

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 55

December 2024

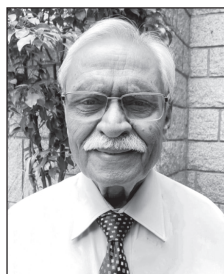
No. 8

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGS SALVATION HAS APPEARED TO ALL MEN

NOT THAT GOD HAS DECREED the salvation of all men, for then all would be saved by His grace alone. But He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. (1 Timothy 2:3, 4). God desires the salvation of all, but the responsibility for accepting God's salvation rests squarely upon every individual. God's saving grace appeared for all mankind, (Titus 2:11), when God, because of His love for mankind, allowed His Word to become a man, (John 1:1, 14), that He "by the grace of God might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). At Romans 3:23, the Bible declares, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." But then we read of the Good News of God, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23). "For He made Him who knew no sin" says the Bible, "to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). God did that for man which man cannot do for himself. Man, because of sin was destined to live away from God eternally. There was no hope for man, but to live separated from God, because of sin, forever in hell. Hell is the place where there is no God. But, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Thus God's saving grace appeared for all men when Jesus was crucified, by the will and foreknowledge of God, Acts 2:23, to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10).



Man is saved from his sins, to become worthy of heaven, by the grace of God, and not by works of his own righteousness, is one of the most important, and exclusive, and distinct teachings of the Bible. While many people on earth believe that to be saved from sins, and to become worthy of heaven man must perform “good works” of his own righteousness, and follow certain “rituals,” the Bible says, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6). We all fall short from God’s standard of righteousness. Man’s efforts to make himself sinless and worthy of heaven are futile. It is a pure imagination of man when he declares that so and so has gone to his/her heavenly abode. On what basis?

The apostle Paul wrote to Christians at Ephesus, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Thus our salvation not only depends on God’s grace it also depends on our faith. When the Bible says, one is saved by God’s grace, it doesn’t mean one is saved by grace only. Grace is God’s part in man’s salvation, which God has already accomplished when He made Christ to suffer for our sins on the cross. Faith is man’s part in his salvation and is exhibited when man obeys the Savior’s command to be saved. (Mark 16:16). Nowhere does the Bible teach that one is saved by “grace only” or “faith only.” Faith only, the Bible says, is a dead faith, of no use, or useless. Just to merely believe in Christ and accept Him as one’s savior, as many do, would not save anyone. It is a wrong teaching, and dangerous belief. Hear what the Bible says about such a faith: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled”, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them

out another way? **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**" (James 2:14-26). When Jesus, the Savior, who died on the cross for our sins by the grace of God, after His resurrection from the dead and before going back to heaven, commanded, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16), why so many think that they will be saved by their "faith only" or by only believing in Christ? Can one be saved by a dead faith?

— Sunny David

THE DAY OF WORSHIP

J.C. Choate

WHAT DAY IS THE DAY of worship? Some would say Saturday, if they are still trying to follow the Old Law. And many others would declare Sunday because they claim to be Christians or because of their knowledge of Christianity. But what does the Bible teach?



As to Saturday, the Old Law taught that the Sabbath day should be kept holy. But the fact is, we are no longer living under that law and therefore we are not bound to keep the Sabbath or to worship the Lord on Saturday. With the giving of a new law came a new day of worship. The Lord was no longer to come last, but first. Therefore, he asks us not to worship him on the seventh day of the week, but rather on the first day of each week. Paul and other Christians did this as recorded in Acts 20:7. Listen, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." Now notice, it specifically says the first day of the week, not the seventh day of the week. On the first day, the same day Christ arose from the grave Christians were commanded to meet and partake of the bread and fruit of the vine in remembrance of him.

Again, Paul says that the giving of our earthly goods should be on the first day of the week. We read, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2). But why should giving be done on the first day of the week? Because that is the convenient time of doing it inasmuch as that is the day on which Christians assemble in order to worship God. It is just that simple. The

first day of the week is clearly stipulated. Surely Paul would not suggest that Christians meet on the first day of the week to give if they were to worship on some other day.

In the Hebrew letter we have this admonition, "... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as—the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Please observe the following: 1) They were not to forsake the assembling. 2) As some had been doing. 3) But they were to exhort one another. 4) As they saw the day approaching. Evidently they knew of a particular day that had been set aside for the assembling of themselves together, and since the sabbath law had been nailed to the cross and a new day of worship had taken its place, then it is very evident that this day was the first day of the week. This is the only conclusion that one can possibly reach.

John said on one occasion, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Some would say probably that every day is the Lord's day. Yes, it is true that all time belongs to God, but John surely had a specific day in mind or else he would not have mentioned the day at all. Surely if every day had been the Lord's day then he would not have said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." But since he did say such, he must have had reference to the first day of the week, the day of worship.

In going back to the resurrection of the Lord we find that significantly enough, even he arose from the grave on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, 2). Some have argued that the reason the Lord did not arise on the Sabbath day was because it was hallowed; but how foolish. Did not the Lord heal on the Sabbath? No, the Lord did not come forth on that day lest everyone reach the conclusion that that day was the day of worship.

