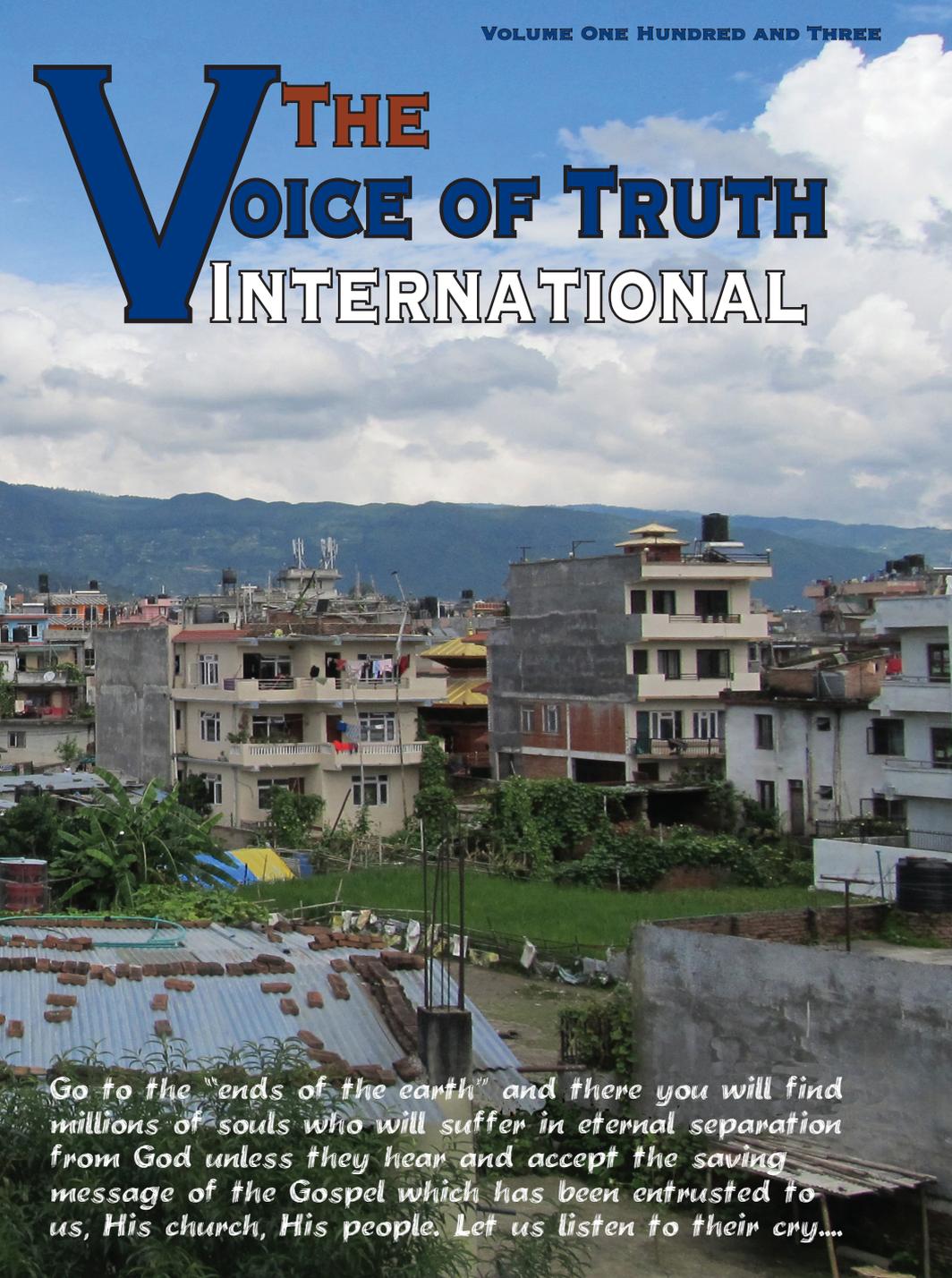


# V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



*Go to the "ends of the earth" and there you will find millions of souls who will suffer in eternal separation from God unless they hear and accept the saving message of the Gospel which has been entrusted to us, His church, His people. Let us listen to their cry....*

# *My Attitude*

**Cliff Holmes**

I woke up early today, anticipating all I had to do before day's end.  
I have responsibilities to fulfill today.

My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy, or  
I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today, I can feel sad that I don't have more money, or  
I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my  
purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today, I can grumble about my health, or  
I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today, I can lament over all that I didn't have when I was growing up, or  
I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today, I can cry because roses have thorns, or  
I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today, I can mourn my lack of friends, or  
I can excitedly embark upon a quest of being friendly.

Today, I can whine because I have to go to work, or  
I can shout with joy because God has given me the power to "create"  
wealth.

Today, I can murmur because I have to do housework, or  
I can feel honored because the Lord has provided shelter  
for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped.  
Here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.  
What today will be like is up to me.

I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

Have a really Great Day—unless you have other plans?



**Cliff Holmes has served variously over the years as a minister, a deacon and a song leader. He resides in Decatur, Alabama, USA.**

THOSE WHO REJECT BAPTISM FOR SALVATION OFTEN ASK...

**WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?**  
FOLKS, NO ONE TODAY CAN BE SAVED LIKE HIM!

Romans 10:9 says,

“...if thou shalt confess  
with thy mouth Jesus as Lord,  
and shalt believe in thy heart that  
God raised him from the dead,  
thou shalt be saved...”

The thief on the cross never believed it,  
**BUT YOU MUST!**

THE  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE  
CHURCH

IT IS FINISHED

JOHN 19:30



1CO. 15:1-4  
DEATH RES.

BURIAL

P

PERFECTION

1TI. 3:15; EPH. 1:20-23; 1:3

P REPARATION MAT. 3:1-2; 11:10; 4:17

P PROPHESED ISA. 2:2-3; 28:16; MAT. 1:21

P PROMISED GEN. 3:15; 12:2-3

P URPOSED EPH. 3:10-11; 2TI. 1:8-9

HEAVEN

2PE. 1:10-11  
REV. 2:10-11

BAPTIZED  
MAR. 16:15-16

CONFESS  
ROM. 10:9-10

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-9

REPENT  
LUK. 13:3-5

BELIEVE  
LUK. 8:24

HEAR  
JOH. 6:44-45

ACTS 2:36-41

DRAWN AND EDITED BY ROBERT C. LURD

BASED ON AN ORIGINAL HAND-DRAWN CHART (#37) BY JAMES HUGGINS  
(FORMER INSTRUCTOR OF MINE AT FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING)

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**The churches of Christ salute you**

(Romans 16:16).



# Demons

Louis Rushmore

## *Introduction*

Aside from historical and contemporary fascination with demons, demons are also a biblical topic. However, much of what worldly people believe concerning demons has no basis in either factual evidence or biblical reference. “The problem for the modern world, then, is not demon possession but demon obsession!” (Mosher, “Demons (1)” 4).

The English words “demon” and “demons” appear 88 times in the NKJV, including four times in the Old Testament (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37). Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37 refer to a ‘malignant demon.’ The other two citations derive from another Hebrew word and mean “shaggy,” particularly a “he-goat.” Therefore, 55 times that Hebrew word appears, owing to the definition and contexts, it refers to goats, and twice it is translated as “satyr.” Also due to the contexts of Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15, what elsewhere refers to goats is translated as “demons” in those instances.

## *Demons Existed*

“Daemon” translated “demon” appears 13 times in the New Testament. “Daimon” appears only in Matthew 8:31, meaning a “demon” or “an evil spirit.” “Daimonion” appears in the New Testament 63 times and is translated as “demon.” The verb “diamonizomai” means possessed by a demon and occurs 13 times. The adjective “diamoniodes” means demonic, used only in James 3:15.

“The existence of demons is taken for granted in the gospel accounts and nothing is said concerning their origin” (Gulledge 5). “Even the enemies of Jesus admitted the fact of His casting out demons, though they wrongly attributed His power as to being in league with the demons (see Mark 3:22)” (Daugherty 87).

## *Origin & Identity of Demons*

There are primarily two differing ideas that men entertain regarding the origin or the identity of demons. Some suppose that demons were the same as the fallen angels who followed Satan in his mutiny against God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Others imagine that demons were souls of the wicked dead who were for a time allowed to escape Hades.



Others imagine that demons were souls of the wicked dead who were for a time allowed to escape Hades.

Angels are not said to need an organic body to work on earth; a fact that cannot be said of demons (Matthew 8:28-34). Because of the latter facts many Bible students have decided that demons are the departed spirits of evil men who were loosed from the hadean realm for a season. (Mosher, “Demons (1)” 4)

V.E. Howard doubted that demons were the souls of wicked dead temporarily released from Hades. “This passage [Luke 16:22-29] further forbids the idea that spirits of those departed, either of the good or the evil, can be permitted to go back to earth, either for purposes of helping men or hindering men” (44). Yet, the same problem applies to the fallen angels, since they, too, have been bound. They are chained and likewise reserved for Judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

No one can decisively argue regarding the origin or the identity of demons in New Testament times in the absence of information in the Word of God to resolve the question. “In the final analysis, no dogmatic conclusion can be drawn with reference to the origin of demons. That they existed admits of no doubt to anyone who takes the Bible seriously; as to their origin, the Scriptures are silent” (Jackson 26). “...The New Testament is silent about origins of demons...In light of this silence, Christians do not need to spend a lot of time speculating or being dogmatic about the origin of demons” (Daughtery 87).

## *Description of Demons & Demon Possession*

So, from the biblical context one accepts the existence of demons in the first century world through which Jesus Christ and His disciples trekked. In addition, only from the biblical context can one derive a description and

a definition of demons.

It is apparent that demons were supernatural spiritual beings who were inferior to God and superior to men. “Demons could speak, and seemed to be endowed with knowledge that was superior to their hosts” (Mosher, “Demons (2)” 4). “In the Scriptures they are presented as intelligent beings, possessing true knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Son of God” (Gulledge 5). “It is a rather sobering thought to note that demons are the first ones mentioned in Holy Writ as recognizing that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed Deity... (Mark 1:23-24)” (Mosher, “Demons (2)” 4). “In the NT and early Christianity generally demons are always regarded as evil spirits. This viewpoint is made clear through the frequent use of such terms as ‘evil spirits,’ ‘unclean spirits,’ and ‘deceitful spirits’ as interchangeable with ‘demons’” (“Demonology”). The *New International Bible Encyclopedia* encapsulates demons as we find them in the New Testament.

The Gospels contain six accounts of Jesus exorcizing demons from afflicted individuals: (1) the demoniac in the synagogue (Mark 1:23 par. Luke 4:33-36), (2) the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20 par. Matt 8:28-34 par. Luke 8:26-39), (3) the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30 par. Matt 15:21-28), (4) the epileptic lad (Mark 9:14-29 par. Matt 17:14-21 par. Luke 9:37-43), (5) the dumb demoniac (Matt 9:32-34), and (6) the blind and dumb demoniac (Matt 12:22 par. Luke 11:15). The healing of the woman with a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:10-17), if considered an exorcism, may be added to this list. Further, an exorcism twice mentioned but never narrated concerns Mary Magdalene, who had been delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9). Although the Gospels allude several times to the practice of demonic exorcism by Jesus’ disciples (Mark 3:14; Mark 6:7 par. Matt 10:1 par. Luke 9:1; Luke 10:17-20; Mark 16:17; Mark 9:18,28 par. Matt 17:16,19 par. Luke 9:40), the only specific instance of a NT exorcism not performed by Jesus is that attributed to Paul in Acts 16:16-18, in which a “spirit of divination” is cast out of a slave girl. (“Demonology”)

“Demon possession is clearly distinguished from mental illness and sickness in the Holy Bible—every time!” (Mosher, “Demons (2)” 4). “Even in New Testament times when true possessions were rather common, a clear distinction was made between demon possession and ailments of mind and body” (McMillon 101). “The New Testament record is very careful to differentiate between demon possession and illnesses. Certainly, demon possession could produce illness, but not all illness was attributed to demon

possession” (Daugherty 87). “Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them” (Matthew 4:24 NKJV).

### *The Purpose of Demons*

Though the origin and the identity of demons is an unknown to mortals this side of eternity, the purpose behind the appearance of demons in first century Palestine is no mystery. We have a strong hint in 1 John 3:8 of the reason for which demons were allowed to possess individuals during the ministries of Jesus Christ and His disciples. “...***For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.***” When the 70 disciples, who marveled that they were able to cast out demons, returned to Jesus, our Lord said, “...***I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven***” (Luke 10:18).

“Just as Jesus demonstrated His power over nature (Mark 4:35-41), over incurable illnesses (Mark 5:25-34), and over death (Mark 5:35-43), Jesus demonstrated His authority over the spirit world. ...Jesus gave His Apostles power to cast out demons. The credibility of their message was confirmed by their power to perform miracles which included the casting out of demons (Mark 16:15-20)” (Daugherty 88). “God allowed demon possession to allow Jesus and the Apostles to show their power or authority over the spirit world. ...Furthermore, demons were cast out to confirm truth...Mk. 16:17, 20...” (Stacy 44). The existence of demons and demon possession “...established the comprehensive and supreme authority of the Son of God” (Jackson 28).

### *No More Demons*

The purpose for the existence of demons and demon possession on earth has been fulfilled. Therefore, demons and true demon possession no longer exist. “Their time of work was limited in the same manner as were spiritual [miraculous] gifts” (Hatch 5). Forasmuch as miracles served their purpose to confirm the Word of God (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4) and to authenticate the Messiah (John 20:30-31) but have ended (1 Corinthians 13:8-12), demons and demon possession have also ended. “When the last apostle died, the gifts, which only an apostle could bestow, ended. The manifestation of demons also ended” (Hatch 5).

“If demons still possess people today, then the age of miracles is still with us and we do not yet have all truth!” (Stacy 44). Demon possession was a supernatural, miraculous circumstance, but the age of miracles was supposed to end after the partial revelations of the Gospel were replaced with a complete

revelation (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). We have been given the complete revelation of God for people now living; it is the New Testament (Jude 3). We are not allowed to accept any additional revelation (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19). We have all that we need (2 Peter 1:3). Were demon possession still occurring today and yet miraculous ability to cast out demons (Mark 16:17) was no longer available, what a cruel and hopeless peril that would be for the human race. There are no more demons to cast out, and no one has any miraculous power to cast out demons either. Zechariah 13:1-2 is thought to be a prophecy about demons and demon possession, as well as a prophecy about their ending, too. ***“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.”***

### *Conclusion*

Demons were evil spirit beings limited in time to the biblical era, chiefly in first century Palestine. They were “not omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent” (Stacy 44). Their existence on earth paralleled the extant of the miraculous gifts bestowed upon humanity. Casting out demons demonstrated that Jesus Christ in particular was superior over everything, including the spirit world. When the purpose of miracles was fulfilled, miraculous ability—including demon possession and casting out demons—was neither needed any more nor available to anyone—demon or human. †

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# Stirring Up Anger

Jerry Bates



The Book of Proverbs has some interesting proverbs, and they are just as true today as they were when they were originally penned. Many are worded in ways that sound odd, and some are based on a culture that is completely foreign to us; yet, the basic messages are still valuable. One such proverb is Proverbs 30:32-33, which reads, *“If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth. For as the churning of milk produces butter, and wringing the nose produces blood, so the forcing of wrath produces strife.”* Let us spend a few moments considering the truth taught in this adage.

The main point emphasized in this proverb is for one to cease exalting himself or devising evil, because an effort to do so only produces wrath. The wise man (in this case, Agur, Proverbs 30:1) writes that exalting oneself is very foolish. I feel sure that most of us would agree that when one exalts himself, the result is strife. Yet, while most people agree that such is the case, it is nevertheless true that most of us have tried to do that very thing. Who has not acted foolishly at one time or another? The writer of this proverb compares this desire to the churning of milk or the wringing of one’s nose. While few people today churn butter, most are still aware that butter is the natural result of the churning of milk. Likewise, we do not use the words, “wringing the nose.” However, we understand the concept. When one is hit very hard on the nose, the natural result is much blood, and it is immediate. I feel sure that most of us can personally identify with that result. These are good illustrations to show that strife is the natural result when one tries to exalt himself or devises evil.

The wise man declared that rather than do such things, one should

***“put your hand on your mouth.”*** Again, these words sound very strange to us. While the phrase is odd, the thought is very current. He basically encourages one to “Be quiet!” This phrase is used several times in the Old Testament, and the thought is to shut up and keep one’s thoughts to himself. Albert Barnes, in his classic commentary, stated it this way. “The act expresses the silence of humiliation and repentance after the sin has been committed, and that of self-restraint, which checks the haughty or malignant thought before it has passed even into words.” Similarly, Proverbs 28:25 records, ***“He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered.”***



The New Testament often warns against speaking evil or exalting oneself. James compared the tongue to fire, ***“a world of iniquity”*** (3:6). A few verses later (3:8) he added that the tongue is ***“an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*** Furthermore, the same writer also declares that where a self-seeking and an uncontrolled tongue exists, there is confusion and every evil thing (3:16).

Jesus Christ encouraged His disciples to be peacemakers. He was quoted as saying in Matthew 5:9, ***“Blessed are the peacemakers.”*** This means that not only are we to be peaceable, but that we also seek to bring other men into peaceable relations. Obviously, this requires the wise use of our minds and our tongues. There are certain actions that tend to lead to peace and certain actions that naturally lead to strife. As Christians, we must avoid those things that lead to strife. The apostle Paul stated it this way, ***“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another”*** (Romans 14:17-19). 



1932—2008

# What Does the Bible Say About the Church?

J.C. Choate

Please consider the question, read the Scripture and check your answer.

## 1. What is the church?

*“...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18); *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47); *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are*

*called in one body...”* (Colossians 3:15).

- A meeting house.
- A denomination.
- The “called out,” the saved, God’s people.

## 2. Who established the church?

*“And Jesus answered and said...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:17-18).

- Christ.
- John, the baptizer.
- Peter, the apostle.

## 3. Where did the church begin?

*“Christ said to the apostles, And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:49; also, Acts 1,2).

- Rome.
- London.
- Jerusalem.

#### 4. When did the church begin?

*“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”* (Acts 2:1); *“...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47).

- 606 AD.
- On the Day of Pentecost, about AD 33.
- 1500 AD.

#### 5. Who is the foundation of the church?

*After Peter and the apostles confessed Christ to be the Son of God, Jesus said, “...upon this rock I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18). Paul explained it in this way: *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

- Peter.
- Christ.
- The Pope of Rome.

#### 6. What is the name of the church?

*“...I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”* (Ephesians 3:15). *“The churches of Christ salute you”* (Romans 16:16).

- The church of Christ.
- The name of some man.
- Manmade names not found in the Scriptures.

#### 7. Who is the head of the church?

Speaking of Christ, Paul said, *“And he is head of the body, the church...”* (Colossians 1:18).

- The president of an annual conference.
- Christ.
- The Pope of Rome.

#### 8. How does one enter the church?

*“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47).

