set forth. 1. All things should be done decently and in

order. 2. God is not the author of confusion. 3. Women are to be in subjection. 4. All things are to be done unto edifying. The means of carrying out those principles may differ in various circumstances.

We need to know the difference between divine law and a statement concerning the custom of the times. The holy kiss and the wearing of veils can be shown to be customs. The principles underlying those commands are constant.

The general principles underlying these things are: We are obligated to do certain things at certain times and in certain ways. Sometimes we have a choice. How do we tell when we are bound or not bound? The simplest way to tell is: when the inspired instructions and example show that any aspect of the activity was important, we need to be aware of it. There is nothing in any record at any time that shows there was significance or importance in the upper room. Everything about the example and command indicates that the day was significant.

Space does not permit dwelling on the fact that the early Christians continued steadfastly in prayers, but every Christian and every congregation today should realize the importance of learning to pray as the Bible teaches. Studying the prayers of Jesus and Paul is probably the best way to learn the nature and value of prayer.

JESUS AND THE EXTRA MILE

Michael L. King

AS THE SHADOWS OF THE cross began to fall across the path of Jesus, you could see Him struggling to go a little farther. Jesus epitomized the kind of attitude and response that He had earlier taught in His discourse on the mount (Matthew 5:38-42). Our Lord has never asked us to go places where He has not been or do things that He has not done. He truly is our “trail-blazer” in every aspect of life. It does make sense for us to “*look unto Jesus*” for the example and pattern after which we fashion our own lives. Consider some thoughts about areas in which Jesus pressed a bit further than others might have gone. When Jesus came to do the will of the Father who had sent Him (John 4:34), He took the assignment seriously. We, too, should take our responsibility seriously and be willing to “*abound in the work of the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Much of the incarnate life of Christ was spent in **PRAYER**. Jesus could be found praying before daylight (Mark 1:35), in the garden (Matthew 26:36), and before His death, when His heart must have been very heavy (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus prayed in behalf of those who come

to God, as their intercessor (Hebrews 7:25). During times of crisis and decision-making, Jesus prayed (John 7:5). Almost always, others were the object of His prayer life.

Jesus went further than most are willing to experience in the area of **LOVE**. Those Pharisees and Romans who made His life and ministry on earth so difficult were loved by Him. He loved His enemies and, for them, laid down His life (John 15:13). He loved those who could or would not love Him in return (Luke 6:32). The Lord's love was not just a much-talked-about and little-done kind of love, but He demonstrated His love in life and in death (Romans 5:6-8). Luke referenced his Gospel as being a "*treatise ... of all that Jesus began both to do **and teach***" (Acts 1:1).

How could anyone have asked for more in the area of **SACRIFICE**? He was the greatest giver of all. Jesus died, not a martyr, but as a **willing** sacrifice (John 10:18). The figurative expression has been made, with a full realization that Jesus was **nailed** to the cross, that the "Chords that bound him to the cross were: a Savior's love; loyalty to the eternal purpose of God; and a resignation to God's will." We are instructed to "*abound*" in the grace of giving, which means "to exceed a fixed or expected amount" (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Consider the **WORK** which Jesus did during His earthly pilgrimage. Jesus explained His purpose for being on the earth as, "*I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*" (Matthew 20:28). We know that He worked until He was weary, as was the case with the time spent with the woman at the well (John 4:6). Paul was influenced by Christ in His work, for he worked night and day (2 Corinthians 11:25). The need for sacrificial workers today is great! We can look to Jesus and the apostles to find the kind of commitment necessary to be a godly person (1 Corinthians 15:58).

One final area is possibly the key to Jesus' willingness to extend Himself and go beyond a nominal level of service. Jesus was generous in His **SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL**. The relationship that Jesus had with His Father could be characterized by what Jesus said: "*I can of my own self do nothing . . . because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me*" (John 5:30). The language which He spoke demonstrated His submission to God, for even as He prayed He always made allowance for "*Thy will be done*" (Matthew 26:42). The life of Jesus was a fulfillment of God's mission to the world — to seek and save those who were lost, and in so doing, to honor His Father's will (Hebrews 10:7).

In virtually every area of the life of Christ, He could be found "going

the extra mile.” Confidence has been given to those who follow Christ, that if they “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” that “*all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matthew 6:33).

Furthermore, we know that “*all things work together for good to them that love God*” (Romans 8:28). This passage promises that when we love God (limitation), things work (operation) together (cooperation) for our good (compensation). Our Lord has not asked that we **die** to prove our love for Him, but that we **live** for Him. “*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your spiritual service*” (Romans 12:2).

God and Christ have gone far beyond that which is deserved by those of us, the recipients. It is time now for us to respond as Isaiah of old, “*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me*” (Isaiah 6:8).

The Captain Of Our Salvation

Bill Dillon

ON ONE OF HIS OCEAN voyages to the South Sea Islands, Robert Louis Stevenson related that a terrible storm arose and the passengers feared the ship would be lost. One of the men finally went to the upper deck, braving the wind and the rain, to see the captain quietly pacing the bridge. With undisturbed face, the captain issued orders for the handling of the ship. The man made his way back to the other worried passengers huddled together and said, “I have seen the captain’s face, and all is well!”

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 we read, “*The love of Christ compels us.*” The words used here literally mean, “holds together.” Christ is the “super-glue” that holds our lives together so we can be whole persons — pure, honest, upright, persons of integrity.

Amid all the sorrows and strifes, and the anxieties and confusions of our times, and amid all uneasiness over what may lie ahead, we take heart to face life courageously by centering our heart’s devotion and life’s desire upon the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Jesus is the Revealed, the Redeeming, the Risen, the Reigning, and the Returning Lord whose example runs like a golden beam of glimmering light, piercing the darkness of uncertainty that often surrounds us.