With the taking away of the old way of worship, a new way and a new day was given by Christ. The old law was removed and a new law given. The old worship was replaced by a new worship. The old day was done away and a new day of worship given. The old physical kingdom was replaced by a new spiritual kingdom. The blood of animals was replaced by the blood of Christ. The old name was to be no more and a new name was to be given. How complete was the change in God's law!

If you intend to worship God Scripturally then you first of all must worship on the day that he has ordained, the first day of the week. It does make a difference, or else the Lord would have never written it. It is commanded in I Corinthians 16:2, and we have an example of Christians worshipping on this day. So it is binding on all Christians today.

WAS CHRIST CREATED?

Wayne Jackson

NO, THIS PASSAGE DOES NOT teach that Christ was a created being—in spite of the fact that the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” so argue. The Greek word for “firstborn” is *prototokos*, and it can simply denote that which is “first or chief in rank. In the Old Testament, Ephraim (a synonym for the kingdom of Israel) was said to be Jehovah’s “firstborn” (Jeremiah 31:9), yet technically Ephraim, Joseph’s son—from whom the appellation was derived—was younger than his brother Manasseh (Genesis 48:14). “Firstborn” was thus used of Ephraim because he was to be the greater of the two (Genesis 48:19).

In a prophecy that is obviously Messianic, and one that may form the background of Colossians 1:15, Jehovah announced: “*I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth*” (Psalm 89:27). The future tense form of the verb excludes the idea of a literal origin. Adam Clarke noted that the Jews even referred to God, the Father, as “the firstborn of all the world” to denote His role as Creator. Paul may employ the term in a similar way in Colossians 1:15. The Second Person of the Godhead (i.e., Christ) is eternal (Micah 5:2, John 1:1).

Lessons from Nature

Phillip Sherwood

WHEN GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE and all that was in it, he pronounced it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Everything had its place from the tiniest virus to the greatest dinosaur, the smallest mould to the greatest redwoods, the showiest flowers and vegetables to the prickly cacti. Each had its place and multiplied after its own kind. Yes indeed, all was “very good.” Over all this man had dominion and rule (Genesis 1:28-30).

What can we learn from creation? The first thing is rest. On the seventh day God rested from all his work (Genesis 2:1-3). This was the pattern he set down for man and all domestic animals (Exodus 23:12) because God knew man needed rest from his labours. The land also was to be given a rest in the seventh year (Exodus 23:10,11). This is to be a time of refreshing for the body, soul and spirit.

Too often we are too busy for God and our own spiritual welfare. We need to be like a tree planted near a river, it brings forth fruit in season, its leaf does not wither and it prospers (Psalm 1:2,3). This is another

lesson we can learn from nature. We need to be tapped into the spiritual river to truly prosper. That river is the Scriptures and prayer. It takes time and a quiet place.

Jesus knew the value of the quiet times with his Father. That is the time for refreshing and for making the right decisions for our lives (Luke 6:12, Matthew 14:13-21, 23, 17:1, Mark 6:30-32 and Luke 21:37). Before his greatest trial in the Garden of Gethsemane he needed to be alone with his Father (Luke 22:39-46).

Another lesson we can learn is the value of pruning (John 15:1-8). In nature old, dead, unproductive or wild branches are removed. This produces better fruit and flowers. We mow our lawns to keep them green instead of weedy and lank. So too our spiritual lives need pruning. All useless and unproductive sin needs pruning then the fruit will abound. If a branch does not bear fruit it is cut off and burned. It is far better to receive the chastisement of God now than to face eternity separated from him (Hebrews 12:5-11). Let us put aside that sin that tries to keep us down and run the race to victory (Hebrews 12:1,2).

Another lesson to be learned from nature is *do not worry*. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus tells us that God provides for the birds and beasts and he will provide for us as we are of more value. Worry robs our spirit of its peace, worry cannot make us taller. The flowers grow and bloom in the providence of God and even Solomon with all his splendour cannot outdo a flower. The temporal things of this world are but for a moment, seek God and his righteousness and all these things are a surety.

In Proverbs 6:6-11, we are told to consider the ants. Always busy, going about their work, providing food for themselves and their offspring, caring for each other and their homes, tidying up their environment, getting on with their everyday lives and not waiting for handouts. We too, need to keep busy doing the right things and we will be blessed and lack nothing. Put aside the garbage in our lives and concentrate on that which brings spiritual blessings, the destiny of our souls are at stake.

Watch the hen and her chicks (Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34), she scratches around to find food for her chicks, calls them to her and teaches them what to look for and what is good to eat. She protects them under her wings when there is danger. This is how Jesus felt about the city of Jerusalem, he wanted to protect the people but they rejected him. We need to be like the hen, protecting each other and caring for each other, looking for the spiritual food. God has offered it, all we need to do is take it. Yes, we can learn some wonderful things from nature. Look around you today and each day, learn and be blessed.

