

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN



WHILE THE RELIGIOUS WORLD is getting ready again to celebrate the birth day of Christ in this month, which actually occurred more than two thousand years ago, the Bible, however, tells us that Christ is going to come again. Why will He come again? The first time He had come as the Savior of the world, now the second time, the Bible says, He will come to judge the world in righteousness. When the apostle Paul preached at Athens, in Greece, he told them, "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold and silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained, He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:29-31). His second coming will not be like His first coming, and the purpose of His second coming will also be different. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Speaking of Christ's first coming, the apostle Paul had said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15). To provide the way of salvation from sin, and thus to make men and women worthy of heaven, Christ gave Himself a ransom for the world. In His own words, we read, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a

ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45). The vicarious nature of Christ’s death for the sins of the world is so eloquently proclaimed by Jesus Himself here through the word “ransom”. The word “ransom” means to pay money to someone so that he will set free the person he is keeping as a prisoner. Christ was going to shed His blood in His death on the cross for the sinners of the world. In instituting the Lord’s Supper in the memory of His sacrificial death, speaking of the cup of the fruit of the vine, He said, “For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:28). Later, the apostle Peter wrote Christians, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Peter 1: 18, 19). The clear inference is, men could not take the life of the Son of God, unless God had allowed them. Jesus Himself gave His life as ransom for all. He declared, “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” (John 10:17, 18). So the first time Christ had come to lay down His life; to die on the cross for the sins of the world, according to the plan, and determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. (John 3:16; Acts 2:23). This, the Bible says, is the gospel or the good news. (1Corinthians 15:1-4; Mark 16:15, 16). His death for the sinners on the cross, and not His birth, is the good news.

While nowhere in the Bible Christians are commanded to remember and celebrate Jesus’ birth, yet, again and again it is shown and commanded that we should remember and celebrate His death. Christ’s death on the cross was the vicarious atonement for the sins of the world (1 John 4:10). Through His death on the cross Jesus did for us that which we can never do for ourselves. The death of Christ satisfies all of God’s just requirements. His death was the vicarious substitution. His death was on our behalf. As 1 Cor.15:3 says, “Christ Died for our sins.” It was the death of a spotless lamb upon which God could pour out the wrath that people deserved. (Isaiah 53:4-7; 1 John 4:10). Just before His death, Christ had instituted “The Lord’s Supper,” and He had told His disciple to observe this supper “in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:19). Speaking about the Lord’s Supper, the apostle Paul said, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in

remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). After Christ had established His church, according to His promise (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:37-47), His followers began to come together every first day of the week (Sunday), on the day Christ was raised from the dead, to observe “The Lord’s Supper” to commemorate His death. An example of this is found in Acts 20:7, which says, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” They came together to break bread or to partake in the “Lord’s Supper.” Even today, congregations of churches of Christ, (Romans 16:16), all over the world, come together on every first day of the week to break bread to proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. We need to remember Christ throughout the year and not just once in a year.

## THE COMING OF CHRIST

**J.C. Choate**

JESUS CHRIST WAS WITH God from “the beginning.” This is clearly seen in God’s statement concerning the creation of man. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26).



After man fell and was driven from paradise then it was necessary that he should have a redeemer. Thus, we lead the first promise that Christ would be that redeemer. Speaking to the serpent, God says, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The Lord later promised Abraham that through his seed should all the nations of earth be blessed (Genesis 12: 1-3). Christ was to be the fulfillment of this promise (Galatians 3:26, 29). This promise was repeated over and over to generation after generation. And God kept his promise.

It was also prophesied that Christ would come. For example, Isaiah said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the

Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53: 13). The entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah deals with the coming Redeemer. As a matter of fact, one can read about the Lord’s entire life by just reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. He may read of the birth of Christ, his childhood, his works, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. It was through the reading of the Old Testament that such men, as the eunuch came to learn of the Christ (Acts 8:29-40).

Finally, when we turn to Matthew 1:18, we have these words, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise....” And so we have the story of how Christ was born into this world. Notice some facts:

1. He was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:23).
2. His name would be Jesus (Matthew 1:21).
3. He would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

In connection with the Lord’s coming there are many other facts that can be only briefly listed. Some of them include:

1. John was the forerunner of Christ. He prepared the way for the Lord (John 1:6, 15; Luke 7: 24-28).
2. Christ was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth (Luke 2:1; Matthew 2:19).
3. He grew up as most other boys of his day did (Luke 3:51, 52).
4. At approximately thirty years of age he began his public ministry (Luke 2:21-23).
5. He was baptized to set an example for others to follow (Matthew 3:13-17).
6. He chose twelve apostles (Matthew 10:24).
7. He sought not to condemn the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17, 18).
8. He was tempted of the devil (Mark 1:12).
9. He was transfigured (Luke 9:28).
10. He performed many miracles (John 2:1; 11:1; Luke 8).
11. He taught in parables (Matthew 13:25; Luke 13).
12. He was betrayed by one of his own (Matthew 26:47; John 18:2).
13. He was given a false trial (Luke 23; John 19).
14. He died on the cross without sin for the sins of the world (Romans 5:6-8).
15. He was buried and then resurrected three days later (Matthew 26:28; John 19:20).