Hebrews 12:2 says we are to be “*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*” We arise from our knees to take hold of our responsibilities with calmer minds and fresh courage. Mary James wrote:

*“Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I’ve lost sight of all beside.
So enchained my spirit’s vision,
Looking at the Crucified.”*

Christians can be calm and controlled knowing the Captain is at the helm.

THINKING RIGHT ABOUT GOD

Frank Chesser

ISRAEL THOUGHT THAT GOD hated them and was seeking their ruin in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1:27). Israel’s refusal to think right about God led to their rebellion and a forty-year delay in reaching Canaan. No man can respond to God in love and gratitude if he is convinced that God is his enemy.

Unexcelled in the earth, Job was stripped of his wealth and stood with bowed head and broken heart over the caskets of his ten children. He was right when he declared, *“the Lord gave,”* but he was wrong when he said, *“and the Lord hath taken away”* (Job 1:21). That was Satan’s action, not God’s.

Job proceeded to accuse God of shooting him with arrows (6:4); crushing and wounding him without cause (9:17); laughing at the afflictions of the innocent (9:23); breaking him like a leaf (13:25); filling him with weariness and desolation (16:7); and ignoring his desperate cries for help (19:7). In all probability, Job’s faulty view of God would have drowned him in despair had not God pierced the heavens with corrective instruction.

When nature runs amuck and life and property lie twisted in its wake, such tragic destruction is described as an “act of God.” A drunk driver closes the eyes of a child in the sleep of death and a father blames God for taking his son. From the bed of affliction, man looks up to God, whom he views as the source of his distress, and cries, “Why me?” How can a man serve God in love and gratitude when he believes He has robbed him of his home by fire, his health by disease, and his mate by death?

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). God is the source of health, happiness, and life, not disease, despair, and death. Conversely, every negative thing about life is the result of the influence of Satan and sin in the world. It is imperative that we think right about God.

The Goodness Of God

Jack W. Carter

RARELY DO I SPEND TIME with my God without dwelling mostly on His goodness. In this regard, I find that I can't fully express the sense of gratitude within me.

Idolatry has ever been the great sin of humanity. It had an early start in our history and it is still flourishing in many parts of our world.

I guess the foremost question on my mind is, why? Why are people determined to turn away from such a loving God to bow down in worship to objects that cannot speak, cannot act, or even know the meaning of love?

For centuries people have been trying to somehow give life to their gods. They attempt to feed them, appease them (often even with human sacrifices) and conjure up every form of superstitious ritual in the hope of coming up with a formula that will make life a little easier.

Our God doesn't need to be fed. Through the Psalmist He spoke, *"If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is mine and all it contains"* (Psalm 50:12). He doesn't want human sacrifice. Concerning this He clearly stated that it was *"a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind"* (Jeremiah 19:5).

Our God wants to love us with a warm, living love. He wants us to live with hope and the assurance that He is ever present to watch over us in every circumstance. I am so glad that we have such a loving God as our Creator and Father. I am so very glad that He is not at all what so many seem to want Him to be.

KEEPING THE PROMISE

Patrick Boynes

YOU KNOW THAT SHE HAD to be special for him to have spent so much money on her. When the most he'd ever bought for anyone before was a tee shirt from Blackpool, a seven-diamond ring was really going to the other extreme. And it wasn't only the money. It was the selfless way he had asked her to be his bride — he'd put his money where his mouth was.

The ring was his word. It was the best way he knew how to say that his intentions were both loving and honourable. He had made a promise he planned to keep. If he gave the ring, he would later give himself. It

was his guarantee.

When John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, he spoke of One greater who would baptize the people with the *Holy Spirit*. Before Jesus departed this earth, He told His followers that He would send the gift His Father had *promised*, the one they had heard Him speak about. When Peter stood up on that memorable day of Pentecost, he explained to the people that the resurrected Jesus had poured out the *promised Holy Spirit* which He had received from the Father, and that the promise was for them, their children, and for all whom the Lord would call. And when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he spoke of being marked in Christ, “*with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*”

The Scriptures repeatedly insist that God is a keeper of promises. Men of faith such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel, and many more would readily testify to God’s faithfulness to His word. When God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him, He’s fulfilling a promise — He’s keeping His word.

But more than that, when God gives His Holy Spirit, He’s providing a guarantee to fulfill all the other promises He has made. The Holy Spirit “*is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*” (Ephesians 1:14). He is “*in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come*” (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). Where each of these verses uses the word “deposit,” Paul uses the Greek word “arrabon” — a word denoting, in the ancient business world, a pledge or down payment which assured the subsequent payment of the full amount. And, significantly, it is a word which the modern Greeks use for an engagement ring!

If we have the Spirit of God living within us, we have assurance of “*the promised eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:15), “*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade*” (1 Peter 1:3,4). It’s not a question of, “I’ll be going to heaven if I’ve been good enough, or if I’ve attended enough meetings.” It’s rather a matter of, “I’ll be going to heaven if I have the Spirit of Christ within me.” **If God has given us His Spirit, He will also give us our inheritance.**

And when God comes to invade our lives with His presence, He doesn’t come with a suitcase. He comes with a removal van and plans to stay. He’s not like a tenant who is willing to put up with that ghastly wallpaper until it’s time to move on to the next place — God has plans to redecorate and remodel us to His liking and by His Spirit.

The abiding presence of God within the life of every true believer is a constant assurance that our hope is real and everlasting. *If He has given us His ring, then He will give us His all.*