OUR GOD'S LOVE FOR US

O.P. Baird

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus, God's Son, came into the world to save people from their sins and give them eternal life. In order to do that, He had to die on the cross as the sacrifice for us. When we think of the suffering Jesus endured for us we can begin to understand how great God's love is.

It is difficult to imagine what terrible suffering was endured by those who died by crucifixion. Criminals who were crucified raved and screamed, and cursed those who crucified them. But with Jesus it was very different. He patiently endured His agony. When He did cry out, it was not a cry of hatred and anger, but instead it was a cry of love. He called out to His Father in heaven and said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

How could Jesus have that kind of love for His enemies who hated Him and were torturing Him to death? It was because He came to save sinners. That was an act of divine love (John 3:16). He knew He would have to die for sinners in order to save them, and His love for them made Him completely willing to do that. Even the terrible treatment He received from them could not take away His love for them. When we remember this, we cannot doubt His perfect love for us. God sent His Son to die for us because He wants all people to learn the truth and repent and be saved: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3,4). *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

Now, with God's love for us in our minds, let us consider this very important question: "Who truly loves God?" That is a vitally important question because God's blessings are for those who love Him.

Jesus showed us God, the Father. He said, *"...He who has seen Me has seen the Father..."* (John 14:9). We see Jesus when we learn what the Bible tells us about Him, and that makes us love Him and His Father. Loving God involves a feeling of deep affection, but it is much more than emotional feeling. Let Jesus tell us who it is that loves God: *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me... If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him,*

and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:21,23,24).

The apostle John says, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments..."* (1 John 5:3).

God's love in us drives out of our heart the love for sin and fills us with the love for righteousness. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of love, and *"... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His"* (Romans 8:9). The Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ, is the Holy Spirit. That Spirit in the heart will fill the heart with God's love: *"... the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* (Romans 5:5).

When our hearts are filled with God's love we can understand what it is like to be a Christian. God's love in us will make us love others. It will cause us to love even our enemies and sincerely desire their forgiveness, as Jesus desired the forgiveness of those who crucified Him.

Let us open our hearts to God's love so we can love Him. Then we will repent of our sins, keep on learning God's truth in His Word, the Bible, and we will obey His commandments.

SIMPLIFYING

Jeril (Polly) Cline

IT HAD BEEN A HARD DAY. He had been hungry but unable to eat (Matthew 21:18,19). Upon entering the temple, His authority had been challenged (Matthew 21:23). Later the chief priests and Pharisees sought to seize Him, but waited for fear of the crowd (Matthew 21:45,46). Instead, they, along with their previous enemies, the Herodians, opted to trap Jesus with this explosive question: *"Is it lawful to pay tax to Caesar, or not?"* (Matthew 22:17). Volatile in nature, this was sure to stir up hatred and strife, no matter what His answer was.

The Nationalist Movement maintained that to pay the tribute money to Caesar was to acknowledge his royal authority and to disown that of Jehovah, Who alone was Israel's King. To answer, "Yes," would not only have shocked His people's feelings, but would have cast great doubt upon His own claim of being Israel's Messiah/King. On the other hand, to have replied, "No," was just what the leaders were waiting for, bringing Him into direct collision with the Roman civil authorities, and it would have been taken as a command to rebel by such fanatic Jewish groups as the Zealots.

In this potentially explosive atmosphere, our Lord moved them from the seemingly complex to the simple: *“Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.’ And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then He said to them, ‘Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* Simplifying... Simply put, He went to the heart of the issue. The answer was not “which one”... “either, or”... but, **“both, and!”** *“And hearing this, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away”* (Matthew 22:22).

Jesus had cut right through the complexity of the civil problems of their day. Whether it concerned a woman who was married to seven brothers, or the religious question—*“Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*—the simple answer of God quieted the confusion of man.

Could it be that the heart of their problem/question is ultimately at the base of mine? Jesus simplifies the matter when He asks them: *“Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God?”* (Mark 12:24; Matthew 22:29).

In other words, you do not know the what and why of life or the Power available to carry out that “what and why.”

He ends the discussion with one of His own questions meant to lead them to the Who of life when He asks: *“What do you think about the Christ, whose Son is He... how does David in the Spirit call Him, Lord...?”* (Matthew 22:44).

Who, What, Why... God not only answers our questions, but simplifies the answers so that we cannot fail to understand. Then He supplies the power to carry out His will, if we are willing (2 Corinthians 3:5; 4:7).

JESUS, THE MASTER TEACHER

Kenneth Tipton

MANY RELIGIONS WILL CONCEDE THAT Jesus Christ was a good teacher, even if they deny that He was the Messiah. What made Jesus such a master teacher? What methods and techniques made Him so good as a teacher? Perhaps the best way to examine His methods can be found in one of His longest recorded classroom lectures, what we call the “Sermon on the Mount.”