16. After giving the great commission he ascended to the Father in heaven (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1).

John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Hence, the Lord kept his promise and all the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the coming and life of Christ. And all of these things have been recorded that we might be made to believe and be blessed thereby (John 20:30, 31). The Bible teaches that Christ is Alpha and Omega, the first and last. He is likewise spoken of as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:11-16). He was the greatest man to ever live, and yet, he was not just another man, but the Son of God (Matthew 17:5). He is the Saviour of the world. He is all in all. Truly HE is.

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## THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN

Wayne Jackson

THOUGH WE CANNOT FATHOM the intricacies of heaven from our current vantage point, surely we can appreciate some of the blessings of that state as set forth in the Bible.

(1) Heaven is a place of rest from earthly hardships. *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them"* (Revelation 14:13). *"Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest"* (Hebrews 4:11).

(2) Heaven is a place of reaping. This earth is a place of obedient activity wherein one lays up treasures to be finally enjoyed in heaven (Matthew 6:19). There will be a tremendous "reward" of satisfaction in knowing that we have helped to increase the population of heaven (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:14).

(3) Heaven will be a place of rejoicing. Those who remain loyal to Christ will hear the Master say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"* (Matthew 25:21). All who enter heaven will rejoice for the great victory they have won over the forces of evil (Revelation 12:12; 19:7).

(4) Heaven will be a place of righteousness. *"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Revelation 21:27). *"Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie"* (Revelation 22:15).

(5) Heaven will be a place of responsibility. The celestial realm will

not be a domain of idle inactivity. There “*his servants shall serve him*” (Revelation 22:3). In one of His parables, Jesus told of ten servants who were each entrusted by their master with money to invest in trading. When they were finally called to account, each was rewarded with responsibility in direct proportion to the way in which he had used his ability (Luke 19:17-19).

(6) Heaven will be a place of reunion and recognition. When the patriarchs died, they were “*gathered to (their) people*” (Genesis 25:8; 35:29). Both Jacob and David expected to be reunited with loved ones after death (Genesis 37:35; 2 Samuel 12:23). The Lord taught that we shall “*sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 8:11). Paul affirmed that those whom he had helped in their heavenward journey would be a source of joy at the time of the Lord’s return (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20). This clearly implies future recognition.

Surely with these great blessings ever before us, we will constantly renew our diligence to obtain this magnificent destiny.

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## WHY SHOULD YOU BE A CHRISTIAN?

Jack Harriman

**BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.** Blessings such as the right to pray (1 Peter 3:12), the peace and joy that come from knowing that one is saved (2 Timothy 2:10), the knowledge that God is at work in one’s life (Romans 8:28), and all other spiritual blessings enjoyed only by faithful Christians.

**Because it is just using good judgment.** To have the abundant life here (John 10:10) and eternal life hereafter (Matthew 25:46) is just good common sense. To be on a Father-child basis with the eternal all-powerful God is just using good judgment.

**Because Christ gives real purpose to life.** A man without a purpose is as good as dead. A Christian has a reason to live. He lives to glorify God (Matthew 5:16) and teach others (Mark 16:15).

**Because it is your duty.** First, you owe it to yourself. Second, you owe it to your family. Third, you owe it to your fellowman and to your country.

**Because God needs your service.** The Gospel has been committed unto men for the purpose of its proclamation (2 Corinthians 4:7). Those who work in the Lord’s vineyard are few (Matthew 9:37). You are needed.

**Because of God's love.** God loves you (John 3:16). Christ loves you (Romans 5:8). This love should leave you no choice but to be a Christian (2 Corinthians 5:14).

**Because of the reward of heaven.** Heaven is a place far greater and far more desirable than words can express. You can't afford to miss heaven. If you miss heaven, you have missed it all.

**Because of the terror of hell.** The horror of hell cannot be described in words. Jesus said it is a place of outer darkness, where the worm does not die, the fire is not quenched, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. I don't want to go there, do you?

Yes, there are many good reasons to be a Christian. And because of the uncertainty of life, and because God has not promised you salvation on any other day (2 Corinthians 6:1,2), and because you have precious little time to serve God at best, you should become a Christian today.

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## BE LIKE PHILOLOGUS

Harvey Porter

WE ARE FASCINATED BY the many people that are named by Paul at the close of his letter to the church at Rome. As he sent greetings he gave praise for their labors in the Lord and for their love shown to him. He said that Tryphaena (dainty) and Tryphosa (delicate), who were probably twins, worked hard in the Lord. He wrote of the woman named Persis (Persian woman) that she ***“worked very hard in the Lord”*** (Romans 16:12). He then greeted Rufus (red hair) and his mother, whom Paul said had been a mother to him.

Then in verse 15, he sent greetings to Philologus, whose name meant “lover of learning.” “Philo” was “love” in the Greek language and “logos” meant “word,” or, literally “lover of words.” We can see how that would be a “lover of learning.”