- By joining it, one’s own decision.
- By being voted in by other members.
- The obedient are saved and are added to the church by the Lord.

**9. What was paid for the church?**

*“...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28).

- Nothing.
- The blood of Christ.

**10. What does God require in the worship of the church?**

*“God is Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24).

- Just be honest and sincere.
- Worship in the true spirit and also according to the Scriptures.

**11. What is the organization of the church?**

*Christ is head* (Ephesians 1:22,23), *and qualified men are to serve as elders and deacons* (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

- Pope.
- Deacons.
- Elders and deacons.

**12. What is the work of the church?**

*“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15); *to visit [help] the fatherless and widows* (James 1:27).

- To operate as a club.
- To preach the Gospel and care for the needy.

**13. What will finally happen to the church?**

*“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”* (1 Corinthians 15:24).

- It will die.
- It will reign on earth 1,000 years with Christ.
- It will be delivered up to God.

You may be “happy” with “your” church, but consider these questions, “Is ‘your’ church the one you read about in the New Testament? Is it the one established by Christ, the one for which He is coming back some day?” If not, study the Scriptures above and obey them so that you may be a part of Christ’s church. †

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# 5-Minute Bible Study

## Woe to You Hypocrites

Paula Bates

1. Then the Lord said to him, now you \_\_\_\_\_ make the outside of the cup and dish \_\_\_\_\_, but your inward part is full of \_\_\_\_\_ and wickedness. Luke 11:39
2. Woe to you, lawyers! For you have taken away the \_\_\_\_\_ of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were \_\_\_\_\_ in you \_\_\_\_\_. Luke 11:52
3. Woe to you, \_\_\_\_\_ and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like \_\_\_\_\_ tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are filled with \_\_\_\_\_ men's bones and all \_\_\_\_\_. Matthew 23:27
4. Therefore, indeed I send you prophets, \_\_\_\_\_ men and scribes: some of them you will \_\_\_\_\_ and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your \_\_\_\_\_ and persecute from city to city. Matthew 23:34
5. Therefore, to you who believe, He is \_\_\_\_\_; but to those who are disobedient, "The \_\_\_\_\_ which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble being \_\_\_\_\_ to the word, to which they also were appointed. I Peter 2:7-8

**Teaching illustration: Fill pretty cup with dirt, leaves & rocks. Ask, "Would you want to drink from this cup even though it is very beautiful on the outside?"**



- Answers:**
1. Pharisees, clean, greed
  2. Key, entering, hindered
  3. Scribes, whitewashed, dead,
  4. Wise, kill, synagogues
  5. Precious, stone, disobedient
- uncleaness

# God Is Sovereign

Larry Murdock

You might ask, “Why is your God better than other gods?” The God of the Bible makes history make sense! The God of the Bible also makes the future make sense! The Bible says:

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!” For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.* (Psalm 90:1-12 ESV)

A generation arises and a generation dies, but the eternal God watches over each one! While we have our 70 or 80 years here on this earth, we need to serve the Sovereign of the universe! By doing so, our future is assured, and one of these days we can live eternally with Him!

Webster defines the adjective “sovereign” as “(1) above or superior to all others; chief; greatest; supreme (2) supreme in power, rank, or authority (3) of or holding the position of ruler; royal; reigning (4) independent

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of all others (5) excellent; outstanding – n (1): a person who possesses sovereign authority or power; specifically, a monarch or ruler.” In the days of Samuel, the nation of Israel decided it wanted a king like everybody else. So, God had Samuel repeat the following to the people of Israel. ***“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us’”*** (1 Samuel 10:18-19). I wonder how many of us, by our actions, have said to God, “Set someone else over us; better still, let me have my own way!”

Friends, are you fleeing from the Supreme Sovereign of the universe? The Creator of this universe is its Sovereign! As Sovereign, there is nothing that God does not know; there is nothing He lacks the power to do. He is absolutely free from limits or restraints, with the exception of those restraints or limits that He would freely make for Himself.

Can you grasp the significance of being invited into the presence of such a Sovereign as this, and being permitted and even encouraged to petition this Sovereign in prayer? The apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Colosse:

***We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*** (Colossians 1:9-14)

Paul marched boldly into the throne-room of the Sovereign of the universe and asked for things on behalf of the Colossian Christians. Friends, when

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you pray to the Sovereign of the universe, you are talking with the One Who knows everything; you are talking with the One Who has the power to change things and Who is limited in only the ways He has chosen to be limited because of His nature.

Therefore, what should be our reaction? Bow! Believe! Behold with awe the way God works out the details of your history. ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”*** (Romans 8:28).

Recorded in Isaiah 45 are the words of the Sovereign to a king by the name of Cyrus. He was a Persian king and the founder of a long line of Persian kings. God chose this heathen king to do His bidding. Notice Isaiah 45:1-13.

***Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things. Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it. Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, “What are you making?” or “Your work has no handles”? Woe to him who says to a father, “What are you beget-***

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*ting?” or to a woman, “With what are you in labor?” Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: “Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward,” says the LORD of hosts.*

God had these words written by Isaiah almost 200 years before Cyrus was born! That’s right! Can you imagine the impact this Scripture had upon Cyrus when some Jewish exile later showed it to him? Well, Cyrus took to heart the message. He released the Jewish people from their captivity without price or reward. He sent them home with the commission to rebuild the Temple at his expense.

*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia...the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:1-4)*

Friends, the God of the Bible is the Sovereign of the universe. Shouldn’t you bow; shouldn’t you believe; shouldn’t you worship and serve this Sovereign? 

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# Tracing Jesus' Historical Roots

T. Pierce Brown

The following are some prophetic references to Jesus that the Jews recognized as referring to the Messiah for whom they were looking. The New Testament shows the references to be fulfilled in Jesus.

Genesis 3:15 says, *“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”*

Galatians 4:4 is one of the several references that indicate that Jesus was the seed of the woman who was to *“bruise the head”* of the Old Serpent, who is known as Satan.

In Genesis 18:18 God said, *“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.”* Acts 3:25 indicates that it was through the Jewish nation that the Messiah was to come Who would bless all nations. *“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”*

Among many other passages, the Messiah was shown to be an heir to the throne of David in Isaiah 9:7, which reads, *“Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”* When we look at the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew



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1:1, we find this to be fulfilled in Him, ***“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”***

The place of the birth of the Messiah was prophesied in Micah 5:2; ***“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”*** Matthew 2:1 shows this to be fulfilled in Jesus. ***“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem.”*** Then, in verses 4-6 we find, ***“And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”***

In Daniel 9:25, we find the prophecy, ***“Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, [The Messiah] the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.”*** This time was fulfilled in Luke 2:1-2 when it is said, ***“Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.”***

Although most of the Rabbis did not know what many of the prophets meant until they were fulfilled in the life of Jesus, one should consider that in no other life were they fulfilled as in Jeremiah 31:15, ***“Thus says the Lord: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.’”*** It is a matter of historical record that what is recorded in Matthew 2:17-18 happened, and thus fulfilled the prophecy. ***“Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.’”***

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God had told Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18, *“I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”* There is no other person in all of history who fulfills that prophecy as Jesus did, and many of the Jews in Jesus’ day recognized it, as we find in John 6:14. *“When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.”* Also, in John 1:45 we read, *“And Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*

The Rabbis did not understand how the Messiah could be a king and yet be rejected. So, many of them thought there would be two, but all admitted that Isaiah 53:3 referred to the Messiah. *“He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.”* Of course, our own experience coincides with John 1:11; *“He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.”*

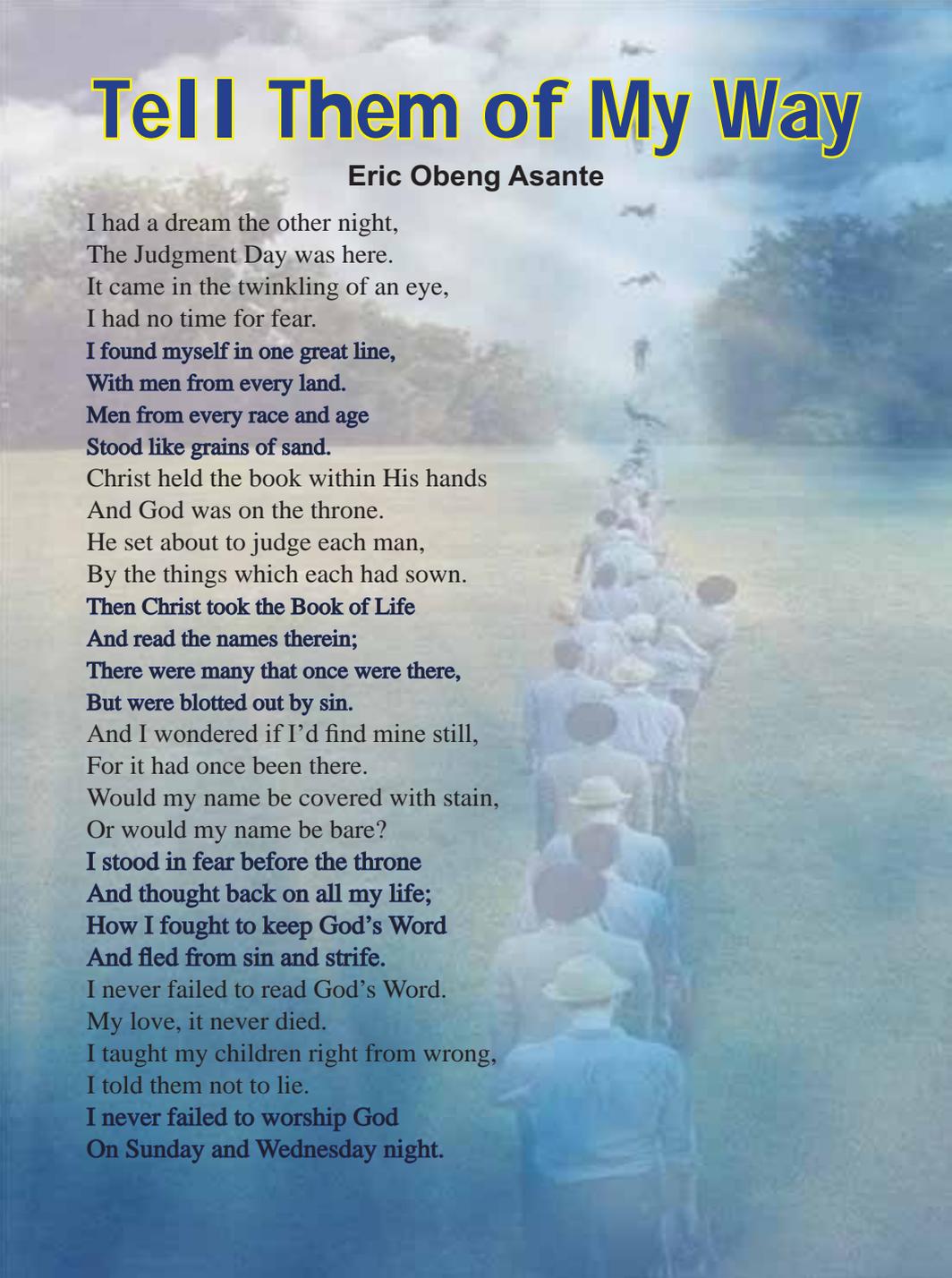
Zechariah 9:9 prophesied about the Messiah, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass.”* It was fulfilled as recorded in John 12:13-14, *“When they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy king cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt.”* 

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[Editor’s Note: Prophecy and fulfillment regarding Jesus Christ—the Messiah—is a principal proof of the inspired origin of the Bible and of the existence of Almighty God. Mere mortals are incapable of making predictions hundreds of years before their fulfillment in every detail. There exist several hundred biblical prophecies pertaining to Christ, all of which were fulfilled completely, and many more prophecies and their fulfillment about the church of the Bible. Jesus as well as the Lord’s church has historical roots through prophecy and fulfillment. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

# Tell Them of My Way

Eric Obeng Asante



I had a dream the other night,  
The Judgment Day was here.  
It came in the twinkling of an eye,  
I had no time for fear.  
**I found myself in one great line,  
With men from every land.  
Men from every race and age  
Stood like grains of sand.**  
Christ held the book within His hands  
And God was on the throne.  
He set about to judge each man,  
By the things which each had sown.  
**Then Christ took the Book of Life  
And read the names therein;  
There were many that once were there,  
But were blotted out by sin.**  
And I wondered if I'd find mine still,  
For it had once been there.  
Would my name be covered with stain,  
Or would my name be bare?  
**I stood in fear before the throne  
And thought back on all my life;  
How I fought to keep God's Word  
And fled from sin and strife.**  
I never failed to read God's Word.  
My love, it never died.  
I taught my children right from wrong,  
I told them not to lie.  
**I never failed to worship God  
On Sunday and Wednesday night.**

I often traveled many miles  
To hear a word of light.

I gave my goods to feed the poor  
And never ceased to pray.  
I'd always kept my tongue in check  
Until this very day.

So surely the Lord will know me  
And tell me to walk on in;  
But Lord, please have mercy  
On all these lost in sin.

And as I thought, the crowd moved up,  
And I was fifth in line,  
The men that stood before me  
Were ready to pay their fine.

The first man stepped to meet the Lord,  
And fell upon the floor,  
Then I saw just who it was,  
It was the man next door.

Jesus took the Book of Life  
But could not find his name.  
My neighbor said, "I have not heard."  
I knew, I was the blame.

Next in line was sister Anne,  
Who once in Christ had been.  
Because I failed to admonish her,  
She continued in her sin.

Her name had once been written  
In the pages of that book,  
But I never even took the time  
To see why she forsook.

Then a black man came before the throne  
He had worked with me for years,  
He knew his name would not be there  
And his eyes were filled with tears.

This man had never learned the truth  
And neither had his kin,  
For I would not talk with them  
For the color of their skin.

And then the man before me  
I suddenly recognized,  
And as he stepped before the throne  
He looked into my eyes.

He was my roommate from college days,  
He had been my greatest friend,  
We'd always helped each other out,  
Down through thick and thin.

But I never told him of the Lord,  
It seemed so trivial then,  
For we were young and had plenty of time  
To talk of God and sin.

And finally upon the Judgement Day,  
I meet with him once more,  
But now there's nothing I can say  
To open him the door.

And now I stood before the Lord,  
My soul was filled with fright.  
"Why hadn't I taken the time  
To teach them what was right."

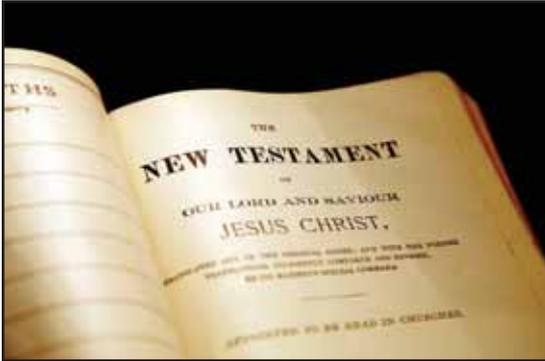
Again the Lord, He took the book  
And looked there for my name,  
Where once had been a pure white page  
My brothers' blood now stained.

And then the Lord, He said to me,  
"I've found here one dark blot.  
You hid My name from all these men.  
Depart, I know you not."

"You met them every day in life  
And knew they were astray,  
But you never even cared enough  
To tell them of My way."

# Introducing the New Testament

Jeremy Barrier



When Mohandas Gandhi was a young man in College, he began to read through the Bible to fulfill a promise to one of his classmates. He soon discovered that within the New Testament was found such a divine and eternal truth that he was unable to shake the influence that it

had upon him throughout his life. This kernel of truth was found in the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth. Gandhi was so moved by the Gospels that he wrote in his autobiography, “But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart.” Within this short essay, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss this short, but powerful and meaningful part of the Bible called the New Testament. It has long been the source of encouragement and hope for people around the world as they have looked for hope in a sick and dying world. One of the reasons the New Testament has assisted people for so long in such difficult situations is because it was born out of a sick and dying world.

After Jesus lived His life (approximately 4 B.C. to A.D. 30), taught multitudes about eternal life, died on the cross and was resurrected on the third day, He, then, remained on the earth for 40 more days and taught His disciples many things concerning God and Heaven. Once the time arrived for Jesus to depart, He then turned His ministry of repentance and preparation for the reign of God over to His followers, namely the apostles. For several generations after Jesus went back to Heaven, the apostles continued to teach

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and to proclaim the Good News of salvation. After the apostles began to die and to pass on, their followers continued to spread this message.

By the beginning of the second century A.D., Christians realized that the early church was quickly fading out of their sight. Therefore, Christians in different regions began to gather and accumulate some of the writings that had been preserved from the early church, as well as to record the life of Jesus in writing from trustworthy sources so that followers of Christ in the next generations would know about Jesus and the hope that He brought to humanity. This compilation process began in the second century and finally came to a somewhat completed state by A.D. 367, when the Bishop Athanasius presented a sermon to his congregation and told the congregants which writings of the early church would be accepted as authentic and useful for the church. There were 27 books on Athanasius' list, which we now call the New Testament.

Of course, we do not intend to disregard or to disrespect the role of God in the process of inspiration. It is important, as humans, to understand that inspiration is an activity of God partnering with humans. Therefore, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, God actively inspired a human, John, to write down what he saw. Therefore, in any accounting of God's activities in giving us the Scriptures, there is the part that we cannot see (God's inspiration) and the part we can see (the paper upon which the words are written, the personality of the individual, etc.). History narrates the human side of an event that God controlled, directed and inspired.

To assist the student of the New Testament, who is wishing to work his way through this wonderful piece of literature, I would like to provide a brief introduction to the contents of each section found within the New Testament. To simplify this process, I will follow the standard order that has been presented for several centuries. The New Testament begins with the four Gospel records, namely *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*.

The word "Gospel" simply means "Good News!" Sometime during the last two decades of the first century, four different accounts were compiled that recorded the events of the life of Christ in "biographical" form. The first three Gospels are commonly called the Synoptic (Synoptic

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means “Seeing Together”) Gospels because their accounts are so similar. The Fourth Gospel, John, seems to tell the narrative in a more independent way, stressing different aspects of Jesus’ life.

Following the Book of John is *The Acts of the Apostles*. This book, commonly identified as having been written by the Gospel writer, Luke, is an early form of Christian literature that was used by Christians that were facing persecution from people and governments around them. *Acts* tells of the nature of the early church, its worship and how to be initiated into Christianity. Finally, it records a number of legal defenses of Christianity before Roman magistrates, as Christians sought to prove that Christianity was a legitimate religion within the Roman world. *Acts* spends most of its time following the lives of two different apostles, namely Peter and Paul. These two apostles, in many ways, led the advance of Christianity with Peter taking the Gospel to the Jews and Paul taking the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Following the *Acts of the Apostles*, one finds thirteen epistles (*Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* and *Philemon*) that have been attributed the apostle Paul. These thirteen letters have been a very strong inspiration to Christians for centuries as they witness the letter writing that went on within the early church from one town to another. These letters of Paul, gathered up by early Christians, give detailed accounts of how Paul understood the nature, worship, organization, theology and mission of the early church. The physical gathering of Paul’s letters actually did happen in space in time. This is a historical fact. Even Paul encouraged such activities (Colossians 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:13).