In Matthew 5:2 the introduction begins, *“...He began to teach...”* Jesus begins by teaching about relationships between cause and effect in Matthew 5:3-11. Some examples given are: they who mourn... will be

comforted; the meek... will inherit; those hungry... will be filled; and those pure hearted... will see God.

Students are called the “*salt of the earth*” and the “*light of the world*,” as Jesus uses common materials to illustrate His point in Matthew 5:13-16. There was no need for fancy materials.

In Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus uses references such as “you have heard” to introduce His quotations, and uses subjects that are current, as well as familiar topics like: murder, adultery, divorce, and even swearing. His teaching involved keeping things relevant.

Jesus challenges students who already have good behavior to achieve to an even higher level (Matthew 6:1-18). Those ideals are seen in giving alms without announcing it, praying privately (not openly), and covering up instead of flaunting one's fasting.

In Matthew 6:19-34, Jesus teaches His students how to handle their possessions and how to handle worry. These are concepts that are personally applicable to each individual learner.

Relationships with others are taught by Jesus in Matthew 7:1-23. Here He teaches about judging others, asking others for help, and recognizing those who are evildoers.

In His conclusion in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus describes those who follow His teaching as being wise, compared to those who do not follow His teaching as being foolish.

The narrative by Matthew continues in Matthew 7:28 by saying that the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one having authority.

As a life-long educator, I would suggest that if we want to be successful teachers, we should follow the same pattern and teach cause and effect relationships, use simple and common materials to illustrate our points, and use references and quotes that are familiar to our students.

If our students are already good, we should challenge them to go to an even higher plane, personalize the lessons to apply to the needs of the individual, and continue to teach about the importance of relationships.

If we have done these things as well as Jesus did them in His teaching, our students will also be wise and not foolish.

Like it or not, we are all teachers, either formally or informally. In Matthew 28:19,20 the outline is (1) teach, (2) baptize, and (3) more teaching.

Therefore, we must strive to improve our teaching methods and techniques to be like **Jesus, the Master Teacher**.

How Does God Speak To Us Today?

John Thiesen

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

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

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

CHRIST THE FINAL SPOKESMAN

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

GOD'S REVELATION NOW COMPLETE

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

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

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

BELIEFS OF ATHEISTS

Basil Overton

God exists, or God does not exist!

AGNOSTICS SAY THEY JUST DO not know whether God exists or not. But, the position of agnostics is only a denial that man can decide between believing God exists and believing God does not exist. It is my belief that agnosticism and atheism are both unreasonable.

One who does not believe God exists is called an atheist. But, an atheist *does believe* some things; he has a kind of faith.

1. An atheist **believes** there is no God. If he should say he knows there is no God, he puts himself in an extremely awkward position. To know there is no God, one would have to know everything, because if there were just one thing he did not know, that one thing might be that God exists! So, at best, an atheist can merely *believe* there is no God. He cannot *know* there is no God without knowing everything!

2. An atheist **believes** that matter has always been here, or that it came into being without any intelligence being involved. Regardless of which of these an atheist believes, his belief forces him to also believe that matter brought into being the present order of things, including all living things.

3. The atheist **must believe** that lifeless matter not only became alive without any intelligence to direct it, but he must also believe some of that matter not only became alive, but it also became *conscious* of itself, including man with his brains and his beliefs. These beliefs of men include both the theistic concept (believing in God) and the atheistic concept (not believing in God).

According to atheism, matter brought into being the concept that there is a God! An atheist has to believe that mindless matter, after it got here somehow, then somehow developed into living forms, and that matter developed brains in some of these living beings including human beings, and then worked out atheism in the brains of atheists, and theism in the brains of those who believe in God.

4. If an atheist **believes** there ever was a time when nothing existed, he must also *believe* that something came out of nothing! It seems that even an atheist would find that hard to believe!

5. To **believe** his position an atheist also believes in spontaneous

generation of life from non-life. Scientists say life could not have always existed on the earth. So, according to scientists life had a beginning. Life coming into being from non-intelligent, non-living matter by spontaneous processes would be a greater miracle, and harder to *believe* than to *believe* that God exists and that He created matter and life!

6. An atheist has to **believe** that the order, symmetry and balance of nature came from mindless matter.

7. To be an atheist one has to **believe** that consciousness arose from a chance-produced combination of non-conscious matter. He has to *believe* that the “creator” of consciousness was not merely unconscious, but non-conscious, matter!

8. An atheist has to **believe** that human minds like his own, with which he does his believing, came from what was mindless and therefore thoughtless! Atheists have to *believe* that all their thoughts come from what was without thought!

9. An atheist has to **believe** that mindless matter became intelligent enough to deny that intelligence had anything to do with its existence and its becoming intelligent. He also has to believe that without any intelligence being involved, non-intelligent matter became intelligent enough to say that this whole colossal universe was brought into being without intelligence and that it is not governed by intelligence!

It is not surprising that David wrote: “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1).

Why Not “Reverend?”

Dennis R. Smith

MANY WONDER WHY PREACHERS OF the church of Christ do not use the word “Reverend” in front of their name, or why they do not like to be addressed as such when spoken to. The answer to this, like all related subjects, is found in the Bible.