If Philologus lived up to his name he was a great student, and as a Christian, he would have been a diligent student of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to find ourselves in his company, because the word “disciple” means “learner” and “rabbi” meant “teacher.” Jesus said,

*“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me”* (Matthew 11:28,29).

This is a continuing relationship. There never comes a time in our

life when He ceases to be our teacher, or when we cease to be His disciple or learner. It ought to continue into eternity. Sheep need the Good Shepherd all of the time to lead them into green pastures and beside the still waters.

This is probably one of the great failures of the Lord's people in this fast and busy age—we do not study the Word enough. Even if we came to every service of the church for a sermon or a Bible class, we would be there only about four hours a week. Public schools and colleges meet many more hours per week than that. Most businesses require their workers to take study courses and seminars from time to time to keep up with their business.

We all need to set aside some time for Bible study. It would be good to choose a book of the Bible and read it through as many times as we could in a week or a month. We would become very familiar with its contents. We could then consult Bible helps, such as dictionaries, atlases, commentaries, or Bible handbooks concerning passages we did not understand. It is a rich and rewarding pursuit. It will demand some time. It will mean that we will have to give up some less important things. It will require discipline, just as every worthwhile endeavor does.

Paul wrote Timothy and said, *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). Diligent study will help us to *“correctly handle the word of truth.”* This makes us “approved” to God and enables us to live “the life that is life indeed.”

Jesus said, *“You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). The Psalmist said, *“Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against Thee”* (Psalm 119:11). And again, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway”* (Psalm 119:105). Hosea wrote that God said, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6).

Learning is basic to life itself. Babies come into this world hungry to learn. They soon learn who feeds them and comforts them. They learn the voices of those who love them and help them. They learn a language and what hurts and what soothes. Learning is designed to continue as long as we breathe. And learning truths from God are more important than learning the ways of this world.

We all need to sit at the feet of the Master Teacher and be fed daily. Let's all adopt the name “Philologus” and be a “lover of learning.” That means that we will have to live up to our name.



# ***New Testament Writers***

**Don Hatch**

MEN WHO WROTE THE New Testament are some of the greatest biographers known to history. The circumstances of trials, tribulations, and suffering for the name of their Savior serve as a memorial for all generations. The accumulation of these men's writings, inspired of God, is the greatest book ever written. They instructed, through the medium of writing, countless generations on the victory over evil by doing good (Romans 12:21). Following is a list and a brief account of the New Testament writers:

**Jude** — Very little is known of this man, with the exception that he was a very devout disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. It is believed that he was one of the Lord's own brothers (Matthew 13:55). His writing is unique and simplistic.

**Mark** — was the nephew of Barnabas and was a co-worker of Paul in preaching the Gospel among the nations. His full name is **John Mark** (Acts 12:12). The biographical account he gives of Jesus Christ presents Jesus as a worthy example to the Gentiles.

**Luke** — was a close friend and co-worker with Paul. He was known to be a physician. He wrote the biographical account of Jesus in "**the Gospel of Luke**" and the history of the early church in "**The Acts of the Apostles.**" Both are chronological accounts of events carefully traced by the writer.

**Matthew** — was a "publican tax collector" for the Roman government. This would have been one of the most hated positions in the Jewish world. His writings were to the Jewish mind and followed their teaching as a format in his composition. It is thought that he was slain by the sword in Ethiopia for the name of Christ. He wrote the first book in the New Testament.

**John** — was the brother of James, the martyred (Acts 12:11-20), and was considered to be the closest to Jesus. Confusion is removed when we know that he was not John the Baptist (who never wrote any letters in the New Testament). John, who also penned Revelation, was the last living Apostle.

**Peter** — is also called "Cephas" or "Simon." He was the writer of **1** and **2 Peter**. He and his brother Andrew were partners in a fishing venture. Some of the life and times of Peter are seen in **Acts and Galatians**. He is thought to have been crucified upside down.

**James** — There were three disciples named James (Mark 1:19;

Galatians 1:19; Matthew 10:3). This James, from all historical accounts, apparently was the brother of Jesus. James' book is one of the most practical works. It became a hated book during the "Reformation" period of history.

**Paul** — was the most prolific writer of the New Testament (with more than one third of the books carrying his signature as their writer). In early years called "Saul," Paul is generally believed to have been beheaded in Rome for the cause of the Gospel. He was one of the most influential missionaries of all times.

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## WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

Roy V. Palmer

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN God as a matter of fact. It is as obvious to them that God exists as it is that they themselves exist. The Bible says, "*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*" (Psalm 14:1) But are there compelling reasons for one to believe in God? Is it not actually as reasonable to assume that there is no God?

In the first place, what do we think of when we speak of God? The Bible says, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1). Therefore God is our Creator. "*Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,*" wrote the Psalmist. God is eternal. He always was. He always will be. And God is good. "*His righteousness endureth forever*" (Psalm 11:3). But He is also our Judge and Lawgiver. "*The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth*" (1 Samuel 2:3,10).

"*The Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us*" (Isaiah 33:22). "*God is Spirit*" (John 4:24). "*God is Light*" (1 John 1:5). "*God is love*" (1 John 4:16).