After Paul’s epistles, one will find the *Book of Hebrews*. *Hebrews* addresses the supremacy of Christ. The sermon, set in the context of a letter, was written to encourage Christians to resist persecutions by others, namely Jews, so that they would realize the supremacy of Christ to the Old Law. Following *Hebrews* is the *Book of James*, which is a moral exhortation to encourage Christians toward living a life worthy of God, in contrast to the evil ways of the world around them. Themes of humility, restraining the tongue, not being given to indulgent and greedy habits and

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others such themes are addressed.

Next come *1 & 2 Peter*. While *1 & 2 Peter* are placed side by side, their contents have very little in common. *First Peter* addresses a situation where a number of Christians who spread throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) were facing subtle persecution through governmental restrictions and exclusion from neighbors. The author attempted to call these members into line by withstanding trials and organizing themselves in such a way to resist the persecution. *Second Peter* is a shorter letter, and the contents are very similar to *Jude*. Both of these letters address the need for the church to beware of false teachers who would soon come to pervert the teachings of the early church.

*First, 2 & 3 John* are all short letters that address the issue of Jesus as the Messiah, as prophesied in the Old Testament. In addition, the letters are an appeal for Christian unity and love of one another. The last book of the New Testament is *Revelation*. It is the only New Testament document that was written in the apocalyptic genre. It was written to the seven churches of Asia, exhorting them to stand strong as persecutions would soon be coming. The way in which the church was encouraged to do this was through the prophesies that were revealed to John. Thereby, the church would stand strong, God would help it overcome all odds and retribution would be paid for the sufferings of the deceased saints and martyrs.

This small document, called the New Testament, which contains so many strong and encouraging teachings, is a testimony to the faith and strength of Christianity through all the ages. One critical point is that the New Testament has preserved the ever-pressing call of humanity to “Repent for the kingdom of God is near.” This call to the world that God has come through Jesus Christ for the purpose of saving every person is “Good News,” indeed. In addition, the New Testament has been the tried and true standard for God’s people in matters of faith, and it is an asset in one’s coming to know and love the Almighty God. As we take this message to the world, let us realize that this message is the message of hope for a disenfranchised world looking for purpose in people’s lives. 

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# It Looks Greek to Me

David R. Kenney

The expression, “It looks Greek to me,” is an idiom that refers to something written (or spoken) that is not understandable to the recipient. It is a common expression. However, one wonders if people recall its origin. This idiom is found in Shakespeare’s famous work, *Julius Caesar*. I recently recommended that my class read *Julius Caesar* since it contains some of the great lines we often use but do not realize their origin. One may use the expression, “It looks Greek to me,” but an astute responder might reply, “What kind of Greek?” While the Greek language has been around for centuries, the language has gone through significant changes over time.

For example, the Greek poet Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are believed to have been written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., although the oldest copy we have dates to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. These two works are among the oldest Greek writings in existence. The type of Greek in Homer’s day is sometimes called Classical Greek (1000–330 B.C.), but there were other types of Greek prior to Homer’s day. Another significant Greek language period is sometimes called Hellenistic Greek (or Koine Greek). This form of Greek was spread worldwide by the conquests of Alexander the Great. This was the universal and common Greek (the word *koine* means common) from 330 B.C. to A.D. 330. There were other forms of Greek to follow the Hellenistic Greek, such as Byzantine Greek (330 B.C.–A.D.1453). The Greek spoken today, or Modern Greek, has been used since A.D. 1453, but it differs from the versions of Greek of prior periods.

Scholars at one time struggled with the type of Koine Greek in the New Testament. In fact, one scholar actually stated the New Testament was written in “Holy Ghost Greek” because it was so distinct from the other writings in Koine Greek. Not everyone agreed with this, but still scholars thought Koine Greek of the New Testament was distinctively rare. Then, the archaeologist’s shovel and additional discoveries brought clarity. It was discovered that Koine Greek of the New Testament was the

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conversational type of the period (contrasted with the Vulgar and Literary) as seen in its presence on recipes, contracts and other documents. For example, documents found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (some of which were not religious writings) helped confirm that Koine Greek was not as obscure as prior scholars thought. These discoveries shifted the debate from the uniqueness of the Koine Greek of the New Testament. The New Testament was written to be read by as many people as possible, and Koine Greek was a universal language of the period to accomplish this goal. We can see a comparison in our English of today compared to the English of the 19th century, or our everyday writing and speaking contrasted with legal contracts drafted by attorneys. Remember, today something may be common, but tomorrow may be another matter!

God scattered the world by confusing languages at the tower of Babel, so the power of words to divide or to unite is not to be underestimated. Words are the vehicle of thought! How can one truly understand the thought without understanding the words supporting that thought? I totally agree with Basil Overton's assessment: "I believe one can become a Christian, live the Christian life and go to heaven, if he never knows a word of Greek. But there is personal satisfaction in gaining insights from the study of Greek." Jesus commanded, "***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature***" (Mark 16:15 NKJV). I believe God providentially provided the Koine Greek language as a vehicle to help us fulfill that command. 

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**David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA.**

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## Salvation

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# Where Were You at 4:30?

Daren Schroeder

The last thing I anticipated this past Wednesday was an earthquake! Each of us were going about the routines of our day, and then, very unexpectedly, the earth quaked. Of course, we are grateful that it was rather mild, but it does make us think.

It makes me think of how the Lord will come in a similar manner... unexpectedly. Folks will be going through their normal routines, and suddenly the Lord will appear in the sky for all to behold Him. ***“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen”*** (Revelation 1:7).

In one sense, it is not particularly significant where we are when that day occurs. It would not make a difference whether we are at work, at the market or at home asleep. In another sense, ***our souls depend on where we are***. Paul said in Ephesians 1:7 that redemption is ***“in him”*** (Jesus Christ). Those who are not in Him (and faithful) will be in terror on that day. Those who are abiding in Christ are purchased (or “redeemed”) by the blood of Jesus. ***“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...’”*** (Revelation 5:9).

Like an earthquake, the Second Coming of Jesus will be a surprise in that it will occur at an unexpected moment. However, there is an eternity of difference between being ***surprised*** and being ***prepared***. May each of us have our lamps trimmed and ready (Matthew 25:1-13)! 

Daren Schroeder is the minister of the Godley, Texas church of Christ, USA.

## Salvation

# *Emphasis on the Plan of Salvation*

Eddie Cooper

During invitations offered today, preachers often say, “Let us know if there is a way that we can help you” or “If you have a need, let us know.” How are people being informed in our assemblies about the help that can come? What needs do those in the assembly have, and what does the recipient have to do? What about the plan God has for salvation? What application do we make to those who have the need of salvation? How are people able to reason about needs versus salvation if they don’t hear what to do? Their need is salvation. In our sermons and teaching, we may take some things for granted that we feel others should know.



When I was a teenager, preachers would place on a blackboard or on transparencies, charts with these letters: H+B+R+C+B = Salvation. It went like this: **Hear** the Word (Romans 10:17), **Believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), **Repent** for sins (Acts 3:19), **Confess** faith in Jesus Christ as God’s Son (Romans 10:9,10) and be **Baptized** for the remission of sins

## Salvation

(Acts 2:38). Nowadays instead, the ‘plan of salvation’ frequently has been reduced to, “Hear the Gospel and believe it,” and then, the other items in the plan may be mentioned. That is okay, provided all in our audiences understand what the Gospel is all about. Do we believe the average person knows what we are talking about? I’m not sure they do, unless we have explained it to them.

When one believes the Word, what does that involve? What is one to believe? Romans 10:17 shows that the Word of God is the only way faith comes. Is it faith in the Word of God? *“Faith comes by hearing the Word.”* However, is hearing the Word and believing the Word of God, the Bible, all that one is to believe in regard to one’s salvation? There are many who believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but what is there in the Bible that is so significant in regard to salvation?

A great part of God’s instructions involves belief in Christ (John 8:24). Maybe there are many who believe things **about Jesus**, but they **do not know Him**. Let me illustrate. The only way we can know about Christ is through the Word of God. There are those who do not believe in Jesus. What does **belief in Jesus** have to do with our salvation? Everything!

Our Lord said, *“Except, or unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.”* It seems to me that when we offer the invitation of our Lord, we need to mention that we are to believe in Jesus as the Son of God so that we can confess our faith in Him (Romans 10:9-10). I realize that hearing the Gospel would involve truths about Jesus, but do people understand what we mean by “hearing the Gospel”? I’m sure you realize that we are to believe the Word of God and obey it, but does that adequately teach a person what one needs to do to be saved? †

**Eddie Cooper is a Gospel preacher who resides in South Charleston, West Virginia, USA.**

[Editor’s Note: I, too, have observed that for years now the plan of salvation or invitation following sermons in many of our assemblies either has been eliminated altogether or reduced to a simplicity that is ineffective in instructing anyone about how to become a Christian. Extending an invitation following a religious discourse (i.e., sermon, devotional, etc.) is a matter of human judgment—a good practice, we think. However, one might as well not put forth some sort of invitation at all if it lacks an outline of the plan salvation. An invitation is more than merely a mechanical device by which a speaker signals the end to his homily and relinquishes the attention of the congregation to another phase of worship. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

## Salvation

# Where in the Bible Will I Find a Second Chance to Be Saved?

Gary Colley



Just as there must have been those who cried out to Noah after the door of the Ark was shut and the water began to rise, no doubt, also, there will be those who will desire just one more day, hour or minute when the Judgment Day arrives!

Things of importance should be taken care of immediately when we know the right course. Procrastination or putting off our obedience to the

## Salvation

Gospel will have eternal consequences (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)! All men have a choice to make between the Lord's church and the world, right and wrong, good and evil, the *"narrow way"* and the *"broad way"* (Matthew 7:13-14). Yes, **all men have a choice, but none will have a second chance!** *"Now is the day of salvation"* is the message, while, also, the apostle Paul exhorted all to not *"receive the grace of God in vain"* (2 Corinthians 6:1-2). The writer of Hebrews said, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"* (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Peter wrote to give the events of the sudden, unexpected appearance of Christ in these words. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:9-10).

Jesus said, *"And these [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matthew 25:46). All of these verses emphasize the importance of preparation "in this life." **There is no indication in the Bible that there will be a second chance, a place called purgatory or that after death we can escape from Hell into Heaven.**

Paul wrote, *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:11-12). Obey today (Hebrews 5:8-9)! 

Gary Colley is a Gospel preacher residing in metropolitan Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

*"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27 NKJV). *"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us"* (Luke 16:26).

# Verse Search



## 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

Jerry Bates

1. What was the gift that Paul declared one should pursue? (v. 1)
2. To whom do those who speak in tongues speak? (v. 2)
3. To whom do those who prophesy speak? (v. 3)
4. Why is the gift of prophecy greater than the gift of tongues? (v. 5)
5. Is there any profit in speaking in tongues? (v. 6)
6. What illustration does Paul use to prove the above point? (v. 7).
7. If no one understands what one says, then what is that person really doing? (v. 9)
8. “There are so many kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ in the world, and none of them is without \_\_\_\_\_.” (v. 10)
9. In what should a person be seeking to excel? (v. 12)
10. If one prays in a tongue, what is unfruitful? (v. 14)
11. Paul says that a person should pray and sing with the \_\_\_\_\_ and with \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 15)
12. If one only blesses with the Spirit, why cannot anyone else say amen to that (i.e., say he agrees with him)? (v. 16)
13. Paul declared that he would rather speak \_\_\_\_\_ words with understanding than \_\_\_\_\_ words in a tongue? (v. 18)

(See the back cover for answers)

## Verse Search

1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? 7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? 8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? 9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. 11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. 12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**NOTES:** This section is speaking about the abuses of speaking in tongues (languages with which either the speaker or the audience was unfamiliar). While speaking in a tongue is good, Paul said, prophesying is much better, because others can understand what you are saying. One should be seeking to edify the church, and that can only occur if people understand what one says. Therefore, if one speaks in a tongue, he should only do it if someone can interpret what is spoken.

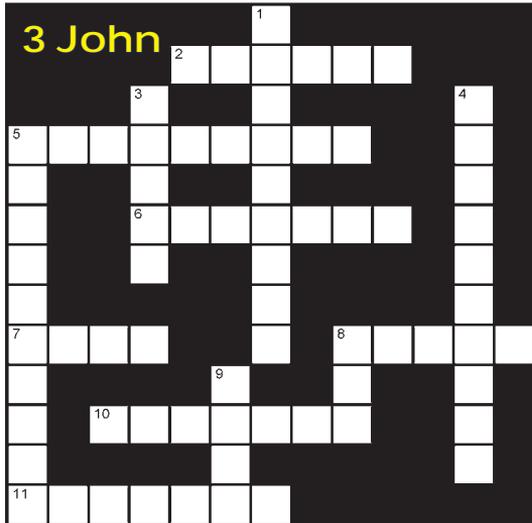


# Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

## Across

2. In what did John pray for Gaius to prosper? (v. 2)
5. Who had a good testimony in the church? (v. 12)
6. Where did Gaius live? (1 Corinthians 1:2, 14)
7. What are we not to imitate? (v. 11 )
8. To whom was 3 John written? (v. 1)
10. What did John call Gaius? (v. 1)
11. When did John hope to see Gaius? (v. 14)



## Down

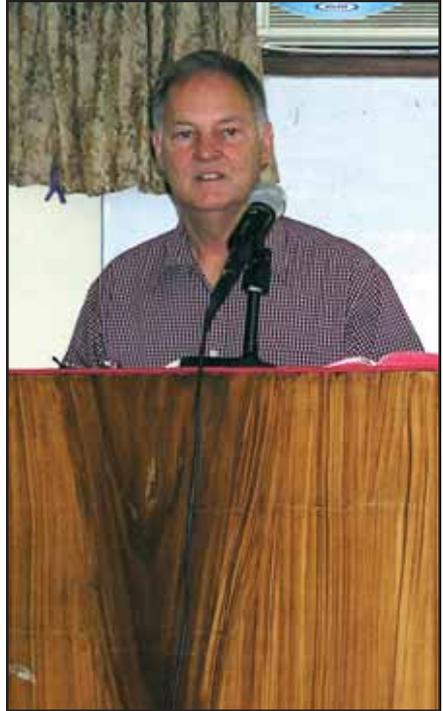
1. Diotrefes used what kind of words? (v. 10)
3. In closing, what did John desire for the church? (v. 14)
4. How did Gaius treat brethren and strangers? (v. 5)
5. Who loved having preeminence? (v. 9)
8. Of whom are we if we do good? (v. 11)
9. What was the 2nd thing John prayed for Gaius? (v. 2)

# The Work of an Evangelist

Wayne Barrier

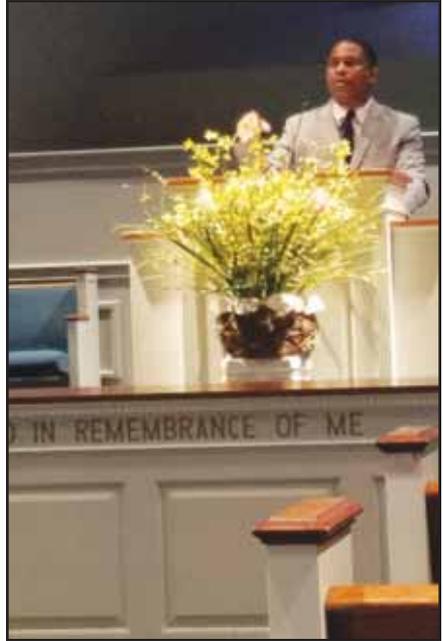
The apostle Paul charged Timothy to “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2 Timothy 4:5). What is the work of an evangelist? A short answer can be found by reading 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5.

*But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All*



## The Church

*Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (NKJV)*



If you desire to do the work of an evangelist, you should (1) model your life and work using the apostle Paul as a guide, (2) be willing to suffer persecutions and afflictions, (3) know the Holy Scriptures, (4) preach the Word, (5) be capable of responding to opportunities at *all* times, (6) convince, rebuke and exhort with patience, and (7) be alert to recognize needs, opportunities, false teaching and teachers.

We need more evangelists. This ministry is especially rewarding and satisfying. 

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA and does mission work in several countries.

## The Church

# Christ and His Church Are Inseparable

Sunny David

A modern dictionary defines the word “church” as, “A building where Christians go to worship.” Most people have an unscriptural idea concerning the church, as a material building made of brick, mortar and stones. The word “church,” however, is never used in the New Testament of the Bible to convey such a meaning. The English word “church” is a translation of the Greek word “ekklesia,” which Christ actually used in Matthew 16:18 when He had promised to build His church. The Greek word “ekklesia” means, “the body of citizens or the assembly of a select people.” When the Bible was translated from Greek into Latin language in the second century A.D., the Greek word “ekklesia” was translated in Latin as “chirche.” In the Roman world, the word “chirche” was used for a religious building or a place of worship. Later, John Wycliffe in his English translation of the Bible, in 1380-84, anglicized the word “chirche” and rendered it as “church.”

The Bible meaning of the church, however, has never changed. The Bible still speaks of the church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23) and says, **“He is the head of the body, the church”** (Colossians 1:18). The church is also spoken of as the **“house of God”** (1 Timothy 3:15), and 1 Peter 2:5 says, Christians are living stones which make up the house of God. To Christians at Corinth the apostle Paul wrote, **“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually”** (1 Corinthians 12:27). An-



## The Church

other striking point concerning Christ and His church or His body is found in Ephesians 5:23, where it says, *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”*

Christ is the Savior of His spiritual body, the church, over which he rules as her Head. That means that He and only He has the divine authority to legislate for the church. Again, in Ephesians 5:25, we read that Christ loved the church so much that He *“gave Himself for Her.”* Then in Acts 20:28, we read about the church that *“He purchased with His own blood.”* The Bible certainly depicts the close affinity between Christ and His church. To belong to Christ is to belong to His church. One cannot have Christ and reject His church. **Christ and His church are inseparable!**

Unless we have a fuller concept of the church that Christ established than to liken it to a literal meetinghouse, then we have missed the true meaning of the church of the Bible. Such expressions, therefore, as “going to church,” “what a beautiful church,” “they are building a beautiful church” and many other such expressions show a lack of understanding of the nature of the church that Christ established.

The church that Christ built and purchased with His own blood, of which He is the Head and the Savior, does not consist of the various denominations found on earth today. New Testament Christianity is undenominational. The notion that thousands of denominational bodies, wearing different names, following different doctrines and patterns of worship, are the one church or the body of Christ is totally wrong. The body of Christ, His church, is not composed of many different denominational bodies that exist on earth today. Christ, according to His promise, established His church in the city of Jerusalem, on the first day of Pentecost following His death, burial and resurrection in A.D. 33 (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:37-47), hundreds of years before Roman Catholicism and various Protestant churches came into existence. All of denominationalism and sectarian division is of human invention. This is not the *“one body”* of which we read in Ephesians 4:4. No one has the right to twist the Scriptures to say that “there are many bodies” when the Bible explicitly says there is but only *“one body.”* Jesus had prayed that His followers might all be one (John 17:21), not divided

# The Church

into hundreds of denominational bodies.