First, there is a complete absence in the Bible of this word being applied to any person on earth. The words “preacher,” “evangelist,” “minister,” or “servant” are used often to identify a “proclaimer” of the Word, but the use of the word “reverend” is found only in connection with God Himself. In Psalm 111:9 we read, “*He sent forth redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name.*” Since the use of this word is limited to only once in the Bible, and then it is used in application to God Himself, the church of Christ believes that it should be reserved for **the Most High only**.

This may seem a small thing to some, but its use is another indication that various religious practices of today stem from a man-made origin instead of from the Bible.

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

A Good Husband

Don Hatch

NOTHING MAKES A *GOOD WIFE* like a **good husband**. The matter of being a righteous husband is under consideration in this article. Men who are weak in character generally define the nature of their marriage by less than favorable characteristics. If driven by vice, greed, lewd devices, or base desire, the marriage will be encumbered by these prevailing characteristics. However, if the opposite is so where the man seeks righteousness, holiness, purity, and godliness, it will manifest itself in the marriage. Men who abdicate responsibilities sooner or later find the home is in a state of anarchy. All that we can observe in the homes of our times and those of bygone days demonstrate to us that the husband is a key to the way homes will be shaped.

God has spoken to men who will become husbands and fathers. Fatherhood is more than being biologically able to procreate. There are responsibilities that must be considered and met. Man is the **head of the home** (Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-5). Love that he displays for his wife and children will unify the home (Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 7). Honor he affords his mate (1 Corinthians 7:2) by purity of life exalts the wife and home. The greatest instrument for teaching is doing. Husbands who provide for their family demonstrate to the sons their future responsibility and to the daughters types of men they should choose for a mate (1 Timothy 5:8). Children, as tender souls, are nurtured in the home (Ephesians 6:4) and will reflect the home's values. An exception is when the child falls into companionship with the world (1 Corinthians

15:33) and allows good morals to be corrupted.

Here are ten general values which will help the husband:

1. Remember that the wife is a partner, not property.
2. Don't expect the wife to be a wife and the provider at the same time.
3. Don't think that your business is none of her business.
4. You will hold the love of your wife the same way you won it.
5. Your first concern must be building a home, not just a house for your family.
6. Discipline is a cooperative venture of the husband and wife.
7. The cheerfulness of the husband establishes the tenor of the home.
8. Criticism of your wife should never be tolerated in your presence.
9. Never take the wife for granted.
10. Remember to keep the home holy.

Personal interest which each husband has in his home will never be wasted effort. Offer companionship, love, thoughtfulness, understanding, appreciation, sincerity, and godliness. Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others without grudging or complaining (Galatians 6:1-5). Never be satisfied with just being as good as someone else. Remember the words of Paul, *"Stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14).

THE POWER OF MOTHER

Dan R. Owen

MOTHERS ARE POWERFUL IN SHAPING the lives, the personalities, the relationship styles, and the values of their children. Christian mothers will determine the destiny of churches, communities, and nations.

Mothers are powerful as the transmitters of sincere faith. Timothy was a devoted Christian evangelist because his sincere Christian grandmother and mother left their mark on his soul. Mothers who love God's Word are constant in prayer, and those who love and serve in their daily lives produce soldiers of the cross for the next generation.

Mothers are powerful as the transmitters of Christian family values. In many cultures the family is crumbling, but Christian mothers can change the future of the family. How will children learn what it means to love one's husband? How will they learn what it means to love one's children? Where will they learn about personal purity? Where will they

learn kindness? How will they know how wives are supposed to relate to husbands or how to make a home? They will learn from their mothers in large measure. By these means mothers will shape society.

Children have God-given responsibilities toward their mothers. Honor them as they raise you and as you care for them in old age. Obey them. Never curse or despise your mother, for this is an abomination against the Lord.

Our mothers leave their indelible mark for good or ill upon our souls. We carry them with us in our bosom until we die. Thank God today for Christian mothers. May all of their children rise up and call them blessed. May God give them strength to wield their great power for our good and God's glory.

Marriages Are Important: Good Parenthood Is An Imperative!

Dayton Keesee

WHEN THOSE WHO SAY “I do”, don’t, the grandest human institution on earth is turned into the greatest potential for deep problems, emotional strain and pain, plus burden-bearing of the blackest blight (one meaning of this term is that which destroys or prevents growth). The hub of all institutions is the home. Faltering in the family forecasts folly for all other relationships. Harbored in the home are the most emotional moorings, life’s deepest decisions, and the greatest demand for trust. When feelings fester among home folks, the pain penetrates deeper. Hurts at home are the hardest to handle.

When God disregarded Israel’s worship, it was because they had dealt “treacherously” with their covenanted mates (Malachi 2:13f). That word means “faithlessly, deceitfully, fraudulently, perfidiously, untrustworthy.” Worship goes stale before God when things don’t work well at home.