But what are the reasons why one should believe there is a Creator, an everlasting, almighty, righteous, spiritual Being called God? The very existence of man, the world and the marvelous universe in which we live, the existence of Creation, make necessary the existence of a Creator. It must be accepted that either something or somebody (Being) has always existed. Otherwise there was a time when nothing existed, and something (the world, man, and all that exists today) necessarily came from nothing. But neither human experience nor human reason can admit that something comes from nothing.

Therefore the existence of a First Cause is essential. God is that First Cause.

A second reason for believing in God is the fact of order and system in the world and in the universe. The existence of order is undeniable. The precision of the movement of the earth, sun, moon and the myriads of bodies in the universe is astounding. No watch can compare in accuracy. It would be vastly more conceivable to imagine that the intricate parts of a fine watch had formed themselves and assembled themselves into a working unit without a maker than to think that the amazing universe, the marvelous processes of nature, and the wonderful function of the natural laws could have accidentally occurred and perpetuated themselves, without a Creator.

Another reason for believing in God is the existence of a moral sense in man. The conception of right and wrong is not found in lower animals. Though it is culture-bound, and varies with enlightenment, it is a universal phenomenon. And though there may be individuals who are exceptions, there is without doubt a universal conscience in man, which mandates a moral law, and a moral law giver.

The existence of the material world requires Something or Someone powerful enough to produce it. The existence of mind requires Someone intelligent enough to create it. The existence of order and system, consciousness and conscience, require someone capable of purposing them and imposing them upon the nature of man and nature. The Bible teaches this is God. The Bible answer is infinitely more reasonable than any alternative ever conceived.

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## THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST

**Hans J. Dederscheck**

PAUL EMPHASIZES THE FACT that the word of the cross is folly to those who perish, but to those who are saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). Christians do well to preach the crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23). For the apostle Paul, it was sufficient to know nothing else except Jesus Christ *“and him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2). There are people who do not like the cross of Christ because of persecution (Galatians 6:12).

The Greeks are no more enthusiastic than the Jews in their reception of the preaching of the crucified Christ. They seek wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22). Before they can believe they must understand. The only teaching they can accept as true is that which harmonizes with their conception of the world, and which satisfies their reason and their sense of proportion. So they turn in scorn and mockery from the idea of a crucified

Christ, which they term “folly” (1 Corinthians 1:24). The cross confuses them, and they cannot regard it seriously without abandoning all the values which add worth to their existence.

Those who are called by God have real insight into the meaning of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:24). “*For he was crucified in weakness but lives by the power of God...*” (2 Corinthians 13:4). Since the cross is the method by which it pleased God to reveal His power for the salvation of the world, any recourse which the preacher of the crucified Christ might have to the arguments of human wisdom or to the prestige of eloquence would strip the cross of its divine efficacy (1 Corinthians 1:17).

“*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, cursed be every one who hangs on a tree*” (Galatians 3:13). When Jesus endured the cross, it was this shame that Christ despised (Hebrews 12:2), revealing thus the full measure of His obedience (Philippians 2:6-8). “*None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Corinthians 2:8). Here Paul sets the cross of Christ in a universal significance. God’s wisdom is revealed in the plan of redemption, in which the death of Jesus Christ is the decisive event and the fulfillment of which will bring believers to glory, the divine life in all its fullness.

The effect of the cross of Christ is described in a similar way in Colossians 2:14, where we are told that God has forgiven our sins, having cancelled the bond which stood against us, nailing it to the cross.

Jesus said that he who would be His disciple must deny himself, and take up his cross (Mark 8:34), and he must bear his cross (Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27). Paul would glory in nothing except in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Far from being ashamed of it, it is in the cross alone that he glories, for it is by its power that he has become a new creature (6:15).

Faith in Jesus Christ crucified involves for believers a radical break with the law, with sin, with the flesh. Those who belong to Christ “*have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:24). Baptism was for them the sign of their participation in the death of Christ (Romans 6:3). Our old man, the sinner, has been crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). Therefore, we ought to live a new life according to the teaching of the Spirit in complete obedience (Galatians 5:25). Paul was convinced: “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*” (Galatians 2:20).

# DOES GOD SLEEP?

Shan Jackson

THE BIBLE IS FILLED with what we call figures of speech. These are used to emphasize comparisons, stress a personal dimension, create an association, etc. Figures of speech were used with power by Jesus. They challenge the reader in the book of Revelation. They were the tools of the Old Testament prophets, and they were used frequently in the Psalms.

Such is the case when we ask, “Does God sleep?” The answer most definitely is “no,” but notice how picturesque is the Psalmist’s allusion: “*As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image*” (Psalm 73:20). In essence the Psalmist is saying that, just as we awaken from a dream and begin to act, so there comes a point in time when God says, “Enough,” to the ungodly who have prospered in spite of their wickedness. At the end of God’s patience and tolerance, the evil are set in “*slippery places*” (verse 18). They are “*brought into desolation*” (verse 19).