**The church is a spiritual body housing all the saved. The church of which the Bible speaks can be positively identified. Its unique marks of identification and doctrinal features are very distinct, being plainly set forth in the New Testament. Its divine makeup can be easily distinguished from all denominational and sectarian bodies of human origin. Christ built only one church. He knew that all people could be saved in that one church. Therefore, He built only one, and Scripture says that He adds to the church daily those who are being saved (Acts 2:47).**

No one, therefore, can *join* the church of Christ by his or her own choice. Wherever people today obey the Bible's teachings explicitly, the Lord's church exists. If people anywhere today do what men did in the first century, according to the instructions of the Scriptures (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16), they will be exactly what they were in the first century who did the same things. They were **Christians only** (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16) and were members of the church of Christ (Romans 16:16). †

[Editor's Note: First, as a young man, I left Catholicism into which I was born, choosing rather to search for the one, true church. Second, the word "church," meaning an assembly, is used in three senses in the New Testament: (1) an assembly of Christians for the purpose of worship (1 Corinthians 14:4-5, 12, 19, 28, 35), (2) the local assembly of Christians (1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 14:23; 16:19), (3) the universal assembly of Christians—spanning terrestrial (geography) and celestial (spiritual realm dismissive to time and material existence) expanses (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 12:28). In a biblical and scriptural sense, the church is comprised of the children of God—Christians. Only in a secondary and an accommodating way might one refer to a meetinghouse as the church, and then, such language obscures the biblical and the scriptural use of "church." ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord's church.

## Kenney's Pennies

*"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends"* (Proverbs 17:9 NKJV). So true. Great friendship advice!

David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA.

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# Doctrine To Live By

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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FASTING?

J.J. Turner, Ph.D.

Did you hear about the conversation where fasting was the subject and one person said, “I fast; I run to food as fast as I can”?

When you hear the word “fasting” what comes to mind? Some may think of it as a religious practice that they condemn; some may think of it with questions, like, “What is it?” Some may think of a medical requirement before taking certain tests, and others may wonder why there are examples of it in the Bible but it is not practiced today. What do you think when you hear the word?

**What is fasting?** The English (verb) is defined by the dictionary as “A voluntary or willingness to abstain from some or all food, drink, or both for a period of time; to reduce one’s intake; the period of abstinence may range from hours, days, weeks, and months...usually fasting for spiritual or religious purposes is based on desires and perceived needs to overcome a weakness, trial, clarify issues, and to be pleasing to God.” When viewed in a physiological category, fasting usually refers to the metabolic status of a person who has not eaten overnight, etc.

We have no problem in obeying the doctor’s orders to fast, but when it comes to entertaining thoughts related to spiritual and personal issues, there seems to be a reluctance or a refusal to engage in fasting. A frequent answer is, “Well, we aren’t commanded to do so.” Another observer may say, “Well, we have numerous examples in the Bible of fasting, even in the New Testament; and we say we need to follow approved examples—why don’t we?” Great questions.

When was the last time you heard a sermon on fasting or discussed it in a Bible class? How many articles have you read in the past year related to fasting? How many books do you have in your library about fasting, written by members of the Lord’s church? I have only two books, **Prayer and Fasting** (1978) and **Is Fasting for Today?** (1980), Dr. Albert G. Lemmons.

### **EXAMPLES OF FASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:**

After the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost, we have several biblical accounts of fasting in the history of the early church:

## Doctrine To Live By

Luke 2:37. Anna, a prophetess: “[A]nd this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

Matthew 9:14. “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’”

Acts 13:1-12. In this context, there is opposition to the preaching and the ministry of the Word and the appointing of messengers as part of the solution. In verses 2 and 3, we see the solution involved prayer and fasting: “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” How frequently do we see this example practiced today?

Acts 14:21-27. In this context, we see the preaching of the Gospel and the appointment of elders in churches. In verse 23 we read, “So when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Acts 27:33. “And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you have waited without food, and eaten nothing.’” This verse is in the context of a group of 276 (verse 37) in a storm and facing being shipwrecked. Thus, the absence of eating related to physical and survival issues.

### **SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS OF FASTING**

Fasting for spiritual reasons is as unique as each person. Each person will have his or her own personal reasons to seek the blessings of fasting for a specific spiritual reason or blessing. There will also be spiritual fasts that involve several persons committed to a cause, as well as an entire congregation praying and fasting about a common goal, etc. We must be careful not to think that fasting for spiritual reasons is not connected in a holistic way to our entire physical, mental and emotional well-being; it is.

Since spiritual fasting is personal, and there isn’t a “one-size-fits-everyone” approach and a set of equal benefits, there are some “common blessings and benefits” all seem to gain in one way or another. In my fasting, and talking with others who have fasted, these are common factors:

## Doctrine To Live By

**Fasting for a spiritual purpose is a very personal thing; it is a focus of a Christian's faith.** It relates to self and personal needs, challenges and changes. It is not an overt display of faith, spirituality or advertisement of commitment. Jesus rebuked such displays. Fasting is a practice governed by humility (Philippians 2:4-8).

**Fasting is usually a commitment to a specific cause, need or goal.** A Christian may fast relative to going on a mission trip, giving an extra sum of money, volunteering for a ministry, etc. Years ago, there was a brotherhood program promoted as "Miss A Meal" and give the sum to evangelism and mission work. It was promoted by Action, a brotherhood newspaper.

**Fasting is usually entered into based on the awareness of one's vocational, social and issues related to health.** Since fasting is a choice, not a do-or-die issue, common sense must be exercised.

**Fasting involves the type of fast,** i.e. the kind of food, drink, activities, etc. as well as the potential duration, e.g. one meal, one day, several days, a week; one physical activity or habit, etc. It is a specific goal.

**Fasting, once the initial feelings of hunger subside, brings the mind into a state of deeper clarity.** It's like the cobwebs have been removed and one can see and feel things differently in a more positive and beneficial way. It has what may be called a "cleansing effect of the soul."

As strange as it may sound, fasting usually provides a new surge of energy and optimism for life and commitment to the Lord and ministry, as well as involvement in other activities.

**Fasting is a booster, clarifier and renewal of one's faith** to previous as well as to new commitments. It activates new attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

There are many additional blessings and benefits to be derived by planned and well executed periods of fasting. Do yourself a favor and continue to study additional blessings. 

Dr. J.J. Turner works with the church of Christ in McDonough, Georgia, U.S.A. For information about books and projects for Christians, go to: [worldbibleinstitute.com](http://worldbibleinstitute.com) and [jeremiahinstitute.com](http://jeremiahinstitute.com).

## Doctrine To Live By

### Paradoxes of Christianity:

# *Losing Through Saving/ Finding Through Losing*

## Part 2

Shane Fisher

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it  
(Matthew 16:25).

**You are *losing* through *saving* when you give yourself over to the world's view of false religion such as:**

**I Pluralism should be embraced.** This is the view that all religions are equal and valid, such as Islam, Hinduism, etc. However, Jesus stated that He is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12).

**II Universalism ought to be accepted.** This is the view that everyone is going to be saved in the end, yet this view contradicts many passages of Scripture.

**III Denominationalism ought to be accepted and fellowshiped.** This is the view that all manmade denominations come under the “umbrella” of Christianity and are equally valid and true.

**IV Being a good person will give you eternal life.** You would be greatly surprised at how many people believe in this. Some would say about “John” who just passed away: “Well, John wasn’t a ‘churchgoer,’ but he lived a good life. He was a good father and a good husband. He took care of his family. He did good deeds in the community. He never broke the law or went to jail, so he is in Heaven now.” The list could go on and on about how good someone was, yet totally miss the fact that every one of us who is of an accountable age has sinned against the Creator and deserves to be punished eternally (1 John 3:4; Matthew 25:46).

## Doctrine To Live By

However, you are *finding* through *losing* when you give yourself over to God's view of true religion.

**I Exclusivism is the nature of truth** (John 14:5-6).

**II Not everyone is going to be saved** (Matthew 7:13-14,21-23).

**III Denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament.** Most people in denominations would gladly agree and accept that *pluralism* is false, and most of them would agree that *universalism* is false. Yet, it is very strange that they are not willing to see that most of what they teach, including their organization, is foreign to the New Testament. Think about the history of the Book of Acts where the church had its beginning in Jerusalem in Acts 2. **Was the church a denomination?** Did it split up into different factions wearing various names and abiding by different manmade creeds? What about the congregations that Paul started while on his missionary journeys throughout Acts? Did he establish a different denomination here and there? Did he start a Baptist church in Lystra while establishing the Catholic church in Derbe? What about the seven congregations in Asia Minor that are mentioned in Revelation? Were they seven different denominations? Who would believe it? Yet, if you have the denominational mind-set, then you are of the persuasion that all churches are equal and valid. This is a foreign concept to the New Testament. **Let us be Christians only, destroy the denominational barriers and go back to the Bible to the one church that Jesus purchased with His own blood** (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4).

**IV Trusting and obeying the gospel and living faithfully unto God will give you eternal life.** We must seek the One who can save us from our sins! He is the only way of salvation! We must trust what He has said and that faith will bring forth the obedience God requires (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). We have to realize that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:4-10). We must reach out *to receive God's gift* on His terms. We are not *earning* our salvation! We must also live lives that will produce good works, which is what a living faith does (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26).

I must be willing to lose myself for Jesus' sake to the world's view

## Doctrine To Live By

of false religions that I may find the truth by going to the Bible where it speaks of the one non-denominational church of which Jesus is the Builder, the church that started two thousand years ago (Matthew 16:18).

**You are *losing* through *saving* when you give yourself over to the world's view of money and possessions.**

**I The world views covetousness and greed as virtues.** Yet, Matthew 16:26 states, *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Here is another paradox of Jesus that if someone gains *everything* in the world, making those things his idol, he will lose his soul for all eternity in Hell. The rich young ruler was a person who had an idol in his heart that Jesus wanted him to let go, but he would not (Mark 10:21-25).

**II The world views sacrificial giving as foolish.**

**III The world believes that the power to make wealth comes from one's own abilities and cunning.**

**IV The world views stewardship as something that is important only if it adds to one's riches, not because integrity is the basis for whatever is done.**

**However, you are *finding* through *losing* when you give yourself over to God's view of money and possessions.**

**I God views giving as virtuous** (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

**II God views sacrificial giving as wise** because the person comes to know that the secret to true happiness is to give, as we are imitating the great Giver Himself who bountifully blesses us (2 Corinthians 9:10-14; James 1:17).

**III The power to make wealth actually comes from God** (Deuteronomy 8:18).

**IV God views stewardship as one of the great principles that we need to learn** (Matthew 25:14-30).

If I lay up and save my treasures here in this corrupt world, I will lose everything at the Judgment. However, if I lay up my treasures in Heaven, I will have gained everything that is truly meaningful for all of eternity (Matthew 6:19-20)! 

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# Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

(Hebrews 2:2-3; Ephesians 3:1-4; Galatians 1:11-12)

For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed to us by those who heard Him.**

**I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),**

**But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

## **Was the Apostle Paul the writer of Hebrews?**

It is true that the apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned much of the New Testament. It is also true that the scholarliness and spiritual depth of Hebrews is much like Paul's writings. However, there are differences:

- In the books that Paul wrote to the various churches, he identified himself as the writer. No identification is given in Hebrews.

- Paul very clearly stated that what he was writing to the churches was the message given to him directly, through revelation from Jesus Christ.

- The writer of Hebrews said that what he was writing concerning salvation had been first spoken by the Lord, and was "*confirmed to us by those who heard Him.*" He was stating clearly that the initial revelation concerning salvation had not been given to him directly but had come from the lips of those who heard Christ. The Book of Hebrews was inspired by the Holy Spirit, as was all of the Bible, but the author's first knowledge of salvation came from others. Apollos, well educated and taught by others, seems a possible fit as author.

# The Women Shared the Good News

Paul Holland

*Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (Luke 24:1-6)*

Let’s meditate on these significant points from this text. The women did what would have been natural to do, but also what the angels told them to do: **“Go tell the disciples about the resurrection!”** That’s what the women did.

Can you imagine how that conversation went? I can see it now—you know how women talk about these kinds of things! They would have given all the details, *all the details!* They would have been interrupting each other, each one filling in details or sharing her own emotions. They would have had tears in their eyes, streaming down their cheeks, perhaps even laughing at such a wonderful event having happened.

The men, however, react the way men tend to react, at least like I would. It seems like the more excited and emotional Rachel, my wife, is about something, the more stoic I get. It’s almost as if my brain is trying to balance out Rachel’s emotions. So, the men felt like this message the women were sharing was “nonsense.” To quote Ebenezer Scrooge, the word means “humbug!” That’s how the apostles, that’s how the men, reacted to the women’s telling them the good news of the Gospel.

Isn’t that how so many people respond today when we tell them about Christianity—about the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ and the beauty of the church of Christ? Too many people think it’s all nonsense! “Humbug” our friends respond. Like the apostles, they do not believe.

However, Peter—the one who had three times denied with swearing

## Christianity In Action

and oaths that he knew Jesus—got up and ran to the tomb. Peter needed forgiveness. He had sinned against his best friend, the Man who had never done anything wrong to anybody. If any of the disciples had been mourning and weeping, wailing and lamenting on that fateful Saturday, it was Peter. Don't you think when Peter ran to the tomb that he was running toward forgiveness? Don't you think Peter was thinking, "If this is true, I'm going to tell Jesus, 'I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry!'" Peter wasn't just running toward an empty tomb. He was running to forgiveness.

Two thousand years later, you and I still marvel at the resurrection of Christ. We marvel that sin is so awful that it caused the death of Jesus Christ. Not just that it caused His death historically through the hands of the Romans and the Jews, but sin caused Jesus' death theologically because **it was the only way God could forgive our sins!**

We marvel at the resurrection that shows the wisdom of God. What man could have come up with a plan to provide forgiveness of sins that included the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection? The whole plan argues for the truthfulness of Christianity. Man could not have imagined such a way.

We marvel at the resurrection because it shows the love of God and the grace of God. It shows that we can have forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. This same man, Peter, stood up on the day of Pentecost and told the Jews who crucified Jesus that the resurrection means that we can have forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ. You don't have to fear death, and you don't have to fear the consequences of sins, because Jesus Christ was resurrected! He lives today!

I tell you today what Peter told his audience to do to receive the forgiveness of sins through the power of the blood of the resurrected Christ. ***"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ and you will receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit"*** (Acts 2:38).

We marvel, today, at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It allows us to anticipate death joyfully! 

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## Christianity In Action

# *In the Lord's Army*

Rodney Nulph

The church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not for the faint of heart. Religion, especially in today's world, is viewed as a passive way of life. However, God's Book, the Bible, paints a far different picture of what Christians are to be. One of my favorite analogies that God uses for His people is the parallel to a soldier. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures, God placed serious emphasis on **the militancy of His church**. Someone has correctly said that the only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing. Surely, that is why God placed such emphasis on His people to be **militant and not passive**. Therefore, each Christian is enrolled in the Lord's army and, as such, has certain responsibilities. Let us scripturally consider some of the responsibilities that each Christian has in the Lord's army.

Firstly, the Lord's Army is a *choice*. Nearing the end of his life, Joshua spoke of the individual choice in serving God, "...*choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Joshua 24:15). Jesus closed the Revelation by emphasizing this choice, "...*And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*" (*Revelation 22:17b*). In the Lord's army, there is no "drafting." There are no soldiers in the His army that are there by accident! **It is a personal, conscious choice to enlist in the Lord's army**. While God would prefer all men to enlist, each person has a choice!

Secondly, the Lord's Army has a *Captain*. Sadly, some enlist and believe that they still have some control. **In the Lord's army, Jesus Christ is the only Captain!** He directs and the soldiers follow (Matthew 16:24). The writer of Hebrews made it quite clear who is in charge (Hebrews 2:10; cf. 2 Chronicles 13:12). As the Captain, Jesus is the only Lord and King (1 Timothy 6:15) and the only Head (Colossians 1:18). **Soldiers in the Lord's army faithfully and willingly submit to Him** (James 4:7).

Thirdly, the Lord's Army follows *commands*. In the same way that a physical army must follow commands, the spiritual army of God has

## Christianity In Action

commands to obey as well. Those commands are clearly outlined in the *soldier's handbook* (2 Timothy 3:15-17). **When a soldier fails to obey the commands of the Captain, he is in serious trouble!** Soldiers in the Lord's army do not seek wisdom and commands from anyone other than their Captain by His authority (Matthew 28:18-20). "I think so's," "my opinions" and "if I were the captain" do not have any place among Christian soldiers. **We must faithfully and willingly trust, obey and serve the commands we have been given!**

Lastly, the Lord's Army does not *consort* with the enemy. **We are in a serious battle!** There is a real enemy who is working daily to win this war (1 Peter 5:8). As such, **there is no room for compromise.** We must stand firm and not consort or fraternize with the enemy in any way (2 John 9-11). While there are other soldiers who have deserted the ranks (2 Thessalonians 3:6), we must not follow in their desertion! The battle belongs to those who do not conform to this ungodly world (Romans 12:1-2).

Dear Friends, the battle rages on. Each person who has enlisted in the Lord's army has the responsibility to continue in the fight. If necessary, we must be willing to die for this wonderful cause (Revelation 2:10). As soldiers, while we are engaged in this battle upon the earth, we never get a *leave of absence* (Acts 2:42). However, to those who make the right *choice* to serve the one true *Captain*, daily following His *commands* and determined not to *consort* with the enemy, there is a great, eternal victory prepared (John 14:1-4). Little wonder why Paul was so confident at the end of his enlistment to write, ***"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to me in that day: and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing"*** (2 Timothy 4:7-8). The inspired admonition sounds forth today as loud as ever, ***"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"*** (1 Corinthians 15:58). Thank God! 

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# Satan Is Working Hard on Saturday

Marilyn LaSrape

Satan is working hard on Saturday so that Sunday will be a “wrap!” In order to make sure that Sunday is a “wrap”—in vain as far as God is considered—Satan has a plan; make no mistake about it. Perhaps he works his scheming, devious, soul-destroying plan harder on Saturday than any other day of the week. It is not by chance that he harasses us constantly but by calculated design. His plan is simple: make sure that the highest and dearest of God’s creation is in Hell with him eternally! Consider the following smooth and ever so subtle tactics that Satan uses on Saturdays to make Sundays an extension of our weekends.