Whatever the pains and problems are between a husband and wife, they intensify when the couple move into parenthood. If good marriages are truly important, then good parenthood is a community and national imperative. In Malachi 2:14f, it is evident God was looking to a remnant in order to get from them godly off-spring.

The world is moving in just the opposite direction—poor marriages, shattered families, and community chaos! Jean Bethke Elshtain, Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, shares with us the price being paid because of profligate parents: “Three

out of four teenage suicides occur in households where a parent has been absent. Eighty percent of adolescents in psychiatric hospitals come from broken homes. Tracking studies indicate that five of six adolescents caught up in the criminal justice system came from families in which a parent (usually the father) has been absent. A government survey of 17,000 children found, according to one analyst, that 'children living apart from a biological parent are 20 to 40 percent more vulnerable to sickness.' The rate of out-of-wedlock births reaches nearly 80 percent in some innercity neighborhoods." These figures warn that current circumstances will likely worsen!

Some who read this will be related to homes that are hurting. Please put prayer and a perusal of God's Word on your agenda. (Especially note Proverbs 1-10; Deuteronomy 6; Psalms 78, 119; Ephesians 5,6; Colossians 3; and 1 Thessalonians 4.) As sure as the home is the key to success in all other institutions, so success at home is the guaranteed key to happiness. Let husbands and wives, parents and children blend and bond, grow and glow to assure not only the grandest of living, but to grant us a godly seed! Therefore, as God said a long time ago, "... *take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously*" (Malachi 2:16).

THE IDEAL FAMILY

(Finding Fulfillment Without It)

Jack Harriman

WHEN I THINK OF AN IDEAL family, four things come to mind. First, one with all the ideal family members: husband, wife, and children. Second, one in which all family members are faithful Christians. The spirituality of the man and woman is rich and deep, and the children walk in their foot-steps. Third, all members of this family relate ideally to one another. This is "a marriage made in heaven." Father and children, mother and children, children and children have an ideal relationship with one another. Fourth, all members of this family function ideally in the community—super dad, super mom, and super kids.

We would all like to have a family like this one, but most of us don't have it and will never have it. So, we must learn to be happy and fulfilled in a family that is less than ideal. We can, too! Note these three things.

Happiness and fulfillment do not come from human relationships. The apostle Paul said, "*Our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Corinthians 3:5). Whether married or unmarried, with or without children,

well-adjusted or maladjusted, fulfillment comes from our relationship to God.

God may bless you greatly through some less-than-ideal family aspect. The promise that *“All things work together for good”* (Romans 8:28) does not mean that God causes the sinful attitudes, words, and acts that destroy family relationships. It means that He will help you “pick up the pieces,” if you will allow Him. Most of us are closer to God today because something was not ideal.

Don’t let the bad part ruin the good part. A lot of us don’t have all the ideal parts, and all family members may not share our faith, and relationships may sometime be strained; but a lot of good things remain intact.

Here is the point! Work with what you have. It can be rich and fulfilling. This is possible because *“our sufficiency is from God.”*

JUDAS

Bill Dillon

JUDAS’ MISTAKE

ONLY THE DEAD AND THE unborn make no mistakes. Some mistakes are minor and can be easily fixed. Others are major and carry consequences which may last for a lifetime or an eternity. The worst mistake any man can make is to reject Christ. Judas Iscariot committed this error and found himself condemned.

JUDAS’ BEGINNING

Judas started out well. He was a close associate of the Lord, even being the treasurer for the band of apostles. He was chosen by Christ; he was given numerous opportunities; he witnessed some of the most notable and significant events in the history of the Gospel, but Judas allowed the Devil to enter into him, and he went out into the darkness of night to betray the Son of God (John 13:26-30).

JUDAS’ CHARACTER

John 12 tells us something of the character of Judas. Judas *“was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it”* (John 12:6). Nothing is said in Scripture about any noble motive Judas may have had. The only excuse for Judas was that he was covetous and greedy, and this was a poor excuse at that. Paul wrote that *“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10). The desire for ill-gotten gain preyed upon his mind, and Judas betrayed the best

friend mankind ever had.

JUDAS' PRICE

Judas sold out the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but this was not the real price of his mistake. He received no benefits from the money and never had another minute's joy in this world or in the world to come. Judas selected suicide as the way to deal with his guilt (Acts 1:17,18). He can be described as "the man who kissed the door of heaven and went to hell."

Men today still betray Christ. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss; modernism accomplishes the same by speaking well of the Lord. When unbelievers say that Jesus was "a good teacher" or "a good man" and go no further in recognizing the deity of Christ, they too have betrayed the Son of God.

When we live unrighteously, we betray Him. When we refuse the counsel of His word, we betray Him. If we just drift carelessly through life, we betray Him.

All the wealth in the world and all the pleasures imaginable would one day be freely and gladly traded for an opportunity to correct the mistake many are now making. It will be too late then.

Sinner, won't you obey the Gospel? (Mark 16:16).