These people owe their very existence to the longsuffering of God, which the Psalmist compares to God sleeping. But as the dream vanishes when the sleeper awakens, so shall God exercise judgment in due time upon man’s evil intent. When God awakens to judgment, those who despise Him shall themselves be despised. When the morning breaks and the Lord awakes as a mighty man, they shall vanish away like distant, unreal dreams. Job 20:8 paints a picture of such: “*He shall fly away as a dream and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.*”

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## *THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLES*

Raymond Glendinning

**The miracles of Jesus had purpose:** (1) To show that He was unique from the many others who claimed to be the Christ; (2) To show that He had authority that no other had; (3) To confirm not only His identity, but also His message. John records seven of the miracles Jesus worked, and he summarizes by saying, “*Many other signs, therefore, Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*” (John 20: 30, 31).

We know that the miracles fulfilled the purpose for which they were worked, for we find a man named Nicodemus who came to Jesus. He acknowledged the fact that Jesus is unique by saying, "*Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (John 3:2). Today, the miraculous works have ceased, but that does not mean that Jesus is no longer unique. "*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Nor does it mean that Jesus no longer has authority: "*... all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matthew 28:18). Nor does it mean that Jesus' message has lost its identity: "*... the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day*" (John 12:48).

So, what takes the place of the miracles to fulfill these characteristics? The church! As the called-out of God, we have been called to show to the world the importance of Jesus to their lives. That is why we exist: to evangelize! Speaking of Christians, Peter writes, "*... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*" (1 Pet. 2:9).

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## ARE YOU A RADICAL?

Tom Kelton

SOME OF US GOSPEL preachers and members of the church hesitate to take a stand publicly for what we believe to be the truth because we do not want to be called a radical.

What we fail to consider is that the Christian faith is radical. Those of us who have been Christians a long time forget how radical our faith really is.

We believe that there really is a God who created the world for His purposes and that those purposes are being worked out in history. We believe this God is holy and righteous and is our Father.

We believe that God called a particular people, the Jews, and told them that He would be their God and they would be His people. The Jews were not educated, sophisticated, or great among the peoples of the earth.

We believe that God brought forth a Messiah from that people. We believe that Messiah was born in Bethlehem of Judea, and His mother was a virgin.

It is enough that we believe that the Messiah came from such a

strange place and from such an obscure people, but there is more. We believe that the Messiah was the incarnation of God — that God Himself entered time and space as a Jew in Bethlehem, a small out-of-the-way town nobody ever heard of. We believe the Messiah walked our dirty roads and died in the manner of a common criminal.

We believe that after the Messiah died, a dead man was raised from the grave. We believe He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father.

We believe that this Jewish rabbi has become the measurement by which the world will be judged — that His horrible death is directly related to the forgiveness, meaning, and eternal life of His people. We believe that He died for us, and that someday He is going to return.

That is what we believe. The very fact that we do believe it suggests that either we are crazy, or it is true. It means that the facts upon which our faith is built are so big and so unexpected that nobody would ever dream them up, and no one in his or her right mind would try to build a faith on something so radical.

The Christian faith is radical. If it were our idea, nobody would have believed it. But it isn't our idea. It's God's idea. Why? Because God is radical. It should be no surprise, then, that what is clearly taught in the Scriptures is radical.

In light of this, none of us should ever fear being labeled a radical for standing for the truth.

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## SEEKING THE LOST

**Dan R. Owen**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD is about lost people finding salvation. Some of Jesus' greatest allegorical stories of the kingdom are about the "lost." These stories reveal much about God and our relationship with Him.

Some of Jesus' stories were told to describe God as the Seeker of the lost. Notice these stories in Luke 15. The story of the lost sheep is really about the Shepherd. He discovers his sheep is missing, he leaves the flock and pursues the lost one, and he rejoices with all of his friends when the lost sheep is found. The story of the lost coin is about the woman who lost the coin. She realizes it is lost, lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches diligently until she finds it. She rejoices greatly when she finds the coin. The stories are similar to the account of Zacchaeus, when Jesus called out to Zacchaeus, invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home, and says, "*the Son of Man came to seek and to*

*save that which was lost,*" (Luke 19:10).

Jesus also told a story in Luke 15 from the point of view of the "lost." The lost son got into his lost condition because of his own foolishness and selfishness. He took his inheritance. He left his family and went to a far country. He wasted his living in the frivolous pursuit of pleasure. It was his fault when he found himself depressed and poverty-stricken. It was the lost son who finally decided to get up and go home to his father. He went humbly, admitting his faults, asking for nothing but mercy. He is much like the sinful woman who came humbly weeping to Jesus. He is like the publican in Luke 18 who cried, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" The lost Son found a glorious welcome when he came home. He found a loving, forgiving Father who rejoiced greatly over his return. His older brother was like the Pharisees, who resented Jesus' attention to the sinners.

The kingdom of God is about the Great Seeker pursuing lost humanity. It is about lost, sinful humanity coming home to God and finding forgiveness and the richest of blessings. These things must be what the church of Christ is about.