- You will go to Sunday services, but you will sleep through Bible class and worship because you stayed up too late Saturday and you just can’t keep your eyes open. **Sunday is a “wrap!”**
- You will go to Sunday services, but your mind is totally distracted because of things that drained your time, energy and influence—not to mention the drain on your money on Saturday. **Sunday is a “wrap!”**
- You do not go to Sunday services; God is getting in your way. After all, Sunday is your only day to “rest” because you have worked hard on the job that week. **Sunday is a “wrap!”**
- You do not go to Sunday services because you make a good salary and you must provide for your family. The Bible does say if you do not provide for your own household you are worse than an unbeliever—doesn’t it? **Sunday is a “wrap!”**
- You let the children stay up too late or you kept them out too long past their bedtime on Saturday, and they were completely uncooperative the next morning. **Sunday is a “wrap!”**

Satan uses these temptations and countless others to offer us choices

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and decisions that seem perfectly harmless and legitimate—not honoring God with our presence and attention in worship on Sunday. He talks to us in ways that make sense. He talks to us in ways that appeal to us. The devil dangles something that we desire and makes it appear to be totally innocent and appropriate—with the best part claiming no consequences, penalties, regrets or costs are necessary. Satan comes to us in ways that are not threatening, not challenging and certainly appear to be free of danger and destruction. With a setup like that from the master manipulator, it leaves nothing open to choose except what we desire.

We must be able to see through this fog of lies and deceit. Our precious Savior, Jesus the Christ, defined who the devil is in the absolute in John 8:44. Speaking to some of the self-righteous Jews He said, *“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources [what comes natural to him], for he is a liar and the father of it.”* How liberating it would be for all of us if we could with all gravity and sincerity embrace the truths that Jesus spoke in this **one verse** about our arch enemy! It has been said that the best way to know if the devil is lying is to see if his lips are moving.

You say you are not getting enough rest? The minister may be preaching the truth with all the fervor he can express, but it is useless to those who are sleeping, while Satan is smiling. Worship has an audience of one. How do you worship God in spirit and truth asleep? Take note; Psalm 89:7 reads, *“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him.”*

You say you are totally distracted? **We must make the decisions and choices on Saturday that limit the drains on us physically and mentally that would hinder giving God our best on Sunday.** Also note Psalm 95:1-3, which says, *“Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.”*

You feel like God is getting in your way and you need a day of rest from

## Worship

working that job all week? When this happens, we have completely lost sight of who it is that is giving us these jobs. God gives us six days to do what we feel we must, but the first day belongs to Him because He has said so. Observe Psalm 111:1, which records, *“Praise the LORD! I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.”* Consider also Psalm 149:1 as it reads, *“Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.”*

You say you must work on Sunday to make a good salary to provide for your family, otherwise you are worse than an unbeliever? The more we get, the more we want. Satan is always dangling something through the numerous and various forms of media to convince us we need one more momentary trinket. Observe 1 Timothy 6:9 as it says, *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

You let your children stay up too late or you kept them out too late? Realize somebody is always watching us, being influenced by us and following our example. If we have children, especially those still under our roofs, they are the somebodies that are forever watching and listening. We are telling them 24/7, as it were, what and who matters the most! Psalm 96:7-9 records, *“Give to the LORD, O families of the people, Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him all the earth.”*

Do we look forward to Sunday and worship with the saints? A challenge is extended for the upcoming Saturdays for the remainder of the year, or whatever part we may be blessed to live. Start making notes when you get up on Saturday morning of the people, places and things that will be contending for your time. **If we are not persistently diligent and deliberate in our choices and decisions, Satan will be right there working as hard as he can to make sure that all Sundays are a “wrap”!** †

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Worship

# Why Do We Attend Worship?

Derek Broome



Why do we attend worship? First and foremost, our worship is to Almighty God. He is our Creator, Sustainer and Savior. As the church, we must direct our worship to Him, for He alone is worthy of praise. **The church is not a *place* we go, but instead it is a family to which we belong. It is who we are.**

In John 4:24 it says, *“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* So, as the church, we are to worship God in the ways that He authorized rather than in the ways of man (Matthew 15:9). We are to worship Him in the right frame of mind and for the right reasons. We

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do not gather together to worship just because we are supposed to worship, but instead, we come together because we love the Lord. It is out of that love that we are to offer true and sincere worship so that our worship is never in vain (John 4:23). Our hearts and our minds are to be prepared to worship, and we should always examine ourselves before we worship the Lord our God (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). However, why else do we gather together to worship?

While it is true that our worship is primarily to God, our worship is also very beneficial to one another. In Hebrews 10:24-25 we see the necessity for us to come together to worship as well as the encouragement that can be offered to one another in the assembly. We gather together to worship God and so that we can edify and encourage one another. As we sing, pray, teach, give and gather around the Lord's Table, we collectively offer a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord. In addition, we also offer a bond of unity and a supportive atmosphere to those around us.

I cannot say that I have always worshipped in the right frame of mind, nor can I say that I have always given my best. Yet, as I have grown in my faith, I have grown to love, want and need to be in worship. One of the most frustrating things to hear somebody say after a worship service is that they got nothing out of it. So many people in our world want to be entertained by worship and never want to offer anything up of themselves. The truth about worship is that **one gets out of it what he puts into it**. Maybe we should stop for a second and ask ourselves, "What would our worship be like if everybody worshipped just like me?" I know for myself there are many areas I need to improve. How great would our worship to God be if we all came prepared and focused, ready to give God sincere worship? How much more encouragement could be had? Let us daily strive to live for God, and let us all prepare to worship Him. †

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**The church is not a place we go, but instead it is a family to which we belong. It is who we are.**

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## proverbs 17:22

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**There are a lot of differences between the young and the old. I came up with a few items that distinguish the two groups. You might even want to add to this list.**

\* The young are in a hurry to do it all. The old want it all to slow down.

\* The young are fired up. The old are trying to keep the flame lit.

\* The young want it now. The old are holding out for tomorrow.

\* The young don't want to hear about the good old days. The old shake their heads at these wild and wacky times.

\* The young want to make more money. The old are looking for a cheaper place to buy their prescription medicine.

\* The young's hormones are off the charts. The old are taking hormone pills.

\* The young are climbing the walls. The old are propping up the fat and flab.

**For all those differences and more, the young and old are both human beings subject to the same principles that govern this old world. Sometimes the old, through lumps and dumps, have gotten a better sight of those principles than when they were younger.**

**What does an old man have to say to the young? Here's a few things, for starters:**

\* Be a saver; be a giver.

\* Follow good examples; outstrip your examples' goodness.

\* Save sex for marriage; make marriage the place for sex.

\* The world doesn't owe you a thing; owe no one nothing, except love.

\* Plan your life; today is all you've got.

\* Say something significant; babble with the babies.

\* Be what you claim; admit you're not what you should be.

\* See the little guy, especially your kids; be the little guy.

\* Down is easy and quick; up is the long, hard row.

\* Don't take no for an answer; know when to say no.

**All this in the spirit of Proverbs 1:8-9:** *"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."* A.A. Neale (Forthright.net)



**Waiter:** How do you like your steak, sir?

**Sir:** Like winning an argument with my wife.

**Waiter:** Rare it is.

## proverbs 17:22



A snail hitched a ride with a friendly turtle. As they reached an intersection, another turtle came along and rammed into them!

A cop came and questioned the snail: “What happened here?”

The little snail replied, “I don’t know—it all happened so fast.”



A man went into a bookstore and complained,

“I bought this book from you yesterday, ‘Cowards in History’ and all the pages fell out!”

The sales assistant said, “That’s because it has no spine.”



A male brain and a female brain were for sale at a scientist convention.

Which brain was more expensive?

The male brain was more expensive because it had never been used.



My significant other and I were discussing mistakes we have made in our relationship.

I suggested she should embrace her mistakes.

She then hugged me.



“Oh, I’m so happy to see you,” the little boy said to his grandmother on his dad’s side. “Now maybe mom will do the trick she has been promising us.”

The grandmother was curious. “What trick is that?” she asked.

“I heard her tell daddy,” the little boy answered, “that she would climb the walls if you came to visit us again.”



A terminally ill man woke up in a hospital bed and called for his doctor. “Give it to me straight, doc,” he said. “How long have I got?”

The physician replied that he doubted whether the man would survive the night.

So the man said, “Fetch me my lawyer.”

When the lawyer arrived, the man asked the physician to stand on one side of the bed while the lawyer stood on the other. The man then closed his eyes. After a few minutes, the physician asked him what he was thinking about.

The man replied, “Jesus died with a thief on either side. I thought I’d check out the same way.”



# How Do You Measure Up?

Hear me when I call,  
O God of my righteousness!  
You have relieved me in my distress;  
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

How long, O you sons of men,  
Will you turn my glory to shame?  
How long will you love worthlessness  
And seek falsehood? Selah

But know that the Lord has set apart  
for Himself him who is godly;

The Lord will hear  
when I call to Him.

Be angry, and do not sin.  
Meditate within your heart  
on your bed, and be still. Selah

Offer the sacrifices of  
righteousness,  
And put your trust in the Lord.

Psalm 4:1-5

# “HE AIN’T HEAVY, HE’S MY BROTHER”

John A. Gray

“*Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow...*” (Philippians 4:3). The idea of co-laboring and one-mindedness seems to be what Paul meant when he addressed his brother or sister in Philippi as a “*yokefellow.*” Paul and the yokefellow were harnessed together in service to the Lord, yearning, praying and suffering for the souls of men and women. This person was obviously a close “*companion,*” as some Bible versions have it, but a yokefellow would have been a step beyond that. Companions can support us, pray for us and encourage us, but a yokefellow is **in the trenches with us**. A yokefellow is ready to labor alongside us. A yokefellow feels our pain, suffers when we suffer and rejoices when we rejoice (Romans 12:15). This sharing of life goals is one reason Paul also warned not to become yokefellows with unbelievers. “*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?*” (2 Corinthians 6:14). We will not be pulling in the same direction if yoked with unbelievers. **We have different masters and listen to different voices.**

The origin of the word “*yokefellow*” helps us understand its deeper meaning that goes beyond our English words “companion” or “friend.” A yokefellow is literally “one of two fellows in a yoke.” A yoke was a heavy wooden frame that was fastened across the shoulders of horses or oxen, harnessing them to a wagon, plow or cart. The animals pushed against the yoke as they moved forward, pulling the load behind them. Owners sought to yoke two animals of similar size and ability so they would pull evenly. Mismatched yokefellows resulted in overwork for the larger animal, which carried the greater portion of the load. Yokefellows struggling against each other also resulted in less work being done. A yokefellow must share equally in the common work, i.e., carry his or her share of the load.

It is vitally important that Christians have a yokefellow or two who help carry the load. When Jesus sent out the disciples to minister, He did not send them out alone. He sent them two by two, yokefellows who could

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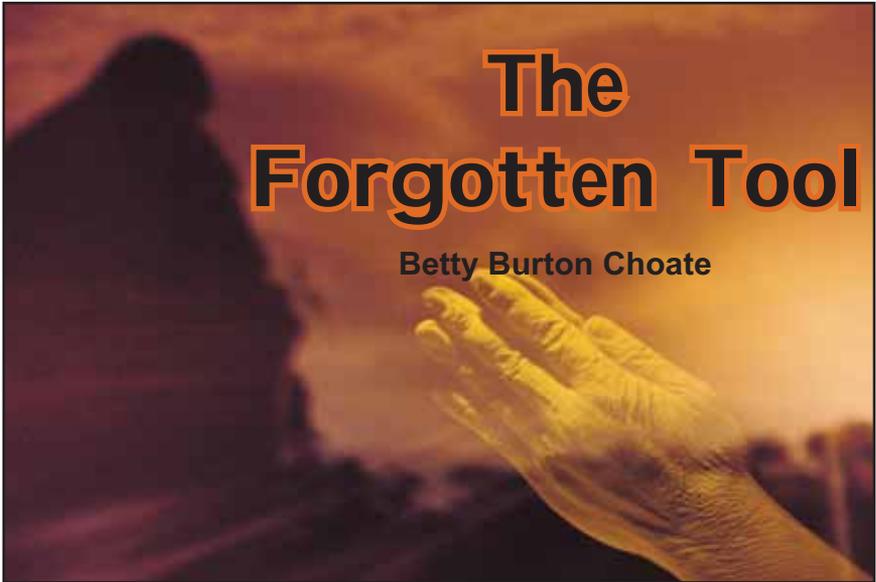


keep each other encouraged and on track (Mark 6:7). When we take the time to cultivate deep spiritual friendships, we find that yokefellows help us fulfill all God has given us to do.

### **“HE AIN’T HEAVY, HE’S MY BROTHER”**

Bob Russell, Bobby Scott

*The road is long with many a winding turn  
That leads us to who knows where, who knows when;  
His welfare is of my concern, no burden is he to bear;  
If I’m laden at all I’m laden with sadness  
That everyone’s heart isn’t filled with the gladness  
Of love for one another.  
We’ll get there for I know  
He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother,  
So on we go:  
He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.✝*



# The Forgotten Tool

Betty Burton Choate

Christians worship. We sing privately and in the public assembly. We pray, we study God's Word, we commune in the Supper, we give. We visit and encourage one another. We have fellowship meals.

Some among us have learned the blessing of using another tool in our spiritual lives. Jesus' words to the disciples, "...*when you fast...*" (Matthew 6:16-18) resonate through the centuries. He said *when*, not *if*. The very wording is an assumption of fact: His followers would fast, so He told them how to behave and how to present themselves to the onlooking world in those times of fasting. They were not to put on an outward show of piety and of great spirituality; instead, their fasting was to be a very personal thing of personal spiritual benefit.

The church as a body, and each of us as individuals, are to gather each first day of the week to worship. By example ("*...on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...*" Acts 20:7) and by command ("*...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" Hebrews 10:25), we are bound to this

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practice. To deliberately fail to assemble with the saints is described as a wilful sin in verse 26.

God, in His great wisdom, has divided our lives, not into ages or years or even months, but into *seven-day weeks*. Can you imagine how difficult it would be if life simply stretched out in front of us with no systematic breaks? The short cycle of days is a tremendous blessing, with the first day being set aside as a time for devotion and worship. Though our worship is directed to God, we are the real beneficiaries, because it should be a sobering time of self-examination.

***“...You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant...”*** (Hebrews 12:22-24).

After the examination, as we come into God’s awesome presence, the very exercise of singing praises to Him lifts our spirits. (Have you noticed that almost every living thing sings?) Singing is one of the “earthly” activities that will also be a part of our existence in that new world, and Zephaniah 3:17 says that even God sings! Singing, therefore, would seem to be embedded in our very nature, and it is a vital part of the communion of our spirit with God.

Obviously, prayer is another avenue of communion. We are allowed to pour out our hearts to our Father, to thank Him for all that He does, and to ask for those things that we need. We are privileged to follow His thoughts as we study His Word and to be guided by His wisdom. We have the opportunity to give to Him, as He challenged in Malachi 3:10: ***“... Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”***

How blessed we are, that among the billions in the world, we know that Jesus died for the sins of mankind, and we have the promise that as we walk every day in His light, His blood continually cleanses us from our personal sins (1 John 1:7). In order to keep both the sacrifice and the cleansing ever-present in our minds, God has given us the weekly memorial of His Son’s death—the focal point of our corporate worship.

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### So, why is fasting not included in worship?

Why is there no Scripture that says we have sinned if we fail to fast? Is fasting a part of the Old Testament law that was abolished at the cross? Is fasting so associated with the hypocrisy of the Jews in Jesus' day that it has fallen into disfavor? Perhaps so, but if so, the loss is ours.

While it is true that fasting is not *commanded*, it does seem to be *assumed*, from Jesus' statement that began, "**When you fast...**!" But why should Christians fast? What is the benefit? Those who have had the privilege of totally withdrawing for a day or for several days from the demands of the world and of the physical body know the answer to those questions. To have experienced time absolutely alone with God, praying, singing, reading and studying His Word, while totally ignoring the physical body, is a spiritual "high" that creates a craving for more such special times. In no other setting is there such single-minded focus on God.

You say, "But we can have the same experience without having to fast." I think not, because part of the experience is the length of time without being interrupted to deal with all the day-to-day needs of the body. Have you noticed how much "food" governs the day's schedule?

As a corporate body, we do enjoy those frequent occasions of fellowship meals together! They are good for us, and I would not discourage the practice. Yet, I would like to suggest that we try having a day of getting together for singing, reading/studying God's Word, fasting and prayer. Or, we might have an all-night occasion, filled with such spiritual focus.

Have you noticed that in our times of fellowship meals, almost without exception the conversation covers politics, the weather, family, sports events and other such topics? However, if we had an all-day or all-night praying and fasting session, such as has been described, I would think that the sole topic would be "God" and our love for Him.

Wouldn't such occasions for the church be powerful tools for deepening the spirituality of each one participating, and wouldn't the family closeness be strengthened through a day or night spent in worship together—without a single moment devoted to food? 

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### 1 Corinthians 6:19 Re-Examined:

# Your Body is a Temple

Wes McAdams

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul asked, *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* The implications of a Christian’s body being a temple of the Holy Spirit are deep and profound. However, this sentiment is also often misapplied. What does it mean for your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit? Does it mean you need to exercise and eat right? Does it mean you shouldn’t get tattoos or piercings? Let’s re-examine this passage in context.

Like most misapplied proof-texts, this passage is often used inconsistently. For instance, I’ve heard Christians say it is wrong for someone to get tattoos or piercings because one’s body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. These folks reason that a Christian should not “deface” the temple of God.

However, the same reasoning never seems to be applied to something more traditional, like a woman having earrings. If it’s wrong to put a hole in your nose, why is it not wrong to pierce your earlobes? If it’s wrong to decorate your skin with ink, then why is it not wrong to decorate yourself by hanging jewelry from your earlobes?

Another popular application is to preach that being healthy (eating good foods, exercising, taking vitamins, etc.) is a proper application of 1 Corinthians 6:19, because healthy people are taking care of the temple of God. Inversely, they reason that overeating or leading a sedentary lifestyle is abusing the temple of God and is a violation of 1 Corinthians 6:19. Of course, those who use this passage in this way tend to make allowances for the unhealthy habits in which they themselves indulge, but not the unhealthy habits of others.

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## The Verse in Context

As always, the proper way to understand a particular verse will always be dependent on the context. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul was not talking about piercings, tattoos, junk food or exercise. Paul was discussing sexual sin and how sexual sin defiles our bodies.

In fact, Paul was explicit that sexual sin is in a category of its own. He wrote, *“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Sex unites the bodies of two individuals. That does not mean they are married, but it means their bodies are united. When bodies are united in a sinful way, it is a sin against their bodies.

Paul taught that the bodies of Christians are holy places—places where heaven and earth are united because of the work of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit. Like the ground on which Moses stood before the burning bush or the space inside the Holy of Holies, one’s body is a holy space. To use that holy space for the purpose of sexual immorality would be like making a sacrifice to an idol in the temple (something that was wrong anywhere but was specifically a sin against the temple when it was done in the temple).

When we grasp this profound reality about our own sanctified bodies, it is a humbling moment. It makes us appreciate the fact that our bodies are something special. The Spirit of God dwells within these bodies, and we are sacred space, filled with the invisible presence of God. As such, every Christian should learn *“how to control his own body in holiness and honor”* (1 Thessalonians 4:4) because our bodies are sacred.