A MAN NAMED MATTHEW

Leon Cole

A MOST INTERESTING WAY TO study the Bible is to do a study of its characters. Often the characters that are not studied as frequently as others afford some of the most important lessons. Such is true of the man Jesus saw at the receipt of custom and said to him, "*follow me*" (Matthew 9:9). His name was Matthew.

Matthew is also called Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). He would not have been viewed by very many as a possible disciple of Jesus. He was a "publican"—a collector of Roman taxes. His countrymen thought of him as a traitor. As a class, publicans were guilty of greed and corruption. Since they were employees of Rome, they exacted enough money to pay their masters and an extra amount for themselves. This man, then, was friendless and an outcast. His only associates were other tax gatherers. He was barred from worshipping at the synagogue. From reading Luke 18:13 one gets the impression that publicans were even afraid to go further into the temple than the entrance. When we read of that publican beating his breast and crying, "*God be merciful to*

me, a sinner” we wonder if that is a picture of Matthew. It must reflect his attitude, knowing he was not accepted by his people, and perhaps wondering if God would accept him.

There have been others who have been called by the Gospel from the depths of sin. The Corinthians are examples (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Folks should never despair simply because they have been great sinners. That is who Jesus came to save.

When Jesus passed by the toll booth, the opportunity for Matthew came. This outcast was offered a better occupation and rewards greater than silver and gold. He could serve a better king than Caesar. Matthew was not seeking Christ; Christ was seeking him. There is a tremendous lesson here for us: if we would follow the Master, we too must be seeking the lost.

Matthew arose and followed Jesus immediately. If he had dismissed this opportunity, another might never have come. In following Jesus, emphasis must always be on the present. Matthew left all; nothing would stand between him and serving Jesus. He was also unashamed of his decision. He prepared a feast for the Lord and invited his associates (other tax gatherers). He was celebrating his new life, bidding farewell to the old, and giving his friends an opportunity to hear the Savior.

All this was done because Jesus “*saw a man named Matthew.*” Others saw a despised outcast. It is thrilling to read of the lost being found by a searching, seeking Savior. Truly we are reminded of the wonders of divine grace. Let us go with this grace, urging men to leave the old man of sin to become a new creation in Christ.

THEREFORE—

T. Pierce Brown

AS I WAS MEDITATING ON THE Great Commission, I was struck anew by the word “therefore.” Without it, the Great Commission would have no power or purpose. Jesus had said, “All **authority** is given unto me — *therefore*, go, teach, baptize, disciple —” Do you get the implications of that? Without the authority of Christ any going we do is useless; any teaching we do is vain; any baptizing we do is but empty ritual; any discipline we perform is wasted.

Just the awareness of this fact alone and acting upon its principles would change the whole course of religious activity, both in the Lord’s church and in all denominations. In fact, if men acted upon this principle, all denominations would cease. **None of them** exist by the authority of Jesus, so all doctrines and practices which they perform—even if the

outward act is the same as that which is by His authority—would automatically cease.

The awareness of the implications of “**therefore**” would have both positive and negative effects in a fantastic way. That is, it would have negative effects in the sense that none of us would do that in a religious context which was not authorized by Jesus. No discussion would be necessary concerning the use of instrumental music in worship, for example. “All authority is given unto me—Go ye **therefore** and sing” would be easy to understand. But “Go ye **therefore** and play” would automatically be eliminated.

The positive effects would also be wonderful if this statement were fully comprehended. The question might be raised, “Why are you so concerned about going into all the world with the Gospel?” The answer would immediately be evident, “Because of ‘therefore’—My Lord, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, Who died for me, and thus demands and constrains my loving obedience, desires it.”

David Lipscomb and others who claim there is no higher motive for baptism than that the Lord commanded it are no doubt right in that. But to conclude from that the false notion that a person can “*obey from the heart that form of doctrine*” (Romans 6:17) without understanding in the heart what the form of doctrine involves does not follow.

To make it simpler: If the One who has all authority says, “*Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins,*” and a person replies, “I do not think that is necessary,” it is impossible for him to be baptized by the authority of Jesus, no matter what he may say his motive is.

A man may say, “I am going to take the Lord’s Supper by the authority of Jesus, because I want to obey Him.” We may admit that there is no higher authority, nor any higher motive. But if he then takes what he calls the Lord’s Supper consisting of a cookie and coffee, only on “Easter Sunday” (or even once a quarter, and consisting of whatever he chooses) because “his church” so practices, whatever he may say about it has little value. “*In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9) should not be too hard to apply if we kept “therefore” of Matthew 28:19 firmly in mind. It suggests, “Christ has all authority. Therefore do what you do by His authority.”

I MUST NOT FORGET TO EXHORT THEM

Glenn Colley

HOW MANY TIMES IN LIFE have you started something with excitement and fervor, only to find later that the task was harder than you expected?

Such is often the case with Christians who are young in the faith. Christianity demands perennial persistence—“Keep on keeping on.” That’s not easy. However, falling away from Christ’s body permanently has devastating results: *“It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them”* (2 Peter 2:21).