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## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Hershel Dyer

THE FIRST RECORDED WORDS which we have from God are these: "*Let there be light*" (Genesis 1:3).

How significant that this command of God should be the first utterance which we have in the Bible. In this book of sacred writings, without which we would be in total spiritual darkness, the first words spoken give the order for light to appear.

Much later, the apostle John tells us that "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*" (1 John 1:5). As there would have been no light for the cosmos or material world apart from God, so there is no light to do away with spiritual ignorance and error apart from Him.

When light appears, the darkness disappears. Neither can exist in the presence of the other. Walk into a room of pitch darkness, turn on the light, and immediately the darkness is gone. Again, turn off the light, and the darkness reappears as pitch black as before.

Christ sent His apostles out into a world that was in the darkness of sin, religious error, and vain superstitions. John even remarked, "*the whole world lies in the wicked one*" (under the influence of Satan), (1 John 5:19). Christ intended that the Gospel which His apostles preached should illuminate the hearts of men with truth so that the darkness



imposed by Satan would be eliminated.

How sad it is that, though the Gospel is preached, men prefer the darkness of sin and error to the light of salvation and truth. Of such the apostle Paul wrote:

*“Whose minds the god of this world has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

There are probably more open doors in the world today for the preaching of the Gospel than at any time in human history. Let us continue to not only “send the light,” but let us “take the light” to those who are in darkness.

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## **What Will You Leave Your Children?**

**Bobby Dockery**

*“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children....”* (Proverbs 13:22).

A GOOD FATHER IS concerned about providing for his family’s needs. The Bible says, “... *if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever*” (1 Timothy 5:8). But a father has not done nearly enough for his children if material things are all he leaves them when he is gone! How tragic for a man to die leaving his heirs houses, land, possessions, stocks, bonds, money — and nothing else! As fathers, we need to be concerned about leaving our children something which will endure when all of earth’s treasures have turned to dust; something that will help them prepare for the day when they, too, must die. Here are some of the things a good father must be concerned about leaving to his children’s children.

**1. A Faith to Live By:** *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him ...”* (Hebrews 11:6). The father who neglects the religious faith of his children is guilty of the cruelest, most blatant form of child abuse.

**2. A Good Name:** Will the name you leave your children be an asset or a liability? Solomon wrote: *“A good name is to be more desired than great riches...”* (Proverbs 22:4).

**3. A Strong Sense of Duty:** “Duty” is not a popular word in today’s self-indulgent society. But, as fathers, we fail if we do not instill in our children a strong sense of responsibility and obligation!

**4. A Deep Love for the Word of God:** Fathers are commanded by God to bring up their children in “*the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). In spite of that plain command, Biblical illiteracy is epidemic. Millions of fathers are failing to provide their children with the very thing they will need most when it comes time for the final audit!

All of us must eventually depart this life. The question is: What then? What will you leave behind for your children and grandchildren? The answer to that question will be determined by what you are doing now!

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## DAILY MANNA

Tom Holland

WHILE GOD’S PEOPLE, ISRAEL, were journeying to the promised land the Lord provided for their food manna from heaven. Except for the Sabbath day, the Israelites could anticipate the daily provision of manna. They were permitted to gather enough on Friday to meet their needs on the Sabbath day (Exodus 16:15-26).

The daily manna under the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13) is not gathered from the earth each morning. However, God provides for His people according to their needs (Matthew 6:33).

The Lord instructs His people to live one day at a time and not to be filled with anxiety concerning tomorrow (Matthew 6:24).

God will provide strength while we fulfill our Christian duty (Luke 17:10; John 15:5). The Lord gave this promise for those who go forth by the Great Commission, “... *I will be with you always...*” (Matthew 28:18-20). The blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, caught the idea in the song “Rescue the Perishing” when she wrote, “... strength for thy labor the Lord will provide.”

God will give us help when “the woes of life o’er take us, hopes deceive and fears annoy.” Hurts, pain, trouble, and disappointment are inevitable (Job 14:1, 2). God will comfort, sustain, and strengthen His people. He comforts through His Word (1 Thessalonians 4:18). He comforts through His people (2 Corinthians 1:4). He providentially will protect us from impossible experiences (1 Corinthians 10:13).

If we live our lives one day at a time and “abide in” Christ, we may anticipate the “daily manna” of God’s provision for our lives.

In the second stanza of the grand old song, “God Be With You,” is a refreshing thought: “Daily manna still provide you; God be with you till we meet again.”

# IS RELIGION RELEVANT?

Dayton Keesee

RELIGION CANNOT BE RELEVANT if it is not right! Christ was crucified by religious leaders who were strong on traditional trends but weak on weighty matters of truth (John 18:28; Matthew 23:23ff; Mark 7:8-13). *Many have been confused and some disillusioned by religion, who would have been impressed by truth in its purity.* Paul stated that none of the rulers would have crucified the Lord if they had only seen the grandeur and richness of Gospel truth (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

Jerry Noble was making some worthy observations when he wrote: “Religion is man-made; the Gospel is God-given. Religion is what man does for God; the Gospel is what God does for man. Religion is good views; the Gospel is good news. Religion ends in outer reformation; the Gospel ends in inner transformation. Religion often becomes a farce; the Gospel is always a force—the power of God unto salvation.”