## Limited Application

**As with any passage of Scripture, we should be careful to not go beyond the author’s intended application.** Paul specifically said sexual sin defiles the body in a unique way, so to raise other behaviors to the same level is to ignore Paul’s point about the seriousness and uniqueness of sexual sin.

Furthermore, it is particularly egregious to apply this passage to things

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that are not even inherently sinful. Eating, resting and even putting a hole or ink in your skin is not inherently sinful. Therefore, claiming these things defile the temple of God is going far beyond the point Paul was making.

Furthermore, the inconsistent ways we apply our reasoning and logic on this issue have become judgmental in ways that violate passages like Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 14:3-4, James 4:12. ***“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”*** It would be one thing to apply this passage to other behaviors that are inherently sinful, but it is another thing altogether to apply it to behaviors that may be unwise or culturally unusual but not inherently sinful.

## Not How the Bible Works

All that being said, we shouldn't require a Bible verse for everything, nor should we try to find a Bible verse that answers every question. I don't need a Bible verse to tell me to look both ways before crossing the street. Common sense should tell me it's foolish to cross the street without looking. To try to rip a verse out of context to prove it's a sin to cross without looking cheapens Scripture and insults the intelligence of its readers (in multiple ways).

We have enough health information at our fingertips that one should know what kinds of food are healthy and what kinds of food are not. We should know the benefits of exercise, as well as the consequences of leading a sedentary lifestyle. If someone chooses to get a nose ring or to get a tattoo, we should understand the benefits and consequences of such decisions. It shouldn't take a Bible verse to convince anyone to make healthy choices.

Additionally, because we have a lot of freedom to figure out how to live our lives in ways that glorify God, there are going to be people who make different decisions than other people. They are going to decide to get tasteful tattoos, pierce their noses or eat a reasonable amount of pepperoni pizza. We're just going to have to be okay with that, and others are going to have to be okay with the decisions we make as well. 

**Wes McAdams works with the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas, USA.**

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## The Christian Home

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# *A Lengthened Shadow*

Michael L. King

It is unfortunate that far too many young people waste their early years of development and determination of direction in their lives. Many parents hold their breath while watching their young children grow into adulthood, fearing they will either lose their faith or be killed. Their impulsiveness and living in the moment numb them to the realities of the importance of every season of their lives. It is not fair to them to have to wait until they reach significant age before claiming and benefitting from some of the greatest years of their lives to live for the Lord.

The wise man and writer of Ecclesiastes, warned his readers, particularly those who are young to ***“remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’”*** (Ecclesiastes 12:1). He did not offer many solutions, but he warned regarding the potential waste that can be experienced. During those youthful years, their minds are sharp, and they are filled with passion and lots of energy. Young people’s vision is sharp, their teeth are strong, and their hearing is keen. Additionally, they are courageous and daring, but they will eventually be afraid of high places and terrors they may encounter along the road.

The conclusion Solomon drew is that the life for the youthful person is filled with vanity. Vanity blinds the judgment and obscures the reality of life. The passing years erode many of the pleasures of youth and the prime of life. So, the admonition is that they awaken to their senses and focus their youth so God can be served and honored not only during their mature years but when they are in their prime and have the faculties to give God their best. Great expectations and aspirations need to be heightened during these most formative years so that the greatness of life can be maximized. If man is capable of finding joy, fulfillment and lasting satisfaction in things that are mediocre and mundane, Solomon concluded that life, then, is futile and like ***“chasing the wind”*** (Ecclesiastes 5:16).

It is important to live a balanced and a full life from youthfulness to declining years. Jesus taught His followers to ***“seek first the kingdom of***

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***God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you***” (Matthew 6:33). It appears as if in the days of one’s youth, ***“these things”*** are being sought but seemingly never achieved. If better judgment could be exercised and some of the weightier elements could be discovered earlier, their hearts and lives could be realized, and complete satisfaction could be enjoyed. The second greatest cause of death in the U.S. alone between the ages of 15 and 25 is suicide. It has been reported that suicide in those between the ages of 35 and 64 has increased by 30%. The National Center for Health Statistics recently reported that the U.S. has hit a 30-year high. It has been reported that a global rate of 10.7 per 100,000 population committed suicide in 2015. A cursory view of these figures indicates that these younger years are crucial for establishing a purpose in life and giving life value. The reality is that if a young person is not able to have a foundational worth for living, his or her entire life will be in jeopardy. David said, ***“My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass”*** (Psalm 102:11).

If God is to be meaningful to us when ***“the evil days come”*** (Ecclesiastes 11:8) and when health and physical challenges are upon us, we need to develop that appreciation and assignment of worth to our existence early in life. Solomon seemed to put his finger on the emptiness of man. Those who read can readily see that “The ‘want’ of man is in the form of Jesus. The vacuum is Christ-shaped” (Kidwell).

Churches have a huge obligation for giving definition to youth for both the purpose and the direction that life should take them. When they have imbedded in them that God loves them, needs them and has a plan for them, they can then aim their lives purposefully, start early to seek it and enable it to become a reality.

Every individual needs to understand that he or she did not just happen. All people need to know they are ***“fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well”*** (Psalm 139:14). Knowing this, how could anyone waste or destroy God’s great handiwork? 

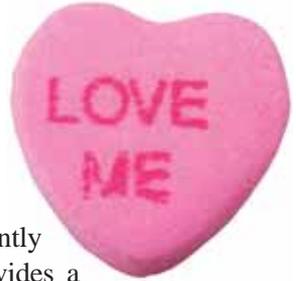
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# True Love Takes Time



Denny Petrillo

Although Song of Solomon 2:7 is frequently misunderstood, when seen in its context, it provides a valuable lesson about love. Here the Shulammite woman was talking to a group of women. These women, like most women of any age, longed for a loving relationship. The Shulammite woman said, in effect, “Don’t rush it.”

In my years of marriage counseling, I have sadly heard a common refrain from numerous wives: “I wish I hadn’t jumped into this so quickly!” For various reasons, they seized the opportunity for marriage (financial security, get away from home, thought she would eventually grow into love, thought this might be her only chance, others thought he was the right man). Yet, after a year or so (sometimes much sooner), she realized that she had made a mistake.

Jesus taught that marriage was for life (Matthew 19:3-6). Once one makes the decision, it is a decision with which one must live. As a matter of fact, He explained later (19:9) that the *only* reason for divorce and remarriage was if one’s mate committed fornication. This teaching led the disciples to say, **“If such is the case, then it is better not to marry!”** What they were saying is, “If you are bound to someone for one’s whole life, a person might think seriously about whether to get married at all!” Jesus noted that not all men can make such a choice. They need to have a wife (1 Corinthians 7:1). The general point of the disciples is a good one. This is far too important a decision to jump into quickly.

The words of the Shulammite are wise words for today. Don’t rush it. Let love take its natural course. If it is true love, it will show itself in time. That way, when the decision is made to marry, you’ll know it was the right decision. 

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# *A Look at Some Complicated Words*

**Jack Gilchrist**

Growing up in the Gilchrist house, oft heard was the phrase, “Use the dictionary.” A request for a definition was met with the answer, “Look it up in a dictionary.” This taught the importance of words and their meanings. One of the first books to acquire for serious Bible study is a good Bible dictionary. This is because words matter.

So-called “liturgical language” has fallen on hard times. Society has become “unchurched,” and some words found in the Bible have become misunderstood. Because society is sometimes lazy, individuals shut down mentally when unrecognized words are heard. So, some classify words as “churchy,”— derogatorily, as in, “That preacher uses too many churchy words.” Big words should not be used to show off, but there are some words that need to be understood and deserve some time and attention. There is nothing wrong with digging a little deeper into words, not for liturgy, but because of biblical significance.

The Hebrew word “messiah” is used thirty-nine times in the Old Testament (Vine 150). It means “anointed one.” It refers to someone anointed to a specific task or given the authority to do a job. There are multiple messiahs in the Old Testament. Patriarchs were anointed (Psalm 105:15). The priests were anointed (Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16; 1 Kings 19:16). The prophets were anointed (Psalm 105:15). Kings were anointed (2 Samuel 7:13; Isaiah 45:1).

More importantly, there is a Messiah that the Old Testament points to coming, Who would fulfill prophecies and promises. He would be anointed by the Lord (Psalm 2:2), and He had authority to do a job (Daniel 9:25). “Messiah” in Greek becomes the word “Christos” or Christ, and Christ fulfills the ideas and prophecies of “Messiah.”

When the New Testament opens, people were looking for the Messiah

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(John 1:41). Two individuals waited in the Temple for the opportunity to see Him (Luke 2:25-38). Jesus proclaimed Himself as the Christ (John 4:25-26), and Peter confirmed that the apostles believed it (Matthew 16:16). Jesus proved He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament by fulfilling prophecies, working miracles and fulfilling His own claims.

Based on these facts, He built His church (Matthew 16:18). “Ekklesia” is the word translated to the English word “church.” It was used by the Greeks to describe a gathering, even a riotous one (Acts 19:32), but most directly it means “called out” (Jackson 31). The term is used to describe Israel (Acts 7:38), an angry mob (Acts 19:32), the church as a whole (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4) and an individual congregation of the Lord’s church (Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16).

Why is this the word used to describe what Christ came to build? The “called out” belongs to Him. The church is made up of people who are not part of this world but are part of the called out (John 17:14-16), and only God can do the calling out (Acts 2:41, 47).

Where does God do His calling out? This important question is answered by the Greek word “baptisto,” which has been transliterated to the English word “baptism.” The word originally meant to be overwhelmed (Jackson 18) See Luke 12:50. It is used literally to be “the process of immersion, submersion and emergence” (Vine 50).

A word study is not necessary to prove how baptism should be done, because baptism is a burial (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). Significantly, baptism is when God adds individuals to His church (Acts 2:41, 47). This is when God calls out individuals from the world and makes them part of His “ekklesia.” This is all powered by the fact that the Messiah came and died to build this “ekklesia” that all can now be a part through “baptisto.” Just a short study of a few words improves the understanding of what God wants for humanity. Pray that more will understand and obey the words of God. ✝

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## Textual Studies

# Two Interesting Details about the Passover

Aaron Cozort



Deuteronomy 16 records Moses' instructions to the Israelite nation about three of their significant feasts. Under the Old Testament law, the Israelites were required to attend three feasts each year in the city where the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) was located. Three of the feasts that they could attend to meet that requirement were: the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

### **The Unleavened Bread of the Passover**

During the Feast of Passover, there was to be absolutely no leaven

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anywhere in the house of the Israelites. They were to purge out the leaven. Throughout the Old and New testaments, leaven almost always signified a corrupting agent and commonly represented sin (1 Corinthians 5). For this reason and to learn this lesson, Israel was commanded to eat only unleavened bread during the Passover.

It is of particular interest, then, that Deuteronomy 16 records, *“You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life”* (verse 3). Moses identified an additional reason for the “no leaven” requirement in Egypt as they were preparing to leave. He called unleavened bread “the bread of affliction,” referencing their slavery in Egypt. He noted that they came out of Egypt in haste. Leaven takes time to work; it requires time to cause the dough to rise. As a result of God’s command to be ready to leave, they were not to prepare the leavened bread and wait for it to grow. Instead, they were to make unleavened bread that could be baked and eaten immediately.

### The Time of The Passover Sacrifice

Over a thousand years before Jesus Christ lived, Moses told the Israelite people that the Passover sacrifice was to be made at twilight. *“But at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt”* (Deuteronomy 16:6).

It is interesting then that we find in Luke 23:44 that Jesus would die on the cross at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day. This would correspond in the Jewish time system to the sunset or twilight hour. Jesus Christ, our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) died at the exact time that Moses had commanded the priests to kill and offer the Passover sacrifice of the Old Testament.

It is valuable to take the time to consider the details of the Old Testament Scriptures because they inform and reveal to us details that help us more thoroughly understand the revelation of God. 

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# Textual Studies

## Prejudice

David Conley

The word “prejudice” simply means to “pre-judge” or to make a determination **before** looking into the truth of the matter. Webster says of the word, “(1) preconceived judgment or opinion (2) an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge.” Another word that often is used to define “prejudice” is “bias.” Webster says that “bias” is “an inclination of temperament or outlook; a highly personal and unreasoned distortion of judgment; one’s tendency.”

Here is the unfortunate thing; people confuse “prejudice” with “judgment.” If I make a judgment about a certain doctrine, lifestyle or practice, then I may be accused of prejudice by someone! This is not the case at all! Oftentimes, I may be called prejudiced in an attempt to divert the attention from the issue and discredit my character.

Judgment is something that **should** be exercised in all aspects of life. Jesus insisted that we “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Jesus named “judgment” along with “mercy” and “faith” as important matters that we **should** exercise (Matthew 23:23).

The Greek word for “judge” is “krino.” It means to “judge,” “determine,” “condemn,” “go to law,” “call in question” or “esteem.” Webster says “judge” is “to form an opinion about a matter through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises; to determine or pronounce after inquiry and deliberation.”

To have an opinion (judgment) about anything without knowing about it is indeed folly! Yet, to abstain from an opinion (judgment) after studying the facts is irresponsible! I must come to a conclusion (judgment) concerning important issues in my life.

What could be more important than my soul? I must carefully weigh out the truths and make a determination (judgment) as to which doctrine is true and which is false. If I make a judgment based on others’ opinions or because I “feel” a tendency to go in that direction, without knowing anything about the doctrine, it is folly! If I fail to make any judgment or commitment at all, even after having studied the issues, then I am irresponsible with my soul’s future! Don’t be prejudiced, but do make righteous judgments! 

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# Scavenger Hunt

through Romans

Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. What is the “power of God unto salvation”?
2. Who has sinned?
3. Why was Abraham counted as righteous?
4. What does not exist without the law?
5. What produces perseverance?
6. What is the gift of God?
7. What is required to “call on the name of the Lord”?
8. How many men did God say had not bowed down to Baal?
9. How should Christians be transformed from the world?
10. Who do men resist when they oppose the authority of governments?

# WHICH LADY ARE YOU?

Emily Fisher

The Book of Proverbs portrays two “ladies” calling out to us. One is from God, **lady wisdom**, whose words are righteousness (Proverbs 8:32-36). The other is from the world, **the evil woman**, whose words cast one down to hell (Proverbs 7:27). Let us examine ourselves as we look at each of these.



*“With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him”* (Proverbs 7:21). The immoral woman of Proverbs 7 is described in such terms as *“loud,” “rebellious”* and *“crafty.”* She is devoid of understanding and draws simple men down her path. Her clothing is that of a harlot (Proverbs 7:10). She is not concerned about being modest with a *“gentle and quiet spirit”* (1 Peter 3:4). She would rather draw attention to herself and look enticing to men than pleasing to her Maker (1 Timothy 2:9-10). She has a crafty heart and feet that *“would not stay at home”* (Proverbs 7:11).

This woman does not spend precious time studying God’s Word, but she spends her days out and about, concerned with materialistic fineries, *“tapestries, fine linens, perfume, and ointments”* (Proverbs 7:16-17). For her, the home is not a sanctuary shared by her husband and herself where each shows love and respect to the other, but a place where she may hide her sins and even invite strangers to her bed when her husband is away (Proverbs 7:19; Titus 2:4-5; Ephesians 5:22-33). She uses her *“impudent”* (shameless) face to seduce others with *“flattering lips”*

(Proverbs 7:13, 21). She is not a woman who blushes, nor is she one who uses her mouth for kindness and truth. She flirts with men to build up her self-confidence rather than putting her confidence in the Lord as

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a person created in His image (Proverbs 3:26; Genesis 1:27). **She “pays her vows” and “peace offerings”** (Proverbs 7:14; Leviticus 3). **To others she may seem religious as she always attends church assemblies and gives lip service to God, but her “heart is far from Him”** (Isaiah 29:13). She looks righteous on the outside, but inside she is **“full of dead men’s bones”** (Matthew 23:27).

This woman looks like she offers sacrifices to please men rather than gives God the sacrifices of a **“broken and contrite heart”** (Psalm 51:17), **faith** (Philippians 2:17), **praise** (Hebrews 13:15) and **her body as a living sacrifice** (Romans 12:1). This woman seems like she has it all with the world at her fingertips, but she has forgotten the most important thing in this life: **“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all; for God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

In stark contrast, the Book of Proverbs paints a picture of the virtuous woman in its last chapter. This wise lady is chaste and upright in character. Her husband has no reason to doubt her or suspect her of any sinful activity (Proverbs 31:11). She makes sure to have the proper clothing for herself as well as for her household (Proverbs 31:21-22).

Wisdom is exhibited by this woman as she shows concern for others and upholds honor rather than her own appearance or pleasures (Proverbs 31:25).

This lady is attractive, not necessarily for her physical appearance, but most importantly for her **“strength,” “honor,” “wisdom”** and **“kindness”** (Proverbs 31:25-26). She remembers that **“beauty is passing”** and God cherishes the **“incorruptible beauty of the heart”** (Proverbs 31:30; 1 Peter 3:4). Being a homemaker is her first priority (Titus 2:5). She does not feel unfulfilled by



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her domestic responsibilities, nor does she regret having children. This wise woman knows that one's house must be built upon God's foundation and that children are a blessing to the home (Psalm 127:1, 3-5). She submits to her husband as the Lord commands, and they are ***"heirs together of the grace of life"*** (1 Peter 3:1, 7; Proverbs 31:23).

This woman ***"seeks," "works," "considers"*** and ***"provides"*** the physical necessities of life so that the spiritual necessities can be number one in her family's life (Proverbs 31:13-16). She is a doer of good and not evil to her whole family (Proverbs 31:12, 27). Her kindness does not stop with her household but extends to neighbors and people in need (Proverbs 31:15, 20). This lady is the essence of ***"good works"*** (Titus 2:14; 3:8). She does not spend endless, idle time on Facebook, Twitter, etc., taking selfies or playing endless Internet games because she is busy ***"watching over the ways of her household"*** and doing the work of the Lord (Proverbs 31:27; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

The virtuous woman has true wisdom because she ***"fears the Lord"*** (Proverbs 31:30; 1:7). She is not a "Sunday-only Christian." Christianity is her way of life, a life that was changed by the grace of God when she submitted to Christ in faithful obedience (Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 2:11-13; Galatians 3:26-28). She is the same every day of the week as she strives to live according to God's Word, both in public and in private life (1 John 1:7-2:5; 1 Peter 2:12). This woman may not be wealthy or popular according to the world, and she most likely suffers persecution for her beliefs, but she really does have it all for she has remembered the most important things in life. Therefore, her Maker will not fail to remember ***"the fruit of her hands"*** (Proverbs 31:31).

All will give ear to one of these "ladies." One will lead us down the path to true life, while the other leads us down the path to death. The question every Christian woman must ask herself is, "Which type of woman in the Book of Proverbs am I—the sinful woman (Proverbs 7) or the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31)?" 