Hebrews 3:12-14 reads, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”*

We learn the following important lessons from this text:

1. A Christian can depart from God. This verse clearly disproves the false doctrine called the “impossibility of apostasy.” This point flashes a danger sign. Here is what can happen. Preachers, teachers, elders, and parents need to be instilling the fearful terror of departing from God. Romans 8:38 says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, but I may shun His love and depart from Him.

People need to be reminded that while departing from God here may sadly seem to them to produce little life change (they still work, live, eat, drink, etc.), the difference in eternity will be unspeakable. We are never completely without God’s blessing here on earth (Matthew 5:44), but no one in hell will benefit one whit from God’s goodness.

2. The protection against this apostasy is to “exhort one another daily.” Christians strengthen other Christians. Just as ball teams do better with the “home team advantage,” so Christians are fed with the exhortation of other Christians. Exhort means to build up, motivate, push forward in that which is right. Who should exhort Christians? **Elders** should (Titus 1:9). **Preachers** should (2 Timothy 4:1-4). **Fellow Christians** should (Hebrews 10:24,25).

Barnabas taught this to us by his marvelous example. *“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:22-24).

3. We are reaching for the ultimate prize. *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”* (Hebrews 3:14). In this verse we have hope, motivation, and warning. Hope, that we will one day begin eternity with Christ in the

house not made with hands. Motivation, to do right according to the One who has revealed to us the difference between right and wrong. Warning, that I will miss the promises of Christ if I don't hold steadfastly to the end. 1 Peter 1:9 says, *"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."*

Exhorting our brothers and sisters sounds easy, but often it is not easy. It requires boldness in Christ, a cause bigger than ourselves, and a love for others strong enough to sometimes risk jeopardizing our relationship by speaking with them about their spiritual well-being.

I have come to the conclusion that we sometimes have unwritten laws regarding exhortation. Many feel that there are "sacred grounds" which must be left alone when it comes to how we exhort others. For example, some believe it is good to discuss biblical morals and to encourage people to support these teachings in others—unless it has some connection to a political candidate. Some people believe that introducing spiritual matters to others in general is improper and impolite, "too personal."

Let's all re-examine our hearts and the walls which prevent us from being exhorters in things people need to hear. If I'm failing to speak to another about spiritual concerns, what is my reasoning? Is it really valid, or should I be swallowing my pride and speaking loving exhortation to that individual? Chances are that each of us became Christians because someone, somewhere, did not forget the tremendous importance of being an exhorter.

WISE CHILDREN

P.R. Swamy

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of the mother" (Proverbs 10:1)

TWO OPPOSITE WAYS OF LIFE are portrayed in this passage of Scripture. Wisdom is moral excellence. Folly is foolish acting, full of vices.

Who is the wise son? Not necessarily is he a person who is well educated in the secular world. Instead, he who has learned the fear of God and has built his character according to the teachings of God is wise indeed.

The mother-figure is introduced for the sake of parallelism. "Father" in the maxim includes the mother, but "father" and "mother" are separated for the sake of contrasts.

It is impossible to estimate the tremendous influence the children

have on their parents, but children seldom believe this. They think that their course of life cannot be of much consequence to anyone so they often become indifferent to the feelings of their parents.

It is universally agreed that no one can understand the depth of love of parents, until he/she becomes a parent himself. Children receive from the parents life, food, shelter, and love throughout. They should realize that, in addition, a great deal of trust is given to them. They are actually entrusted with the happiness of their parents. They have it in their power to brighten Father and Mother's life or to darken it, to make them happy or miserable.

The secret of influence is in the moral and spiritual conduct of the son or daughter. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). A foolish son is not necessarily dull and unintelligent, but one who does not abide by the teachings of God.

When the children are infants, parents often dream of their earthly prosperity or a brilliant career, wealth and other world-wise achievements. As life opens out more fully, the parents come to see that these things are secondary. It is not the dullness or failures and troubles that bring father's grey hair with sorrow to the grave; it is sin—moral and spiritual failure—that is most critical.

It is heart-rending for a mother to part with her infant if he dies an early death, but this grief is calm and tolerable. In contrast, if the child has lived to maturity, fallen into sin, brought shame to the family, and dies in that shame, what a crushing agony! An example of this hurt is the grief David felt for Absalom (2 Samuel 19). If the child is spared to live a life of use-fulness and honour, what a great joy! Jacob's continual happiness with his son, Joseph, illustrates this relationship (Genesis 49).

Every parent's prayer should be "Father, help us to bring up our children in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Their character depends on our character. They will:

1. believe what we teach them.
2. follow the example we set before them.
3. catch the spirit we manifest in their presence.

Parents are their Role Models

Children must honour their father and mother, that it may go well with them and that they may live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:1-3)

Parents and children must understand each other's influence and responsibilities. The power is in their hands to make the other happy or miserable

Similarly, God is our Father. We can grieve His heart by our sins but God rejoices in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.

Parents! Let us produce some wise sons and daughters!!!