Of the five times the word *religion* is mentioned in Scripture, it is referred to as “man’s religion”—referring to that of the Jews—and only once as “pure religion” (James 1:26ff; Acts 26:5; Galatians 1:13ff).

The basic meaning of the Latin term *Religio* is “to bind back or to bind together.” The intent of the term is to bind man back to God—A GLORIOUS IDEA! The fundamental need is for us to listen to God and let Him do the binding.

*“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and HE SHALL EXALT YOU”* (James 1:8, 10).

Being bound to Him Divine is an UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE! By His grace we are lifted up from the waters of baptism (Romans 6:3ff), lifted up in victory from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:15-57), and lifted up to meet the Lord in the air and into heaven itself (1 Thessalonians 1:14-18; John 14:1-6)!

The foregoing proves that His pure religion is VERY RELEVANT! Therefore, give attention to His Truth. May our attitude be, *“Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth. Command and I will obey.”*

# SERVANTHOOD DISCIPLESHIP

Roger E. Dickson

WHEN ONE STUDIES MARK 10:35-45 he must keep in mind that the disciples still retain the understanding that a physical restoration of Israel is yet in the future, and that there was rivalry among them concerning who was the greatest. Like people today, there was a desire to rule over their fellow man.

In verses 35-37 James and John approach Jesus. "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." The disciples here behave as we sometimes do, seeking just any desire we would want. "Grant us that we may sit..." The type of leadership James and John are asking consists of sitting on judgment seats and commanding others to do the work. We are sure that Jesus' concept of leadership He is about to reveal will certainly surprise them. James and John are seeking positions, or "offices", of authority in command. In the supposed physical kingdom to come they are wanting to be major leaders beside Jesus, who will be the king.

In verses 38-40 Jesus responds to carnal requests. Keep in mind that Jesus answers them with the spiritual kingdom in mind, though they are thinking in terms of a physical kingdom. "Can you...?" Jesus is asking them to bear the burden of leadership, and if they have the mental strength to carry out in their lives what they are requesting. "Can you drink the cup...?" In the culture of that time, at a banquet a cup of drink was placed before the guests and they were expected to accept this portion and allotment to them. Jesus is asking if James and John are able to accept that portion of leadership responsibility which will be dealt to them in answer to their request.

"Can you...be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with...?" Here the word "baptism" is used with the definition "overwhelm". Jesus is asking them if they are able to be overwhelmed with the tremendous responsibility that comes with leadership. Even in a physical kingdom the military generals must accept tremendous responsibility in sending men to death in physical warfare. James and John respond with this concept in mind. They know the responsibility for which they are asking in a physical kingdom.

They answer, "We can..." They felt that they had the inner courage and strength it would take to be prominent leaders in a physical kingdom, with the tremendous responsibility and the burden of directing men. Here we see the desire to lead, though their understanding of **how** and what they would lead is incorrect.

“You will...” Jesus does not correct the misconceptions concerning the kingdom for He knows that they will need the same strength to lead in the spiritual kingdom that it takes to lead a physical kingdom. The tremendous burden of leadership which faces generals and kings in the physical world would soon rest on the shoulders of the apostles.

But, “...is not mine to give...” Such positions were not given by Jesus, but by the Father, the original giver of all authority. Though Jesus had the authority to bestow upon them a kingdom, the original authority came from the Father. “For whom it is prepared...” Though Jesus’ response to them may seem confusing, it is not when considered in the context of the time the Father had set forth for the establishment of the kingdom-reign of Jesus. The positions of authority were prepared and reserved for the apostles, but the time would be determined by the Father. *James and John were asking the wrong person at the wrong time and for the wrong thing.*

In verse 41, when the other disciples heard that James and John had privately requested positions with Jesus, they were greatly displeased and manifested their own misunderstanding of the nature of the coming kingdom. In the text we picture the disciples off in a group quarreling with James and John over their presumption to approach Jesus for special positions.

In a physical kingdom, authority is invested in the leaders by either their own self-appointed power to rule or the constitutional authority of the people. Regardless of the source of authority, the rulers hand down dictates to the subjects, and it is the responsibility of the people to submit. “Yet it shall not be so among you.” Jesus explains that the authoritarian leadership of the world will not be so among the disciples. He says that the great ones “shall be your servant.”

The “servant” is the Greek word *diakonos*, the ones in the house whose duties were to care for the family. So it would be in the kingdom. The needs of the people would be upon the shoulders of the leaders, who, in like manner as servants, would respond to those needs with service.

This “position” of leadership is different from that which the disciples had conceived in their minds. Instead of being “on top of the situation”, they were to bear the burden of the needs of the group. Leaders in the church would not be seen to be *rulers* over the people, but would be *servicing* the needs of the people.

By way of illustration, Jesus uses the language of the culture of that day. “And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.” The Greek word here is *doulos*, a word for slave, who has no rights of command and no rights to determine how, when or what to do. Slaves

serve in response to the needs of the people, whatever the nature of the service, and whether or not they feel like serving.