**Emily Fisher lives in Winona, Mississippi, USA, and works with the World Evangelism team.**

## Bible Characters

# Falsely Accused

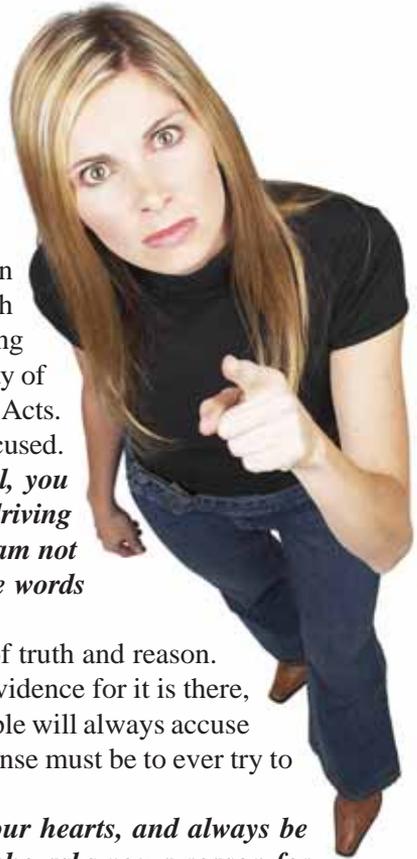
**Andy Robison**

The apostle Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and worked his way up through the Roman court system, defending Christianity and never being found guilty of any crime, as recorded in the Book of Acts. Nevertheless, he was often falsely accused. One Roman governor cried out, *“Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”* Paul calmly responded, *“I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason”* (Acts 26:24-25).

Christianity, indeed, is a religion of truth and reason. It is **not** a religion of blind faith. The evidence for it is there, though many willfully suppress it. People will always accuse Christians of being crazy, but the response must be to ever try to kindly reason with our accusers.

*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed”* (1 Peter 3:15-16). *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”* (Colossians 4:6). 

Andy Robison is the minister for the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ and the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA. He also maintains a website of church hymns at <https://www.churchofchristsongs.com/>.



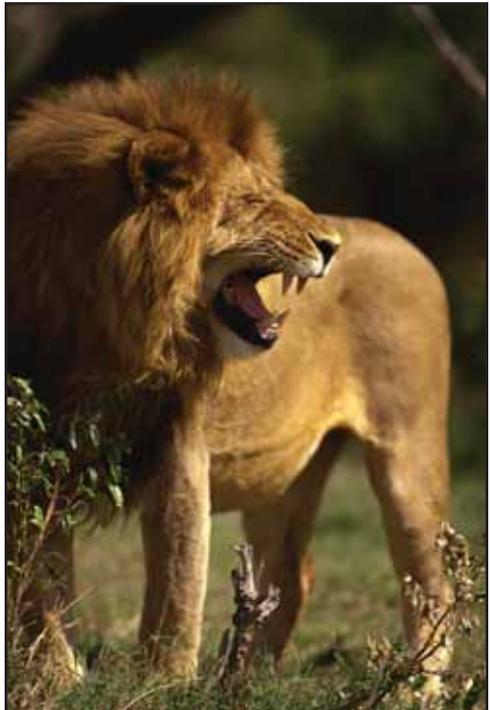
# The Patience of Satan

Paul Mowrer

Surely you mean “the patience of Job.” Or, perhaps, you meant to write “the patience of God.” You can’t possibly mean “the patience of Satan.” Even though it sounds a bit absurd, that is exactly what I meant to write. Better yet is the need for us to understand the working of Satan in our lives.

This past week, Cathy and I were in Illinois celebrating her parents’ 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. One of the activities we enjoy whenever the family gets together is our time of worship with the church there. It was during a visit with one of my brothers there that we spoke on the frustrations and discouragements that come our way as children of God. I repeated to him a thought that had been shared with me several years ago by a local preacher that frustration and discouragement are tools of Satan. There was agreement with the statement, and then he responded with the following, “Satan is very patient.”

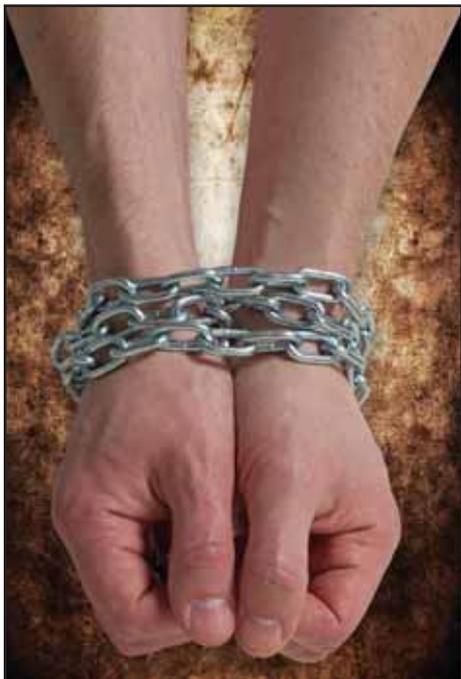
I have allowed that thought to captivate me for the last several days. We are quick to point out the patience of Job and the patience of God, but we fail to recognize that the work of Satan may very well be in a field all its own. We know that “... *the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). I don’t



## The Christian Home

picture a lion giving up after one failed attempt. Maybe you have never watched a lion size up its prey before attacking, but no doubt you have watched a cat in its preparations to pounce on its unsuspecting prey. There is no rush. Just a very calculated wait before pouncing on the unsuspecting victim.

Maybe we don't see Satan in that way, but perhaps it is time for us to re-think the working of our greatest enemy. No doubt, Satan waited patiently before Eve (and Adam) succumbed to the temptation of the fruit in the Garden. As he waited then, he does so now with us, *“seeking some to devour.”*



Unfortunately, his success rate seems to be climbing! Solomon characterizes the one falling into the temptation of adultery *“as an ox goes to the slaughter”* (Proverbs 7:22). Is it possible that we have allowed ourselves to be so caught up in the pleasures of the world that we have become like that ox to be slaughtered?

The apostle Paul warned Timothy to teach with gentleness so that God may grant repentance, so that *“they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will”* (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Christians, it is time to awaken from our slumber before it is everlast-

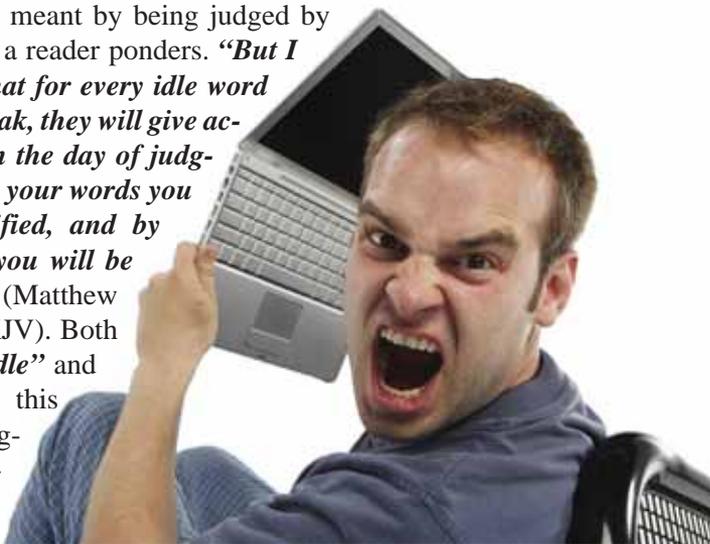
ingly too late! Yes, the Lord is patient, but so is Satan! **Who is winning the battle for your soul?** †

Paul Mowrer preaches for the Monticello Church of Christ in Monticello, Arkansas, USA.

# What Is Meant by Being Judged by Idle Words?

Louis Rushmore

“What is meant by being judged by idle words?” a reader ponders. *“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matthew 12:36-37 NKJV). Both the words “idle” and “word” in this text have negative connotations. Jesus was not



talking about utterances that are either positive or neutral, but rather He spoke about negative or evil speech. See that there are only two categories under consideration—words that justify or words that condemn. Compare Matthew 12:36-37 with Ephesians 5:4, which reads, *“neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”* Once more, there are two categories of words—words that justify or words that condemn. †

## Bible Questions

# *Emergency Contact Numbers*

**Brett Petrillo**

If any of the following situations happen in your life, please dial the appropriate numbers.

- If you are unsure that God loves you, dial John 3:16.
- If you need faith, dial Hebrews 11.
- If you need comfort, dial 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.
- If you are worried, dial Matthew 6:25-34.
- If you feel depressed, dial 1 Peter 5:6-7.
- If you hear gossip, dial Proverbs 26:22-25.
- If you feel overwhelmed by some force, dial 1 John 4:4.
- If you are unsure about your current friends, dial 1 Corinthians 15:33.
- If you love worldly things in life, dial 1 John 2:15.
- If you love money, dial 1 Timothy 6:10.
- If you are focused on succeeding in this life, dial Matthew 16:26.
- If you want to be fruitful in life, dial John 15:1-11.
- If you want advice for your investments, dial Matthew 6:19-21.
- If you aren't sure about participating in something, dial Philippians 4:8.
- If you are experiencing sorrow or pain, dial Revelation 21:4.
- If you are being persecuted, dial Matthew 5:10-12.
- If you are being tempted to sin, dial 1 Corinthians 10:13.
- If you have sinned, dial 1 John 1:9.
- If you feel you can't be forgiven and saved, dial 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- If you are in trouble and need to be saved, dial 1 Peter 3:21.

All numbers can be dialed directly. If as a Christian you need to speak with someone directly, please bow your head in prayer now. God is standing by. 

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## Charts & Outlines

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# *The Value of Home*

Ronald D. Reeves

### *Our Earthly Home*

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Place of rest and relaxation                    | John 20:10; Acts 21:6     |
| 2. Place of nourishment                            | 1 Corinthians 11:34       |
| 3. Place of retreat when physically ill            | Matthew 8:6; Mark 5:19    |
| 4. Place of fellowship with friends                | Mark 5:19                 |
| 5. Place of rejoicing with friends and neighbors   | Luke 15:6                 |
| 6. Place of caring for those in need               | John 19:27; 1 Timothy 5:4 |
| 7. Place of sharing good news and good fortune     | Mark 5:19                 |
| 8. Place of instruction                            | 1 Corinthians 14:35       |
| 9. Place of fulfillment of personal responsibility | Titus 2:5                 |

### *Our Heavenly Home*

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Initial locale of the kingdom of God          | Daniel 2:44; Psalm 103:9  |
| 2. Residents include...                          |                           |
| a. God, the Father                               | Matthew 5:16              |
| b. Christ, the Son                               | 1 Peter 3:21-22           |
| c. The Holy Spirit                               | 1 Peter 1:12              |
| d. Righteous angels                              | Matthew 18:10             |
| e. Righteous men and women                       | 1 Peter 1:3-5             |
| f. The unaccountable                             | Matthew 18:1-4            |
| 3. The source of all blessings                   | James 1:13, 17            |
| 4. Residence of the Temple of God and His throne | Revelation 14:17; 16:17   |
| 5. Freedom from an earthly body                  | 1 Corinthians 15:42-50    |
| 6. Freedom from a society of wicked men          | 2 Timothy 4:18            |
| 7. Place of rest                                 | Revelation 14:13          |
| 8. Receipt of inheritance and rewards            | 1 Peter 1:4; Matthew 5:12 |
| 9. Enjoyment of a fulfilled hope                 | Romans 5:5-11             |

## Charts & Outlines

10. Enter the joy of our Lord
11. Worship and serve the Lord
12. Entrance is gained at the final judgment
13. An eternal home

Matthew 25:21  
Revelation 4:10; 7:15  
Matthew 25:31-46  
Matthew 25:46



## Charts & Outlines

# The Word of Our God Shall Stand Forever

Isaiah 40:8

Louis Rushmore

**Thesis:** To demonstrate from Scripture that the Word of God is the only thing on which one can always rely.

**Song:** “Give Me the Bible”

### **Introduction:**

1. No one and nothing on this earth is completely reliable, except the Word of God.
2. Spouses, children, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters sometimes falter and are not always reliable.
3. Sometimes we fail ourselves, too.
4. Only the Word of God is a sure thing on which we can always rely.
5. Unfortunately, mankind often places his confidence in himself, other people, material wealth, pleasure, etc., none of which is either reliable or durable beyond the present existence.

### **Body:**

#### **I. God’s Word is reliable because God Himself is reliable.**

- A. God’s Word is as durable as God is durable and eternal.
  1. Mankind’s word is sometimes worthless because mankind is not always reliable.
  2. Mankind’s word is sometimes worthless because being frail he sometimes is incapable of keeping his word.
  3. God, though, is eternal, Psalm 90:2.
- B. Isaiah 40:8 is quoted by inspired New Testament writers twice, James 1:10-11; 1 Peter 1:24-25.
  1. The grass in these and similar passages refers to the temporal nature of mankind’s existence on the earth, Psalm

## Charts & Outlines

90:6; 103:15-16; Job 14:1-2.

2. The Word of God, however, which comes forth from our eternal God, contrasts to all that is temporal, including ourselves.

### II. As God's character is changeless, His Word is likewise changeless and reliable.

- A. The nature of our eternal God never changes, Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.
- B. God's Word is reliable because it is settled in Heaven, Psalm 119:89.
- C. God's Word is reliable because it will endure beyond the present world in which we live, Matthew 24:35.
- D. Especially the Word, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is of primary importance because it endures forever, 1 Peter 1:25.

### Conclusion:

1. On whom or what do you rely in this life?
2. If you rely on anything or anyone, including yourself, you will be let down from time to time.
3. Only God's Word is reliable and durable enough to lead us successfully through this life into a blissful eternity.
4. Of Isaiah 40:8, Coffman observed, "It points to the only dependable and certain anchor that men have, namely, the word of the Lord"

### Invitation:

1. This unchangeable, reliable Word of God is the means by which obeying one is born again—saved—can legitimately anticipate spending eternity with God in Heaven, 1 Peter 1:22-25.
2. Have you been truly born again, John 3:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 10:22; Acts 22:16?
3. Are you relying on the durable Word of God, or have you erred from the faith, 1 Timothy 6:10, 21; 2 Timothy 2:18; 1 John 1:9?

### Works Cited

Coffman, James Burton. *James Burton Coffman Bible Study Library*. CD-ROM. Abilene: ACU P., 1989. 

# 430 Years from the Promise to the Law

**Kevin Cauley**

Did the Israelites live under the bondage of the Egyptians for 430 years? This question arises due to the alleged contradiction between Exodus 12:40, Genesis 15:13-14, Acts 7:6-7 and Galatians 3:17. The two general views that are held are 1) the Israelites were in bondage 430 years, and 2) the Israelites were in bondage 215 years. If we can prove that the Israelites were not in bondage 430 years, then we may reasonably conclude they were in bondage for 215 years.

It is the contention of this writer that the Israelites were not in bondage for 430 years. Herein, evidence will be presented that the physical relationship of Moses to Levi prevents this from being the case. That Moses is the grandson (i.e., second generation from) of Levi may be established by the following Scriptures: Exodus 2:1; 6:16-20; Numbers 26:59. These Scriptures say that Jochebed was the daughter (i.e., direct descendent) of Levi. Jochebed was also the mother of Moses. The combined ages of Levi and Moses while the Israelites were in Egypt are shown to be irreconcilable with the Israelites' being in Egypt for 430 years.

Levi was the third born of Jacob (Genesis 29:34). Given that he was born as close as possible to the first child, Reuben, he would have been born in the second year, third month, after Jacob was married to Leah. Now Jacob served Laban for twenty years (Genesis 31:41); so, at the most, Joseph would have been born within the twentieth year, because he was born while Jacob served Laban. This puts Joseph and Levi about eleven years apart, a reasonable number between the second born child and next-to-last born child.

In Genesis 41:46, the Bible says that Joseph was thirty years old when he came before Pharaoh. So, Levi was about 41 years old at the time of Joseph's ascent. After this came the seven years of plenty and the seven

## Biblical History

years of famine (14 years). The Bible says that the sons of Israel went down into Egypt in the second year of famine (Genesis 45:5). This would put Levi's age at fifty (that is, forty-one plus seven years of plenty plus two years of famine). Levi lived for 137 years (Exodus 6:16) and presumably died there. One hundred thirty-seven minus fifty equals eighty-seven. So, Levi was in Egypt for eighty-seven years.

The children of Israel were in Egypt for the first part of Moses' life, when he was being trained to lead them out of Egypt. This first part of his life was eighty years. Forty years he spent in Egypt, and forty years he spent in the wilderness tending sheep for Jethro.

If Levi lived in Egypt for eighty-seven years, and the people of Israel lived in Egypt for the eighty years that Moses was alive, then in order for the children of Israel to be living in Egypt for 430 years, Moses' mother (who was also Levi's daughter) had to give birth to Moses at the age of 263 years, an absurdity. People did not live to be that old during that time, and Sarah attests to the fact that women could not have children at that age (Genesis 18:11). Given the relationships of Levi to Jochebed and Jochebed to Moses, 430 years is irreconcilable without adding additional generations somewhere in between. Were there additional generations?

If there were additional generations, then either Levi was not the direct sire of Jochebed or Jochebed was not the biological mother of Moses. The former relationship seems the most likely for consideration of missing generations as the relationship between Moses and Jochebed as mother and son seems to be firmly established (see Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59). So, was Jochebed (Moses' mother) the actual daughter of Levi, that is, did Levi sire Jochebed? Some suggest that she could have been his granddaughter or great granddaughter? However, this conflicts with the biblical evidence concerning the relationship of Jochebed to Levi. A consideration of this evidence is now in order.

First, Exodus 2:1 reads, "***And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.***" If Jochebed was Levi's granddaughter or great granddaughter, then why is the distinction made between the man who was of the house of Levi and the wife who was a daughter of Levi?

## Biblical History

Why doesn't the text read, "...and took to wife a woman of the house of Levi"? One answer is the text does not read that way because Jochebed was the actual daughter of Levi.

Second, this is further established in Exodus 6:16-20. In this passage, the sons of Levi are listed "*according to their generations.*" This means, specifically, that there are no gaps between the generations. So, Kohath, who is listed in verse sixteen as the son of Levi, was the son of Levi and his wife. Now in Exodus 6:20, the text says that Amram took Jochebed, his father's sister, to wife. Who was Amram's father? It was Kohath. Jochebed was Kohath's sister, and this would make her Levi's daughter.

Third, Numbers 26:59 explicitly says that Jochebed was Levi's daughter by birth: "*And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister*" (ASV). These three passages overwhelmingly establish that Jochebed was the daughter of Levi, as we would use the term daughter today. This last piece of evidence seals the case as to the relationship of Jochebed to Levi and presents irreconcilable evidence to the 430 year view.

So, since the Israelites were not in Egypt for 430 years, then what is to be said about all the passages that seem to say that they were in Egypt for 430 years? These passages are Genesis 15:13-14; Acts 7:6-7 and Exodus 12:40. Acts 7:6-7 is an exact quote from Genesis 15. So, these two passages will be dealt with together.

In Genesis 15:13-14 this statement is made: "*And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*"

Noting that punctuation was foreign to the biblical manuscripts, it is the translators' task to supply sensible punctuation. So, if the translators understood that the children of Israel were in Egypt for 400 years, then they would insert punctuation to support that claim. However, if that claim is irreconcilable with the biblical chronology, the punctuation must

## Biblical History

change. Genesis 15:13-14 should be punctuated as follows: “...*and they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them. Four hundred years, and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge....*” Moreover, to be consistent with this punctuation, verse 14 should begin with the words “Four hundred.” This harmonizes with the biblical chronology. The descendants of Abram will go down into Egypt. They will become servants, be afflicted, and 400 years from the time that God gave the promise to Abram, God will judge the afflicters. Acts 7 may be handled similarly.

What about the problem in Exodus 12:40? The KJV reads here, “*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years....*” Grammatically, the “430 years” is a predicate adjective describing the subject, “*the sojourning of the people of Israel.*” That sojourning may include the wanderings of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons by the figure of metonymy. The “*who dwelt in Egypt*” is an appositive expression that modifies the substantive “*the children of Israel.*” The appositive expression itself does not tell us the length of time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt. It simply tells us this: the children of Israel, at some time, and for some time, dwelt in Egypt. Again, it does not tell us how long they dwelt in Egypt. It simply says that they dwelt in Egypt. This is what the text says. There is no way that anyone could prove that the 430 years tells how long the children of Israel were in Egypt. So, are there any contradictions? The answer is, “No.”

Just how long, then, were the Israelites in Egypt? They were in Egypt about 215 years. In Galatians, we read that from the promise to the law was 430 years. Since Abraham was about 75 when he received the promise from God (Genesis 12:4), and Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 (Genesis 21:5), twenty-five years had gone by since the promise. Isaac was sixty when Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26). So, this adds another sixty years to the twenty-five years that we already have. This makes a total of eighty-five years since the promise. Joseph was born when Jacob was ninety-one, and Levi was, at most, eleven years older than Joseph; so Levi was born when Jacob was eighty (as shown above). This adds eighty

## Biblical History

years to our already eighty-five, giving us a total of 165. Since Levi was fifty when he went down into Egypt (as shown above), this gives us a total of 215 years from the promise to the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt.

Levi lived eighty-seven years in Egypt (as shown above), and the children of Israel were in bondage for at least eighty years while Moses was living (as shown above). So, if we take the number of years that Levi was in Egypt and the number of years that the children of Israel were in Egypt while Moses was alive, before he took them out of captivity, and add them together, we then get 167 years that the children of Israel were in bondage.

However, one might say, the record says that the number of years from the promise to the law were 430, and 215 and 167 do not add up to 430. This is true; consideration must be given to the years that Jochebed, Moses' mother, was upon the earth after Levi died and before Moses was born. Since Jochebed was the daughter of Levi, and Moses was her son (as shown above), then to complete the 430 years, Jochebed had to be 48 years or older when she gave birth to Moses. This age of childbearing is perfectly normal and consistent with biology and Scripture as Moses was not the eldest child of Jochebed.

In conclusion, there were 430 years from *the promise given to Abraham to the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai—215 from the promise to the descent into Egypt and 215 from the descent into Egypt to the Law.* †

**Galatians 3:17-18, "And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise."**

# The Sexual Ethics of Jesus and His People

Wes McAdams

No issue is more contentious in our culture than sexual ethics. From the outside, followers of Jesus are accused of being bigots, and from the inside, many preachers, writers and theologians are questioning whether or not Scripture is really as clear on sexual ethics as we've always asserted. Cohabitation, same-sex relationships, transgenderism and more—ours has become a tricky culture to navigate with kindness and without compromise.

### Everyone Has a Sexual Ethic

Every person with whom I have discussed this issue believes some sexual behaviors are good and pure while other behaviors are shameful and even deviant. For instance, most people in this culture would hold to a sexual ethic that condemns behaviors like pedophilia, rape and incest.

Regardless of a rapist's desires or the length of time he has struggled with those desires, we simply do not condone rape as acceptable sexual behavior. We rightfully condemn rape as immoral, regardless of any other considerations. Similarly, most people in this culture would also condemn a sexual relationship between a 45-year-old man and an 11-year-old girl. Regardless of the man's desires or the girl's consent, we would all judge that relationship to be unhealthy, inappropriate and wrong.

So, here is the question I think everyone needs to ask, "What is the standard or basis for my sexual ethic?" In other words, "By what standard do I judge one sexual relationship to be right and another sexual relationship to be wrong?" Standards by which we judge might include:

- personal opinion**
- state or federal law**
- history**
- psychology**
- Scripture or something else**

# Ethics

Everyone makes judgments about sexual behavior. No one is ambivalent on the issue. Yet, our judgments differ because we are using different standards. So, what is your standard?

## Jesus' Sexual Ethic

Jesus had a sexual ethic. He believed some sexual behaviors were moral and others were immoral. In order for us to understand Jesus' sexual ethic, we need to consider what He meant when He talked about "sexual immorality" (e.g., Mark 7:21). As a first-century Jewish rabbi, speaking to a Jewish audience, there is absolutely no doubt Jesus defined sexual immorality according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18-20). Everything the Law condemned as sexually immoral, Jesus also condemned as sexually immoral (same-sex relationships, rape, bestiality, incest, etc.).

However, Jesus' sexual ethic went far deeper than a surface reading of the Law. Jesus discerned from the Law principles like these:

- ◆ A married man is sinning by even fantasizing about women other than his wife (Matthew 5:28).
- ◆ The story of Adam and Eve serves as a precedent for the definition and permanence of marriage (Matthew 19:4-5).
- ◆ In spite of the Law's limited allowance for divorce, leaving one's spouse to marry someone else is still adulterous (Matthew 19:3-9).
- ◆ Jesus did not create or void any laws about sex, marriage or divorce. He upheld the Law of Moses, but He also dove deeper into Scripture to reveal the will of God that was always present in the heart of the Law.

## The Sexual Ethic of Jesus' People

After Jesus' ascension, initially all of the followers of Jesus were Jewish. Like the Lord, they held to the sexual ethic of the Law of Moses. When Gentiles started following Jesus, the church told them they were not obligated to keep the entire Law of Moses, but there were some requirements from the Law—inherent truths, from the beginning—that remained binding. In Acts 15:28-29, we read, "***It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols,***

## Ethics

*and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”*

Like Jesus, the apostles defined sexual immorality according to the Law of Moses, but they also had a unique view of sexuality in light of the Gospel. The Spirit-filled apostles extrapolated from the Gospel itself a sexual ethic based on Jesus' faithfulness and self-giving love (e.g., Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 5-7). They taught that committing oneself to a spouse of the opposite sex was a way to model the faithfulness and self-giving love of Jesus and the church. They also taught that because Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, engaging in any sexual behavior outside of marriage was an act of defiling God's holy temple, our bodies.

### Policing the World

With all of that said, the apostle Paul took the position that it is not up to the church to police the sexual ethics of those outside the church (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). It is our job to hold other disciples accountable for their sexual behavior, but it is not our job to hold people in the world accountable for their sex lives.

If you have accepted Jesus' offer to be His disciple, then adopting His sexual ethic is part of that relationship. Being a disciple of Jesus means, in part, allowing Jesus to dictate our sexual behavior. Our emotions and desires cannot dictate the way we behave sexually. Just because we have a desire does not mean it is right to fulfill that desire. Like the early church, we must allow the Gospel to shape our view of sexuality and dictate our sexual behavior.

However, if someone is not a follower of Jesus, all we can do is invite them to follow Him and to learn from His teachings, explaining why trusting Him about everything (including sexuality) is the best choice anyone can make. Beginning your outreach by criticizing their sexual behavior—shaming them because they do not hold to a biblical sexual ethic—will not help bring them to Jesus. Our job is to share our Lord with them so that He can change their lives! 

**Wes McAdams works with the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas, USA.**

# A History of Christianity in Nepal

**Pramod Dhakal**

Nepal has been an independent country since its origin. It is a monarchical kingdom situated between China and India. Even though it is a tiny country on the globe, it is well known due to Mount Everest in the Northern part of Nepal. Originally, it was divided into twenty-two small nations until the late king Prithvi Narayan Shah unified it into one great Nepal in A.D. 1771. Thus, he became the first king, and the Shah dynasty continued to rule until Nepal became a democracy on the 28th of May 2008.



**Pramod Dhakal delivering his radio message**

Through most of its history, the borders of Nepal were closed to the outside world. The Capuchian Missionaries travelled overland from Rome and established a presence in Kathmandu for about fifty years in the early 18th century. Then for almost two hundred years, there was no organized Christian presence in Nepal. As Nepal opened its doors, mission organizations representing Indian and western Christians, which had worked across the borders of Nepal, began to enter. They were invited by the government to build a hospital in Tansen, and they started clinics in the Kathmandu valley. In response to this invitation, the united mission to Nepal was formed in 1954. This is a unique cooperation of Christians from around the world to serve the people of Nepal.

The Nepalese society, based on the teachings of Hinduism, believes everything is sacred and nothing is secular. Every person in the society is interdependent with others in the community. There is no place for the deviator in the society. There are no possibilities of accommodation within their societal community for a person who left his religious belief to become a Christian.

## From the Heart Of

**A Buddhist temple. The cords with thousands of small “flags” are the “prayers” of people to their gods.**



**According to the 2011 census, only 9% of Nepal’s population are Buddhist. The remainder are primarily Hindus.**

The few in the Kathmandu valley who were converted to Christianity were considered as being dead. These converted people were boycotted and harassed. The extent to which the outcasting took place depended on the zeal of the society and the pressure of the religious leaders in the area. Typically, it was sufficiently applied so that the convert had to go out and find a new way to make a living in another place. Obviously this was not easy. The government in Kathmandu mistreated the missionaries and tortured converts to Christianity.

Nepal was and is an orthodox Hindu state. Hindus worship many deities in temples and shrines, make sacrifices to the gods and observe the caste system rigorously. Converts to a belief in Christ became peculiar people who gathered with others at home to worship the living God of Heaven. There were very few converts in the country. They knew and loved each other deeply and had no caste system and differences. They were known as a happy community.

In the course of time, after 105 years of inhumane rule, the country was in upheaval, and the people of Nepal were yearning for democracy. King Tribhuwan Bir Bikram Shah became the father of democracy in 1950. Since then, the Nepalese are striving to exercise the spirit of democracy, learning by trial and error until the present day.

## From the Heart Of



**The dead are cremated and their ashes are thrown into a river.**

In the early days, missionaries from USA, Europe and India were working in Mission Hospitals in Nepal. Through these missionaries, the Word of God was rapidly spreading in the country, with small churches in Kathmandu valley. There was no denominational spirit because no one knew about it. Believers used to get together often. Slowly, through the love, hard work and prayers of devoted people, the message of Christianity was spread in Nepal, even though preaching and converting were illegal. Consequently, many churches were established throughout the country. People were attracted by the love, devotion and sympathetic hearts of Christian people. Howard Barclay started the church at Sanepa without music and taught converts to worship there where he continued for a while. Nepali Christians did not know about true Christianity until the Visualized Bible Study Series was seen.

Brother Donald Pfalser came to Kathmandu to work with USAID. He, with his family, assisted a group of Nepali believers by introducing brother J.C. Choate and Sunny David. These brethren expounded the Word of God

## From the Heart Of



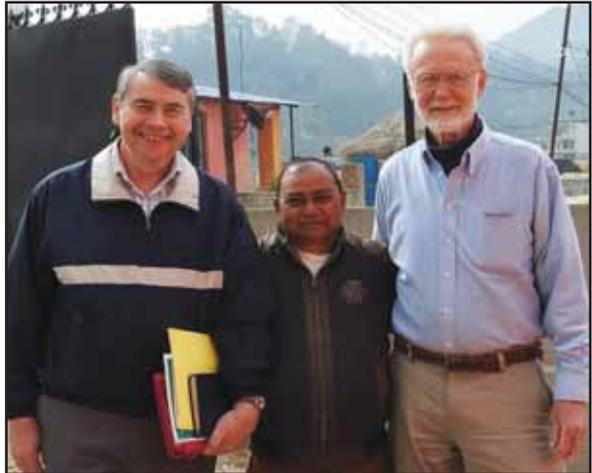
**The building that houses the  
Nepal Center for Biblical Study.**

clearly to these men, and they began to meet at Samakhusi in Kathmandu.

Brother Ray McMillan, the principal of Alpha Bible College in Shillong, came to Kathmandu to teach the Word of God by whom Nepalese Christians came to know the work and love of Brother

Charles F. Scott.

Brother Scott assisted in renting the building at Thapathali for the church meeting. Slowly, Christians were growing in numbers, and more were added to them. Brother Scott recommended the brethren to brother Jack L. Ray of Lehman Avenue Church of Christ in 1985. Without the love and prayers of the Lehman Avenue Church, the churches in Nepal would have remained small. Brother Ray visited us, encouraged us greatly in the Lord and also made it possible for us to have the help of Michael Brooks, who works primarily in Bangladesh. He visits two times a year, working for the



**Jerry with a local brother  
and Jerry Golphenee**

## From the Heart Of

growth of Christians in Nepal.

Apart from this, brother Ira Rice from the U.S., with brother Joshua Gootam of Kakinada, India came to Nepal. They opened a new opportunity



for Nepalese brethren to attend the **Four Seas College of Bible and Missions** in Singapore. So far, three brethren have completed their studies. As the Nepalese students were studying in the Bible college, the congregations of Singapore decided to extend their mission work to Nepal. Since 2001, they have been helping congregations especially in the eastern part of the country.

In recent years, two Bible schools have been opened in Nepal. One is located just outside of Kathmandu and is associated with Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA. It is directed by Gajendra Deshar. The staff of that school is also translating *The Voice of Truth International* and distributing it throughout the country. This publication, along



with other books, is making an impact on the church nationwide. Many congregations are found throughout the country, even in the mountains. This literature can reach into remote areas where it may be hard for any evangelist to go on a regular basis.

Praise the Lord our God for bringing religious

## From the Heart Of

freedom to Nepal, along with making our country a democracy, giving the Nepalese people the supreme power in the country. Thank God that from now on we will not be tortured in the name of religious belief and will not be imprisoned for being Christians. What a Freedom!

The most cherished dream of Nepalese people was fulfilled when the Shah



dynasty of Nepal that had lasted 237 years crumbled down in the blue-sea. There is no more old, obsolete and out-dated institution of monarchy in Nepal. The most outstanding historic priority was given when the first assembly of the elected general constituents declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic on 28th May 2008. An overwhelming majority of 560 members out of 564 present in the meeting voted in favour of declaring the country a Federal Democratic Republic. The Nepalese people celebrated the occasion with gladness. Particularly, the Nepalese Christians were glad to see the end of the monarchical system under which they had been persecuted for many years.

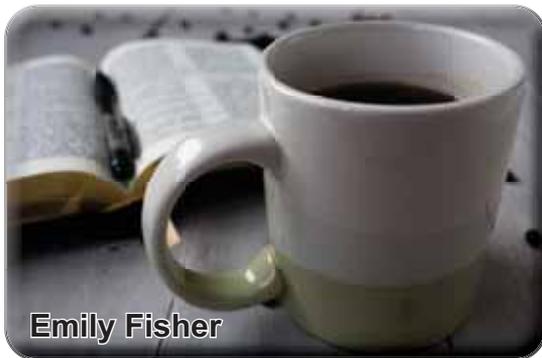
Joyfully, Christians have worked in these intervening years to reach beyond the hills and mountains to spread the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although they have faced many difficulties, they continue to work to take the truth of Christianity to the lost souls of our country. What a blessing to our children and generations to come! The Word of God is still sounding, calling sinners to come home. What an invitation!

May God bless us all ! May God bless Nepal!



**Pramod Dhakal is the minister of the Baneshwor church of Christ in Kathmandu, and is the speaker on Radio Kantipur each Sunday evening. Their Facebook page is Church of Christ, Nepal and the same is for their Youtube channel.**

# Noting Your Bible



## **Rejoice in the Lord**

Having joy in our God and the salvation He offers is a theme throughout Scripture (1 Samuel 2:1; Nehemiah 12:43; Psalm 2:11; 5:11; 9:2, 14; 32:11; 100:2; 118:24; 122:1; 126:3; Mark 4:16; Romans 12:12, 15; Galatians 5:22). The Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, commanded Christians to **“rejoice in the Lord always”** (Philippians 4:4). “Joy” and “rejoice” are keywords in the Book of Philippians (1:4, 18; 2:2; 16-18; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10). It is a noteworthy topic to consider and have as a reference to look up easily in one’s Bible.

In your Bible beside Philippians 4:4 write, **“command–why? (see Luke 1:14, 47).”** Turn to Luke 1:14 and write, **“Rejoice because Christ has come, making salvation possible (see Acts 13:32-52).”** Turn to this passage in Acts and write, **“salvation for all peoples (see Acts 15:3).”** Next to Acts 15:3, write, **“(see 1 Peter 1:3-9).”** Here, write, **“greatly rejoice because Christ’s resurrection gives us a living hope (see Romans 15:13).”** Next to Romans 15:13 write, **“Joy comes in believing (obeying) Christ (see Acts 8:37-39).”** In Acts write, **“Joy follows repentance and immersion for the forgiveness of sins (see 2 Corinthians 7:9-10).”** Here, note that Paul rejoiced when the Corinthians had godly sorrow, producing repentance. Write, **“(see 3 John 3-4).”** In 3<sup>rd</sup> John, write, **“Walking in the truth brings joy (see Matthew 5:12).”** In Matthew write, **“When persecuted–rejoice! (see 1 Peter 4:12-16).”** Here, write, **“Rejoice in trials because we share in the sufferings of Christ (see Acts 5:41-42).”** Here, note that the apostles rejoiced and kept right on teaching Jesus. We must do the same! Write, **“(see Revelation 19:7).”** **Let us be a joyful people, continuing in love and obedience to the Lamb, our Husband, our Savior!** †

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## **What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?**

- \* For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
- \* Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- \* Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- \* If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God’s Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of *The Voice of Truth International* is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with \$35 a month, to cover the \$8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

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# Answers to Puzzles

## Verse Search (Page 38)

1. Gift of prophecy.
2. God
3. Men
4. Because the church can be edified with prophecy.
5. No
6. Musical instruments make different sounds to mean different things.
7. Speaking into the air
8. Languages, significance
9. Edification of the church
10. Understanding
11. Spirit, understanding
12. They cannot understand what he said.
13. Five, 10,000

## Bible Find (page 40)



## Scavenger Hunt (page 81)

Answers:

1. the gospel of Christ (1:16)
2. all (3:23)
3. He believed God. (4:3)
4. transgression/sin (4:15)
5. tribulation (5:3)
6. eternal life in Christ (6:23)
7. hearing and belief (10:13-14)
8. 7,000 (11:4)
9. by the renewing of the mind (12:2)
10. God (13:1-2)

For Further Information, Please Contact:



Overlooking Kathmandu, Nepal