Jesus came to serve, leaving us an example that we should follow. Any who would lead His church must give themselves to service, as Jesus served in leading the disciples while here on earth. As a leader, He gave Himself as a ransom for His sheep. “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In the context of our atonement, the word ransom is used in the metaphorical sense that Jesus gave himself for our salvation. In the context of our study it is used in reference to leadership, indicating that great leaders must give their time, energies, and talents as a ransom for the people. Those who would be leaders must be willing to sacrifice even their very lives for the church, just as Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for us.

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## ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

**Brian van der Spuy**

SADLY, WE LIVE IN A WORLD where negatives seem to have gained and kept our attention. Both on radio and television our news programs would probably better be called “Bad News” because very little of what is good is ever reflected or reported.

Even in the religious world we sometimes tend to emphasize the negative and become victims of our viewpoints. Jeremiah declared “*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Jeremiah 10:23). The writer of the great letter to the Hebrews admonished that “*looking unto Jesus*” would enable us to gain steadfastness (Hebrews 12:1,2).

We speak of motivating people, but it may be that this is a misnomer. People do not have to be motivated. Watch lethargic, dozing church members grab their books and car keys when the final amen is said after the assembly. Observe their energy while they are watching their favorite sports team. Listen to them animatedly discuss their political preference or favorite hobby. They do not need to be motivated. All people are motivated. What we need to do is redirect that motivation. Somehow we need to get people involved in spending their energies in spiritual channels. If we could approach our spiritual lives with the same drive and fervor that we have for making money or pursuing sport, polishing a new car or building on to the house, our effectiveness would increase a hundredfold.

It is equally erroneous to say if people are not motivated from within, they cannot be motivated from without. Observation, experience and logic deny this. History abounds with examples of men motivating others. In 1940 Britain was about to be invaded by a far superior German force. Europe had fallen. The United States was far away and totally unprepared for war, while Britain itself simply did not have the equipment to repel the invaders. But then an obscure 65 year old politician who had experienced many failures in his career was elected prime minister, and made his famous speech saying:

*The battle of France is over. I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. The white fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this island, or lose the war.... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, "This was their finest hour."*

The point is that we can be challenged from without to redirect the energies we do possess. There are so many vacuums in the world, and especially in the church, waiting to be filled by someone we could label a "motivator".

The church is a body, a group, and therefore its success demands that every member (Ephesians 4:16) seek to motivate others by finding and defining goals that are wholesome for one another. Manipulation seeks to exalt itself; motivation seeks to exalt the group. A successful group possesses a chemistry that is hard to define, but is born in the drive towards a common goal that we view as critically important. Once the ball starts rolling, it is hard to stop. While sitting dormant, it is hard to get moving.

Notice how easily a few disgruntled members of any group can rapidly create a disastrous negative energy field within that group. And remember how vital to peace of growth it is to defuse such elements. The point is to make an appeal to every church member. The church of Jesus Christ is filled with capable, energetic, motivated people. People who have been successful in business; people who have been successful in their jobs; people who have studied with great success; people who have excelled in sport, business and other endeavors. To those people we appeal, "Please use your talents and abilities to motivate one another, to redirect energies, to focus on essentials, to create a spirit of optimism and success in the church."

# What Are The Vine And The Branches?

Johnny Ramsey

SOMETIMES QUESTIONS ARISE AS to what Jesus meant in John 15 when He said, "*I am the vine and ye are the branches...*" For example, was Jesus Upholding religious division?

The church which Jesus built (Matthew 16:18) and which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28) does not consist of denominations. The church of the Lord consists of people who are added to it by the Savior (Acts 2:47). Christ is "*head of the body, the church*" (Colossians 1:18). His body is not composed of hundreds of differing religious bodies on earth today. But someone says, "Don't you know that Jesus was referring to the various denominations when He talked about the vine and the branches in John 15?" No, I do not believe that Christ was referring to various denominations when He said, "*Ye are the branches.*" There are three conclusive reasons why I say this.

Firstly, Jesus made it plain that He was referring to individuals, not denominations, when He spoke these words. Jesus is talking to the disciples when He states, "*Ye are the branches.*" He further says, "*If a **man** abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch.*" That clearly identifies the branch as a person, not a denomination.

Secondly, John 15 does not prove that Christ was approving the present divisions in the religious world when He stated, "*I am the vine, and ye are the branches.*" None of the denominations of today even existed then! He could not have referred to the Protestant bodies, for not one of them was in existence until the year 1519 A.D.

Lastly, I am sure that Jesus was not upholding sectarianism, or denominationalism, by His use of "*the vine and the branches,*" because a vine bears only one type of fruit. If Christ had wanted to show approval of denominationalism, He would have needed another comparison, for a vine can only bear one type of fruit. The fruit of the denominations is as varied as the many varying religious orders. It would be just as logical to see a vine with grapes, bananas, apples, plums, oranges, and peaches on each of the branches as to believe that Christ was referring to the denominations when He said, "*I am the vine, and ye are the branches.*"